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Preaching to the Future: Religious Schools, Youth Organizations, and the Rise of Political Islam in Türkiye

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ABSTRACT

We examine whether anti-establishment outsider movements can leverage education and youth mobilization to build long-run political power. We study the expansion of state-run religious secondary schools in 1970s Türkiye and show that access to these schools catalyzed the emergence of Islamist youth organizations, which played a central role in ideological formation, grassroots mobilization, and the eventual electoral success of the Islamist movement. Using a novel dataset and a difference-in-differences framework, we show that access to religious schools increased the local presence of Islamist youth organizations in the short run and boosted Islamist party vote share in the medium run. Effects were strongest where youth branches formed soon after school access and engaged in ideologically immersive activities. Individual-level survey evidence shows that exposed male cohorts were more religious and more likely to engage in Islamist party politics later in life. Our findings illustrate how schools and youth organizations—when strategically aligned—can serve as a foundation for enduring political transformation, not only for ruling elites but also for outsider movements seeking to gain power.

JEL Classification: D71, D72, I28, P16, P52, Z12, Z13

Keywords: Schools, Outsider movements, Party youth organizations, Elections, Religion

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1 Introduction

Education systems and youth organizations have long served as instruments for shaping ideological beliefs and political behavior. A rich literature in economics and political science documents how ruling elites—whether in authoritarian regimes or electoral democracies—have used schools to indoctrinate youth and consolidate power (Alesina, Giuliano and Reich, 2021; Ansell, 2010; Bandiera et al., 2019; Bazzi, Hilmy and Marx, 2024; Blanc and Kubo, 2024; Bozcaga and Cansunar, 2021; Cantoni et al., 2017; Fouka, 2020; Paglayan, 2021, 2022; Voigtländer and Voth, 2015). By contrast, we know far less about how outsider political movements, lacking direct control of state institutions, can strategically leverage schools and youth organizations to advance their agendas. This gap is striking, given the long history and growing relevance of these strategies for anti-establishment outsider movements seeking political power—especially in electoral democracies.

Across contexts and time periods, outsider movements have consistently used schools and youth organizations to build ideological commitment, expand grassroots bases, and lay the groundwork for eventual political power. The Nazi Party established the Hitler Youth as early as 1922, well before taking power (Koch, 2000; Voigtländer and Voth, 2015); similarly, Mussolini mobilized students in the early 1920s before formalizing the Opera Nazionale Balilla in 1926 (Tarquini, 2022). Islamist movements like the Muslim Brotherhood and pre-revolutionary Iranian networks similarly relied on schools and youth activism (Rivetti, 2012; Rosen, 2008). More recently, youth organizations like Turning Point USA have established school and college chapters to promote the populist conservative-nationalist wing of the Republican Party in the recent U.S. elections (Mudde, 2024). Across democracies, far-right and populist parties increasingly target disaffected youth—often finding disproportionate support among younger voters (Foa and Mounk, 2019; Vinocur and Goury-Laffont, 2024).[1] These cases suggest that educational institutions—when coupled with youth activism—can serve as powerful incubators for anti-establishment political movements, yet systematic evidence on this youth pathway to power remains limited.

In this paper, we study the political consequences of access to state-run religious secondary schools (Islamic schools) in 1970s Türkiye, focusing on their role in shaping

[1] Two prominent far-right youth organizations in Europe are Generation Identity (Génération Identitaire) and the Young Alternative for Germany (Junge Alternative für Deutschland). Generation Identity, a pan-European movement known for its anti-immigrant stance, was banned by the French government in March 2021 for inciting discrimination, hatred, and violence (Guardian, 2021). Similarly, the Young Alternative for Germany, affiliated with the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, faced increased scrutiny (NYT, 2021).

local youth activism and subsequent electoral outcomes. Türkiye provides a unique opportunity to examine this question: originally founded on strict secular principles, it later witnessed the rise of an anti-establishment Islamist movement that had long operated outside the political establishment. Islamists ultimately gained power through democratic elections, and over time, reshaped the country's institutions. Under the rule of the Justice and Development Party (JDP) and its populist leader, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Türkiye has experienced pronounced democratic backsliding and a shift toward electoral authoritarianism (Mechkova, Lührmann and Lindberg, 2017). We provide novel empirical evidence that the expansion of Islamic schooling in the 1970s played a pivotal role in this political transformation by seeding the emergence of Islamist youth organizations—organically linked to the broader Islamist movement—which became central to its ideological formation, grassroots mobilization, and eventual electoral success.[2]

To examine this question empirically, we assemble a novel set of district-center-level datasets. First, we compile data on the nationwide expansion of Islamic secondary schools in the 1970s, including the full universe of state-run school locations as of 1980 and their opening years. Second, we collect location data on the National Turkish Student Union (MTTB) local branches, the largest Islamist youth organization of the period. This dataset includes the timing of local branch openings and detailed descriptions of branch-level activities. We also document the local presence of the Akinji Association (Akıncılar Derneği), a relatively more radical Islamist youth organization. Finally, we collect district-center-level election results going back to 1969 and combine them with available data from later elections to construct a panel of national electoral outcomes spanning 1969 to 1995.[3] These datasets allow us to trace how access to Islamic schools shaped the emergence of youth organizations and, through them, local political dynamics over the subsequent decades.

To isolate the impact of exposure to Islamic schools on electoral outcomes, we exploit the expansion of the Islamic schooling network in the 1970s in a difference-in-differences framework by comparing the electoral results in district centers with and without an Islamic school over the period between 1969 and 1995. In practice, we rely on variation both within election years (comparing district centers with and without Islamic schools) and within district centers (comparing electoral years before and after Islamic school access). As a robustness check, we implement matched-sample and entropy balancing estimators to correct for unbalancedness in observables across treated and comparison

[2]Examining the same intervention, Benzer (2025) finds that the expansion of religious schooling also increased girls' secondary school completion, delayed fertility, and raised labor force participation.

[3]While our main analysis focuses on the 1969–1995 period, we have compiled election results through 2018. Extended results on electoral outcomes are presented in the Online Appendix.

district centers. For outcomes related to local youth organization formation, we estimate an event study specification that leverages the staggered timing of Islamic school openings across district centers, allowing us to trace the dynamics of organizational responses in the years before and after school access.

Our main finding is that access to Islamic schools led to a sharp increase in the local presence of Islamist youth organizations in the very short run, and to a rise in Islamist party support in the medium run. Specifically, access to an Islamic school increased the likelihood that a district center hosted a local branch of the MTTB by about 25 percentage points—accounting for roughly 75% of the difference in MTTB presence between treated and comparison districts. We also find that Islamic school locations disproportionately coincide with the presence of Akinji local branches in 1978. On the electoral side, access to Islamic schools increased support for Islamist parties by 1.93 percentage points—equivalent to a 17% increase relative to the sample mean. The magnitude of this effect is substantial: it explains approximately 25% of the rise in Islamist vote share in treated district centers between 1973 and 1995. Overall, secularist center-left parties experienced a faster decline in their vote shares in treated district centers, while conservative right-wing vote shares remained largely unaffected. However, there is notable heterogeneity in the dynamics of the treatment effect over election years for outcomes other than Islamist party vote share. Nevertheless, the Islamist party managed to shrink its vote margin vis-à-vis established parties, and by 1995, had become the largest party in the national elections.

To understand the pathway through which Islamic school access translated into political support, we first examine whether the effects were mediated by the emergence of Islamist youth organizations. Analyzing heterogeneity in electoral impacts by local organizational presence, we find that the estimated effect on Islamist party support was significantly larger in district centers where a youth organization branch was established following school access. Following Schenk (2025), we estimate that approximately 50% of the total effect of Islamic school access on Islamist party support is mediated through the formation of local Islamist youth organizations. Moreover, the strongest electoral effects occurred in district centers where MTTB branches engaged in ideologically intensive and relationally immersive activities—particularly *"sohbet"* ideological discussion groups. In contrast, other branch activities such as educational initiatives, religious services, cultural events, or sports programs were not associated with stronger electoral gains. These findings suggest that the rise in Islamist political support was not a direct consequence of religious schooling alone but was mediated primarily through the expansion of Islamist youth organizations.

We extend our analysis to the individual level to assess whether exposure to the

Islamic school-youth organization pipeline had persistent effects on religious beliefs and engagement in Islamist party politics. Although Islamist youth organizations were formally disbanded following the 1980 military coup, they had already cultivated a generation of ideologically committed individuals who remained politically active in informal networks. Using World Values Survey data and a difference-in-differences design, we find that male cohorts who reached secondary school age after the 1970s school expansion were more likely to hold religious views and to engage in Islamist party politics later in life. These patterns are consistent with the role of Islamic schools as recruitment platforms for youth organizations prior to 1980, and as channels of ideological continuity thereafter. We find no comparable effects for female cohorts, consistent with the male-exclusive structure of Islamist youth organizations during the period. Together, these findings suggest that the Islamic school-youth organization pipeline produced not only committed voters, but also future party elites—contributing to the long-run consolidation of Islamist political power.

Taken together, the evidence presented in this paper reveals a coherent mechanism: access to Islamic schools catalyzed youth mobilization, channeled through Islamist organizations, shaped by ideologically intensive engagement, and sustained into adulthood through continued political involvement. What began as an expansion of educational access evolved into a durable political infrastructure. This pipeline not only activated young people but embedded them in networks that fostered long-term partisan loyalty and leadership. In doing so, it illustrates how educational and civil society institutions—when strategically aligned—can serve as the foundation for enduring political transformation, even in the case of outsider movements.

We contribute to four strands of literature. First, a growing body of work examines the role of religious institutions in shaping support for parties with religious agendas. A few studies investigate the role of religious infrastructure in Islam and Judaism and find that supply shocks on the stock of religious institutions increase the support for religious parties (Bazzi, Koehler-Derrick and Marx, 2020; Bazzi, Hilmy and Marx, 2024; Grewal, 2020). Our paper contributes to this literature by isolating the role of Islamic schools with an examination of a specific policy change that exclusively enabled Islamic school exposure. We further provide evidence on the short- and medium-run dynamics of the impact of Islamic school access on electoral outcomes, as well as through which mechanisms this effect operates. In particular, our novel contribution to this literature is to uncover a youth-to-power mechanism through the emergence of local political mobilization: Islamic school access catalyzed the formation of Islamist youth organizations, which played a central role in building electoral support from below. More broadly, our results highlight

that when two religious institutions—Islamic schools and Islamist youth organizations—are strategically aligned, their joint effect can significantly amplify political mobilization and indoctrination, thereby boosting the success of religious parties.

Second, we contribute to the growing empirical literature on anti-establishment movements that have led to democratic backsliding, focusing on their origins and pathways to political power in historical contexts. This literature has predominantly examined the rise of some of the most prominent anti-establishment movements of the 20th century, notably the Nazi Party and Fascists in Italy. In the case of the Nazi Party, prior research highlights a range of contributing factors—such as dense local social networks (Satyanath, Voigtländer and Voth, 2017), exposure to propaganda (Adena et al., 2015; Caesmann et al., 2021), austerity policies (Galofré-Vilà et al., 2021), and entrenched anti-Semitism (Voigtländer and Voth, 2015)—that facilitated its ascent. In the Italian case, recent work shows that fear of socialist revolution in the aftermath of World War I spurred localized fascist mobilization, which ultimately translated into greater support for the Fascist Party (Acemoglu et al., 2022). We extend this literature by examining the rise of an anti-establishment movement with religion-based ideology in a Muslim-majority democracy and by introducing a novel channel: a youth-driven pathway to power forged through the strategic use of the education system and politically aligned youth organizations.

Third, we contribute to the literature on party youth organizations. Previous literature has pointed out that parties benefit from youth organizations for recruitment (Hooghe, Stolle and Stouthuysen, 2004), being a training ground for future party elite (Binderkrantz et al., 2020), socialization to party values (Mycock and Tonge, 2011), providing labor force for campaigning (Pickard, 2019) and providing legitimacy among young voters (Trimithiotis, 2015). Moreover, McDonnell et al. (2024) show that youth organizations tend to attract disproportionally high-educated ambitious men. Our novel contribution is to quantitatively demonstrate complementarities between youth organizations organically linked to a political party and a favorable school system to the party's long-run success.

Fourth and most importantly, we contribute to the extensive literature in the political science and economics disciplines on the provision of education as a nation-building and indoctrination tool to influence and design younger generations' political beliefs and attitudes (Alesina, Giuliano and Reich, 2021; Ansell, 2010; Bozcaga and Cansunar, 2021; Cantoni et al., 2017; Fouka, 2020; Paglayan, 2021; Voigtländer and Voth, 2015). This existing literature consider cases where the ruling elite, for example in Nazi Germany, Soviet Union or even in the liberal West, uses the school system to secure their long-run goals and success. Our novel contribution is to demonstrate a case where an outsider party was able to use school system, in coordination with youth organizations, to achieve political

power and eventually authoritarian religious rule in a former fairly liberal and secular country. In addition, we provide a novel quantitative contribution to understanding the mechanisms of ideological transmission, shedding light on which forms of activities—particularly those related to indoctrination and socialization—were most effective in shaping political outcomes. These results highlight the fundamental consequences that the design of the school system may have for societies.

2 Institutional Background

2.1 Brief History of Islamist Politics in Türkiye

The global wave of democratization at the end of World War II also affected the Turkish republic. Türkiye was transformed into a multiparty democracy with the 1946 general elections. Demokrat Parti (the Democratic Party, DP), founded by the right-wing conservative faction within the Cumhuriyetçi Halk Partisi (Republican People's Party, RPP), won the first fair multiparty elections in 1950.

Several parties with a clear Islamist agenda were also formed during the 1950s. However, they were short-lived and shut down by the judiciary, which cited their reactionary religious activities. As a result, Islamist movements remained mainly a faction within the mainstream right-wing parties—the DP and its successor, Adalet Parti (the Justice Party, JP)—and pro-Islam nationalist parties, including Millet Partisi (the Nation Party, NP).

Following a dispute with the leadership of the JP regarding nominations, the Islamist factions within the JP and NP formed the "Independents' Movement" under the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan to present independent candidates in the 1969 elections in twelve provinces. Prior to the election, Erbakan published a manifesto called "Milli Görüş" (National Outlook), which later also gave its name to the movement, essentially focusing on economy- and development-related issues with a nationalist focus. The role of Islam in state affairs and daily life was also a general topic of the manifesto. Out of 12 independent candidates, only Erbakan qualified to enter parliament.

Due to public interest and the desire of Islamic brotherhoods like the Naqshbandi Order for political representation, Erbakan and his colleagues founded the Milli Nizam Partisi (National Order Party, NOP) in 1970 (Yavuz, 1997). Under the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan, NOP capitalized on the dissatisfaction expressed by small business owners, peasants, and conservative urban residents who felt marginalized by the state-driven modernization efforts of the preceding decades. According to Erbakan, a return to indigenous "heavy industry" and a strong national economy would restore the coun-

try's lost grandeur, an appeal often phrased in slogans like "Yeniden Büyük Türkiye", translated as "A Great Türkiye Once Again" (Rabasa and Larrabee, 2008). This narrative closely resembled anti-establishment populist political movements in Europe and the US, which similarly emphasized economic sovereignty, national and conservative identity, and opposition to an elitist establishment accused of diluting traditional values. However, while populists in the western democracies often framed their antagonism against immigrants or supranational institutions, Erbakan's movement directed its populist critique towards the secular state apparatus and its Western-oriented modernization agenda.

Although the MNP was banned following the 1971 coup, Erbakan and allies promptly re-emerged in 1972 with a second party, the National Salvation Party (Milli Selamet Partisi, NSP), which served as the primary institutional home for political Islam throughout the 1970s. Milli Görüş started to assume an important place on Türkiye's political scene after the 1973 elections. The NSP received a surprising 11.8% vote share, and 48 of its candidates entered parliament. These early Islamist parties, although modest in electoral strength at first, demonstrated the ability to mobilize grassroots voters who had felt politically and culturally overshadowed by Türkiye's secularizing republican elite. As the NSP joined short-lived coalitions in the late 1970s, it confirmed that Islamism in Turkey would no longer remain merely a rural or peripheral phenomenon but would also be a fixture of multi-party politics. Although suppressed in certain phases—especially following the 1980 military coup—these Islamic parties laid the groundwork for future, larger-scale Islamist mobilization after the 1980s.

After the transition to civilian rule in 1983, Milli Görüş reorganized under the name of Refah Partisi (the Welfare Party, WP). In its first general election in 1987, the WP failed to enter parliament with its vote share of 7.2% since it remained under the 10% election threshold. The Turkish political scene in the 1990s was marked by an unexpected success of the WP that led it to power in Türkiye. Allying with conservative nationalist parties in the 1991 elections, it received 16.9% of votes and entered parliament with 62 representatives. Another surprising result came in the municipal elections of 1994. The WP drew significant attention in Turkish politics when it acquired control of several municipalities, including the two largest and most developed cities, Istanbul and Ankara. This paved the way for the WP to arise as the winner of the 1995 general elections, earning a 21.4% vote share and 158 seats. Fifty-four of its MPs were graduates of Islamic schools, constituting a significant portion of the party's parliamentary seats (Ozgur, 2012, p. 141). The WP's grassroots organizations, supported by the cadres from Islamic schools, claimed to be essential in its success during the 1990s (Ayata, 1996; Ozgur, 2012).

Islamists achieved a significant milestone in 1996 when the WP led a coalition govern-

ment with the center-right Doğru Yol Partisi (True Path Party, TPP). For the first time in the history of the Turkish Republic, an Islamist party held the reins of power. However, its tenure was short-lived. Erbakan's attempts to shift Turkey's foreign policy toward the Muslim world and his controversial symbolic gestures favoring Islamic identity provoked strong reactions. Additionally, his populist stance against the secular elite—marked by an anti-establishment rhetoric—led to heightened tensions between his government and Türkiye's secular military and judiciary. This culminated in the "February 28 Process," a military-led intervention that forced the WP out of power, exemplifying a broader pattern in populist politics where the establishment pushes back against challengers seeking to disrupt the status quo.

Yet, even after the WP's dissolution, the momentum it generated paved the way for its ideological successor, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (the Justice and Development Party, JDP). Under the leadership of its populist figurehead, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the JDP not only secured long-term political dominance but also profoundly reshaped Turkish society and its secular democratic institutions. Since coming to power in the early 2000s, the party has steered the country toward a more authoritarian, Islamist, and nationalist-leaning governance model.

2.2 Religious Schools of Türkiye: Imam Hatips

Islamic schools in Türkiye are tuition-free state-run religious schools that operate from grades 6 to 12. The Ministry of Education (MOE) is the responsible authority that determines and inspects all curriculum and textbook contents and appoints school staff. Therefore, the management of these schools solely belongs to the MOE. Although Islamist parties were involved in several coalition governments from 1973 to 1999, they were never in charge of MOE. Therefore, they were not directly involved in the management of Islamic schools or the Turkish education system.

Islamic schools in Türkiye teach a hybrid curriculum that combines secular with religious subjects. Importantly, the curriculum of Islamic schools in Türkiye primarily emphasized the traditional interpretation of the Quran, focusing on religious education rather than political indoctrination during our analysis period. These institutions were designed to provide students with a deep understanding of Islamic theology, classical religious texts, and moral teachings, rather than promoting any specific political ideology (Ayata, 1996). Roughly one-third of the educational content at the secondary level is religion-related, yet Islamic school students were spending one more year to compensate for this emphasis. In the end, Islamic secondary schools taught a share of secular educa-

tion content similar to literature-track in secular secondary schools during our analysis period.

The involvement of religious organizations and Islamist parties occurred mainly in the context of extracurricular social activities in the form of a hidden curriculum. Even though the formal curriculum is not fundamentally oriented, elements such as peer interaction, in-class discussions, and a shared religious identity make Islamic school students particularly receptive to a wide range of Islamist influences (Ayata, 1996). Therefore, Islamic schools have enabled a homogeneous environment for students with conservative backgrounds to interact as peers and consolidate their religious ideology, unlike secular schools with a more heterogeneous student population.

Moreover, many students attending Islamic schools have become politically active outside of school settings through involvement in Islamist youth organizations, which has provided them with additional platforms to mobilize and advocate for their beliefs (Ozgur, 2012). This heightened engagement has also had a ripple effect, encouraging peers from more diverse educational backgrounds—those not attending Islamic schools—to become increasingly involved in similar political and social activities. In the 1970s, male students who attended Islamic schools were often involved in political youth organizations—linked with Islamist NSP—such as Milli Türk Talebe Birliği and the Akinji (Zengin, 2017; Yarbay, 2021).

2.3 Islamist Youth Organisations: Milli Türk Talebe Birliği and Akıncılar Derneği

The Milli Türk Talebe Birliği (MTTB, National Turkish Students' Union), established in 1916, initially functioned as a non-partisan nationalist student organization focused on cultural and educational activities. By the late 1960s, however, the MTTB underwent a significant transformation, emerging as a key platform for conservative and nationalist students. This shift culminated in the organizational victories of Islamist groups within the MTTB in 1969, marking the beginning of its role as an incubator for Islamist youth activism (Zengin, 2017).

During the 1970s, Imam Hatip schools, became a cornerstone of the Islamist movement's strategy to nurture a politically and ideologically mobilized generation. These schools produced a steady stream of young people who were not only devout but also actively engaged in shaping Turkey's political future. The MTTB played a pivotal role in mobilizing Islamic school students, providing them with ideological and organizational training that cultivated their political awareness and prepared them for activism (Zengin,

2017).

The Akinji Association, founded in 1975, represented a more explicit and focused effort to organize Islamist youth. While initially linked to the MTTB, the Akinji quickly established itself as an independent entity, building grassroots networks and utilizing the presence of Islamic schools to extend its reach (Zengin, 2017). Akinji became a platform for political education, ideological training, and activism, fostering a new generation of Islamists who were deeply committed to the movement's goals.

Activities organized by these youth organisations were crucial in shaping and solidifying the Islamist identity of the youth. Islamic school students, alongside other young participants, frequently attended seminars, study circles, and summer camps, where they were exposed to political and ideological training (MTTB, 1980). These gatherings emphasized not only religious teachings but also practical skills like public speaking, debate, and community organizing. Public demonstrations, such as rallies and marches, were also instrumental in fostering a sense of collective action and solidarity among participants. These activities reinforced the Islamist movement's goals, helping to create a politically conscious generation that would go on to contribute to the success of Islamist political parties (Zengin, 2017).

These institutions—Islamic schools, the MTTB, and the Akinji—worked in synergy to create a politically active and ideologically cohesive generation. Graduates of Islamic schools, trained and mobilized by these organizations, formed the backbone of Islamist political movements, including the NSP and its successors. This network of ideologically aligned individuals not only contributed to the organizational strength of these parties but also provided them with leaders and strategists. This generational pipeline was instrumental in the eventual electoral success of Islamist parties, such as the WP, which achieved dominance in the 1990s (Zengin, 2017).

Both the MTTB and Akinji were shut down following the 1980 military coup, yet many of their trained students remained politically active, carrying their organizational experience into the Islamist parties that thrived in the following decades. Among them, the most prominent was Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who first studied at an Islamic school, later became involved in both youth organizations, and then entered politics through Erbakan's WP (Akyel, 2010; Zengin, 2017). Rising from his role as a local district branch leader of the WP, he became Mayor of Istanbul in 1994, Prime Minister in 2003, and ultimately President of Türkiye in 2014—demonstrating the enduring impact of Islamist youth mobilization, facilitated by Islamic schools and Islamist youth organizations, in shaping the country's political leadership. He is just one of many; over the past 25 years, numerous figures who emerged from similar Islamist youth networks—including former

Prime Minister and President Abdullah Gül, as well as various prime ministers, ministers, speakers of parliament, MPs, and local politicians—have played a central role in shaping Türkiye's ruling elite (Akyel, 2010). This collaboration underscores the centrality of institutional frameworks in fostering political and ideological mobilization. These institutions laid the groundwork for a sustained Islamist political presence in Türkiye, culminating in significant electoral and political achievements.

3 Data

We construct our main dataset by integrating a novel dataset on the locations of Islamic schools and Islamist youth organizations in the 1970s, along with district-center level data on general election results and pre-treatment characteristics. To investigate mechanisms and alternative explanations, we also utilize population and building censuses, and several waves of World Values Survey (Inglehart et al., 2020).

Islamic schools. We build our treatment variable using two data sources. First, we manually gathered data on the locations and opening years of Islamic schools from various websites displaying their logos, which typically include the school's name—often based on the district center—and the year it was established. Second, we cross-check Islamic schools' locations from a source that contains location information on all Islamic schools in 1991 (Özüdoğru, 1991). Since Islamic schools were available only in district centers, we focus on electoral outcomes at the district center level and do not include rural areas in our analysis. In 1980, there were 374 Islamic schools located in 373 district centers, with 301 of them established following the 1974 expansion. Therefore, we focus specifically on district centers where Islamic schools were established post-1974, excluding those with operational schools predating this expansion.[4]

Islamist youth organizations. The first of our two primary outcomes of interest is the presence of local branches of Islamist youth organizations in district centers and their years of establishment. We therefore build a novel dataset documenting the locations of Islamist youth organizations' local branches in the 1970s, based on the annual reports of MTTB (1980) and Yarbay (2021). The annual reports of MTTB also provide information on the establishment years of their local branches. As of 1978, 210 district centers had local branches of MTTB and 242 had branches of Akinji. Of these, 150 MTTB and 175

[4]Notably, the majority of schools that predate 1974 were established in more populated provincial centers.

Akinji branches were located in districts where Islamic schools were established after 1974.

Electoral data. The second primary outcome of interest is the election results, which we obtain from publications of the Turkish Statistical Institute that document every election held in Türkiye. This dataset offers ballot-level information on votes cast for political parties in national elections, as well as on voter turnout. The most comprehensive existing collection of these data was conducted by Livny (2020), but it only includes district-center level information for those district centers that existed during the corresponding election year. We expand the coverage of the data to include 894 district centers that existed in 1990 for all elections between 1969 and 1987. Specifically, we extract the election results for these missing district centers from the Turkish Statistical Institute's publications by linking them to their corresponding ballots.

We classify political parties into three main categories.[5] The first and foremost category of interest consists of Islamist parties. This category includes mainly parties formed by the Milli Görüş movement and its split-offs. The Milli Görüş movement started to participate in elections under the umbrella of a political party beginning with the 1973 elections. However, there were other parties that shared the Islamists' focus and had characteristics similar to those of the Milli Görüş parties prior to 1973, including the Justice Party and the Nation Party. For the 1969 election, we classify the Nation Party and independent candidates in nine provinces that Milli Görüş ran after a disagreement with the Justice Party leadership as Islamist.[6] [7] The second category consists of center-right and nationalist parties that are conservative in social terms. The third category comprises center-left parties that are secularist and socially liberal.

Survey data, population and building censuses. We utilize individual-level data from multiple waves of the World Values Survey (WVS) to examine the mechanisms behind our results.[8] The WVS gathers comprehensive data on social, political, and cultural values, along with demographic information such as age, gender, and education. Our analysis

[5] For more information on the construction of party classification, see Apppendix Table D.1.

[6] Those seven provinces are Adana, Adapazari, Ankara, Aydin, Balikesir, Cankiri, Istanbul, Izmir and Maras. Although there may be other independent candidates from other political views, Islamists were the main body of independents that gathered votes in those provinces. Nevertheless, leaving independents out in our classification do not change the results for Islamist party as seen in section 6.5.

[7] Appendix Figure D.5 shows the positive relationship between the 1969 election vote shares of the Nation Party and independent candidates, and 1973 Islamist party vote shares. However, there was no relationship between the 1969 conservative and 1973 Islamist vote shares. This is a supportive evidence for our Islamist party classification for the 1969 elections.

[8] Specifically, we use Wave 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7 of WVS that contain required information for our analysis.

specifically focuses on Welzel's Secular Values Index, Islamist party membership, and respondents' self-reported religiosity, as these are the most relevant for our study.

Another data source we utilize to rule out several alternative explanations for the increased demand and supply of religion is the Turkish building censuses conducted in 1970, 1984, and 2000, obtained from the Turkish Statistical Institute. Using this data, we create measures of religious and educational building supply for years 1970 and 1984, and 2000.[9] To address concerns related to geographic sorting, we use the 1990 Population census data, obtained from the Turkish Statistical Institute.

Other data. We collect data on an extensive set of controls at the district center level. We calculate distance to nearest Ottoman trade roads between 1300 and 1600 using the information from Old World Trade Routes (OWTRAD) Project (Ciolek, 2012). We collect population size information from the 1970 Turkish census and additionally use this data to construct a market access measure.[10] We calculate distance to railroads in 1973 using the railroad maps collected by Akgüngör et al. (2011). Data on the locations of secularist propaganda institutions, known as People's Houses, in 1945 is obtained from the Directorate of Statistics at the Prime Ministry Office (Başbakanlık İstatistik Genel Müdürlüğü, 1947). Data on the locations of nationalist propaganda institutions, known as Turkish Hearts, come from books by Üstel (1997) and Georgeon (2000). Data on visits by Atatürk and Inönü comes from Assouad (2025). We scrape data on the locations of historic religious sites from Kultur Envanteri.[11] Last, we collected extensive data on distances to Ankara, Istanbul, and the coast, along with geography-related characteristics such as elevation, ruggedness, temperature, precipitation, and suitability for various agricultural products from the Global Agro-Ecological Zones (GAEZ) database (FAO and IIASA, 2024).

[9] For 2000 building census, we utilized the data provided by Meyersson (2014).

[10] The market access of district center i is defined as $MA_i = \sum_j (P_j / \tau_{ij}^{\sigma})$, with P_j being the population of district center $j \neq i$, τ_{ij} the Euclidian distance between district center i and district center j, and $\sigma = 3.8$, as in Donaldson (2018).

[11] See https://kulturenvanteri.com, data retrieved on August 31, 2024. This website offers a detailed inventory of cultural heritage sites in Turkiye. We particularly collect data on historical religious sites, including mosques (cami), complexes (külliye), religious schools (medrese), lodges (tekke), tombs (türbe), and small religious retreats (zaviye).

4 Empirical Analysis

In this section, we first outline the differences in characteristics between treated and comparison district centers, followed by a matching sample exercise utilized for sensitivity analysis. Then, we present our empirical strategy and main findings on the impact of exposure to Islamic schools across several political outcomes. Using chronological order, we begin by analyzing the effect of Islamic schools on the likelihood of establishing local branches of Islamist youth organizations. We then assess the impact of exposure to Islamic schools on subsequent general elections.

4.1 Locations of Islamic Schools

Table 1 presents a comparison of the averages for all pre-treatment control variables across two groups: the 301 district centers with an Islamic school and the 512 comparison district centers. These control variables are organized into blocks covering (i) demographic and development indicators at the district center level, (ii) controls based on the 1973 election, (iii) variables related to religion and politics, and (iv) geographic characteristics. Columns 1-2 report variable averages for comparison and treated district centers, with standard deviations in brackets. To facilitate comparison, Columns 3 and 4 report Wald-tests of the equality of each variable across comparison and treated district centers. In Column 3, we do not include province fixed effects and Column 4 repeats the exercise with province fixed effects.

Table 1: Balance Table (Full Sample)

	Comparison	Treated	Test [treated = comparison]	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Fixed effects:				Province
Demography and Development				
log distance nearest historical trade node	4.115	3.924	-0.191***	-0.009
	(0.880)	(0.958)	(0.068)	(0.055)
log distance nearest historical trade route	3.262	3.093	-0.168	-0.024
	(1.336)	(1.445)	(0.102)	(0.085)
log population 1970	8.225	9.185	0.960***	0.973***
	(0.839)	(0.933)	(0.065)	(0.059)
log market access 1970	-1.715	-0.805	0.910***	0.654***
	(2.207)	(2.198)	(0.160)	(0.139)

Continued on next page

	Comparison	Treated	Test [treated = comparison]	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
log distance railroads 1973	2.952	2.812	-0.141	-0.218*
	(1.766)	(1.949)	(0.137)	(0.127)
1973 Elections				
Islamic vote share 1973	10.465	10.448	-0.017	0.091
	(11.135)	(7.776)	(0.666)	(0.682)
Secular vote share 1973	33.319	35.716	2.397**	1.664
	(16.790)	(14.511)	(1.118)	(1.033)
Conservative vote share 1973	52.095	51.001	-1.094	-2.793***
	(16.633)	(14.952)	(1.133)	(1.034)
Turnout share 1973	64.025	63.742	-0.284	-0.571
	(10.123)	(8.589)	(0.667)	(0.650)
Religion and Politics				
People's Houses 1945	0.215	0.581	0.367***	0.414***
	(0.411)	(0.494)	(0.034)	(0.034)
Turkish Hearts 1931	0.129	0.379	0.250***	0.269***
	(0.335)	(0.486)	(0.032)	(0.031)
log distance to Ankara	5.950	5.800	-0.150***	-0.034**
	(0.653)	(0.647)	(0.047)	(0.016)
log distance to Istanbul	6.167	5.976	-0.191***	-0.004
	(0.932)	(0.946)	(0.068)	(0.021)
Atatürk visited	0.090	0.183	0.093***	0.079***
	(0.286)	(0.387)	(0.026)	(0.027)
Inönü visited	0.129	0.329	0.200***	0.216***
	(0.335)	(0.471)	(0.031)	(0.031)
Historic religious sites per 1,000 pop. (5 km)	0.303	0.303	0.000	-0.001
	(0.763)	(0.668)	(0.051)	(0.053)
Historic religious sites per 1,000 pop. (10 km)	0.622	0.558	-0.064	-0.187
	(1.592)	(1.519)	(0.112)	(0.131)
Geography				
log distance to coast	4.113	3.757	-0.356***	0.127*
	(1.695)	(1.727)	(0.125)	(0.073)
log elevation	6.349	6.119	-0.230***	-0.057
	(1.111)	(1.187)	(0.084)	(0.053)
Ruggedness	126.628	112.707	-13.922**	-14.340***
	(82.467)	(76.635)	(5.726)	(5.283)
Mean temperature	12.176	12.448	0.272	0.123
	(3.249)	(2.934)	(0.222)	(0.116)

Continued on next page

	Comparison	Treated	Test [treated = comparison]	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Annual precipitation	640.570	662.356	21.786	-2.768
	(206.170)	(250.430)	(17.066)	(7.839)
Suitability Index for Potato	0.407	0.419	0.012	0.019
	(0.176)	(0.177)	(0.013)	(0.012)
Suitability Index for Maize	0.262	0.277	0.015	0.028**
	(0.188)	(0.184)	(0.013)	(0.012)
Suitability Index for Tobacco	0.238	0.283	0.046***	0.016
	(0.193)	(0.196)	(0.014)	(0.011)
Suitability Index for Barley	0.413	0.428	0.016	0.027**
	(0.198)	(0.206)	(0.015)	(0.012)
Suitability Index for Wheat	0.408	0.430	0.022	0.028**
	(0.180)	(0.186)	(0.013)	(0.011)
Suitability Index for Oat	0.439	0.465	0.026	0.034**
	(0.209)	(0.227)	(0.016)	(0.013)
Suitability Index for Olive	0.163	0.174	0.011	0.001
	(0.208)	(0.186)	(0.014)	(0.011)
Suitability Index for Cotton	0.167	0.182	0.015	0.013
	(0.220)	(0.237)	(0.017)	(0.013)
Observations	512	301		

Column 3 in Table 1 highlights several differences between treated and comparison district centers, both with and without controlling for province fixed effects. Treated district centers were generally more populous, located closer to historical trade nodes, and had higher market access in 1970. They were also more likely to have hosted historical propaganda institutions, such as People's Houses and Turkish Hearths, and to have been visited by the founders of the secular Turkish Republic, Atatürk and İnönü. These characteristics likely stem from these areas historically having larger populations. Finally, treated district centers were closer to the administrative capital, Ankara, and the economic capital, Istanbul. They were also situated in geographically favorable areas, with lower elevation, less rugged terrain, and closer proximity to the coast. Nevertheless, we include these variables, along with all other control variables, in our main analysis for electoral outcomes as controls.

Importantly, there was no statistically significant difference in pre-treatment support for Islamist parties in 1973 elections between the treated and comparison groups. Additionally, both groups had a similar number of historic religious sites per 1,000 population in 1970. These results suggest that the treated and comparison district centers

were unlikely to differ in terms of religious characteristics or pre-treatment support for Islamist politics—factors likely most relevant to support for Islamist parties.

Matched sample. We also conduct a sensitivity analysis of our main results on electoral outcomes using a more balanced matched sample. To enhance the balance between the treated and comparison groups, we employ propensity score matching to identify comparison district centers with characteristics similar to those of the treated group. First, we run logistic regressions of the treatment indicator on the set of pre-treatment characteristics to estimate the propensity score. To minimize heterogeneity and improve match quality, we restrict matching to district centers within the same population bin, defined using quintiles of the population size distribution. Using the estimated propensity score, we then identify the set of comparison district centers by matching each treated district center to its nearest neighbor with replacement. Compared to the previous results, we primarily lose larger district centers with an Islamic school because they fall outside the common support, meaning there are no suitable controls in the same region. Online Appendix Table D.2 serves as the equivalent of Table 1; however, instead of comparing 310 treated district centers to 512 comparison district centers, it compares 272 treated district centers to 126 comparison district centers. Compared to Table 1, the matched sample in Online Appendix Table D.2 is significantly more balanced on observable controls. As shown in Column 3, the only variable that remains significantly different between the treatment and control group at the 5% level is the logarithm of the population size in 1970.

4.2 Islamic Schools and Islamist Youth Organizations

We begin our analysis with how establishment of Islamic schools affect the political youth activism at the local level. To execute this, we utilize a new dataset we constructed consisting of the branch locations of two prominent Islamist youth associations—MTTB and Akinji—as of 1978.

Descriptive Evidence. As illustrated in Appendix Figure D.4, district centers with Islamic schools had a substantially higher presence of Islamist youth organizations in 1978 compared to those without. Approximately 40% of treated district centers hosted a local branch of MTTB, whereas only 5% of comparison district centers did. A similar pattern is observed for the Akinji: around 40% of treated district centers had a local branch, while only about 10% of the comparison district centers did. These findings

suggest an association between access to Islamic schools and the local presence of Islamist youth organizations. However, it remains unclear whether access to Islamic schools was directly caused the establishment of these branches, as the timing of branch openings relative to school openings is not yet confirmed. In the next section, we present evidence that these branches were established shortly after the introduction of Islamic schools, indicating that exposure to Islamic schools led local students to establish branches of Islamist youth organizations.

Specification. To further investigate the timing of establishment of local branches relative to the Islamic school openings, we leverage additional data on the founding years of MTTB branches from 1974 to 1979. This information enables us to examine whether branch openings were temporally aligned with the introduction of Islamic schools, providing insights into whether exposure to Islamic schools may have triggered local branch formation.

We estimate the following classical event-study specification using both the TWFE estimator and the Callaway and Sant'Anna (2021) estimator, which effectively addresses the challenges posed by staggered treatment timing in the TWFE approach:

$$y_{dt} = \sum_{t=-5}^{-2} \beta_t \left(Islamic_d \times \theta_t \right) + \sum_{t=0}^{3} \beta_t \left(Islamic_d \times \theta_t \right) + \gamma_d + \delta_t + \epsilon_{dt}, \tag{1}$$

where d indexes district center, and t indexes year relative to Islamic school opening, and $t = -1$ is omitted as the reference category. The dependent variable is a dummy variable that takes 1 if an MTTB local branch was present in a district center for a given year relative to Islamic school opening. Islamic is an indicator for Islamic school presence and θ_t are dummies indicating all possible years relative to Islamic school opening. γ_d and δ_t are district center and election year dummies. Standard errors are clustered at the district center level.

Findings on the formation of local Islamist youth organizations. Figure 1 presents our findings on the impact of an Islamic school opening on the likelihood of establishing a local MTTB branch, estimated using the Callaway and Sant'Anna (2021) estimator, while Appendix Figure D.10 presents the corresponding estimates using the TWFE estimator. [12] Specifically, it shows how the likelihood of establishing a local MTTB branch compares between the treated and comparison groups across years relative to the Islamic school

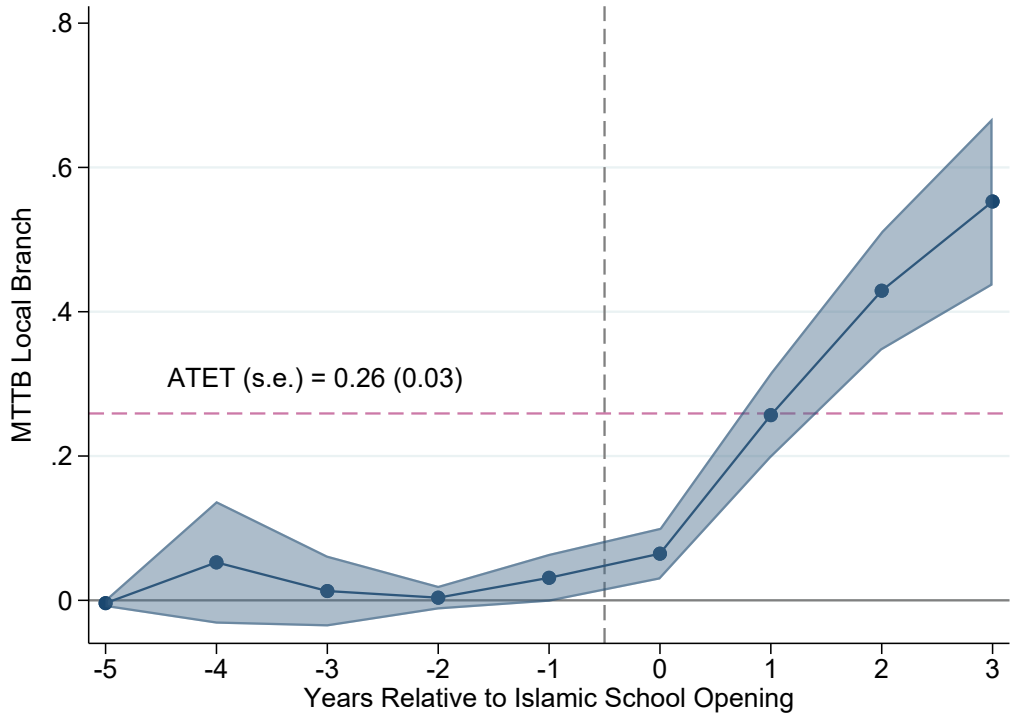
[12]For the TWFE estimator, we binned event times beyond -3 and +3 years relative to the Islamic school opening into the endpoint categories of -3 and +3, respectively.

opening.

As shown in Figure 1, there is no observed difference in the likelihood of holding a local MTTB branch between the treated and comparison groups in the years prior to the Islamic school opening. The pre-treatment estimates are centered around zero and are not statistically significant at the 5% level. The absence of pre-trends in Figure 1, while not a direct test of the parallel trends assumption, provides reassuring evidence in support of its validity for the event study methodology.

Notably, Figure 1 shows that the opening of an Islamic school leads to a sharp increase in the likelihood of establishing a local MTTB branch, with a slight initial effect observed in the same year as the opening, followed by a more substantial increase one year later and thereafter. The average treatment effect on the treated is 25 percentage points, indicating that the opening of an Islamic school alone accounts for approximately 75% of the difference in the presence of local MTTB branches in 1978 between treated and comparison district centers.

Figure 1: Islamic Schools and MTTB Openings



Notes: This figure reports estimates of event-study specification in equation 1 using Callaway and Sant'Anna (2021) estimator. Outcome is an indicator of MTTB local branch presence in a given year.

It is important to note that opening an Islamic school is a relatively lengthy process, involving either the construction of a new building or repurposing an existing one, as

well as the appointment of qualified teaching staff. In contrast, establishing a local MTTB branch is much simpler and faster. The formation of a local branch only requires a group of people willing to organize, without the need for significant infrastructure or formal appointments. Despite the simplicity of their formation, local MTTB branches were primarily established after the opening of Islamic schools, not before. Combined with previous evidence, this underscores the role of Islamic schools as a triggering factor for the formation of local MTTB branches.

Although we lack precise data on the opening years of Akinji local branches, it is likely that most of these branches were established either in the same year as Islamic schools became accessible or shortly thereafter, given that the Akinji itself was founded in late 1976. By 1977, 86% of the treated district centers already had access to Islamic schools, which likely set the stage for the subsequent formation of local branches as access to these schools expanded. The significantly higher presence of Akinji branches in treated district centers as seen in Appendix Figure D.4, along with the timing of their formation after most of the Islamic school openings, makes it highly likely that the opening of Islamic schools was the main driver for the formation of these local branches.

4.3 Islamic Schools and Electoral Success

Next, we explore the political consequences of exposure to Islamic schools using general election results during a period between 1969 and 1995. In particular, we are interested in examining how exposure to Islamic schools affect the electoral support for the Islamist party.

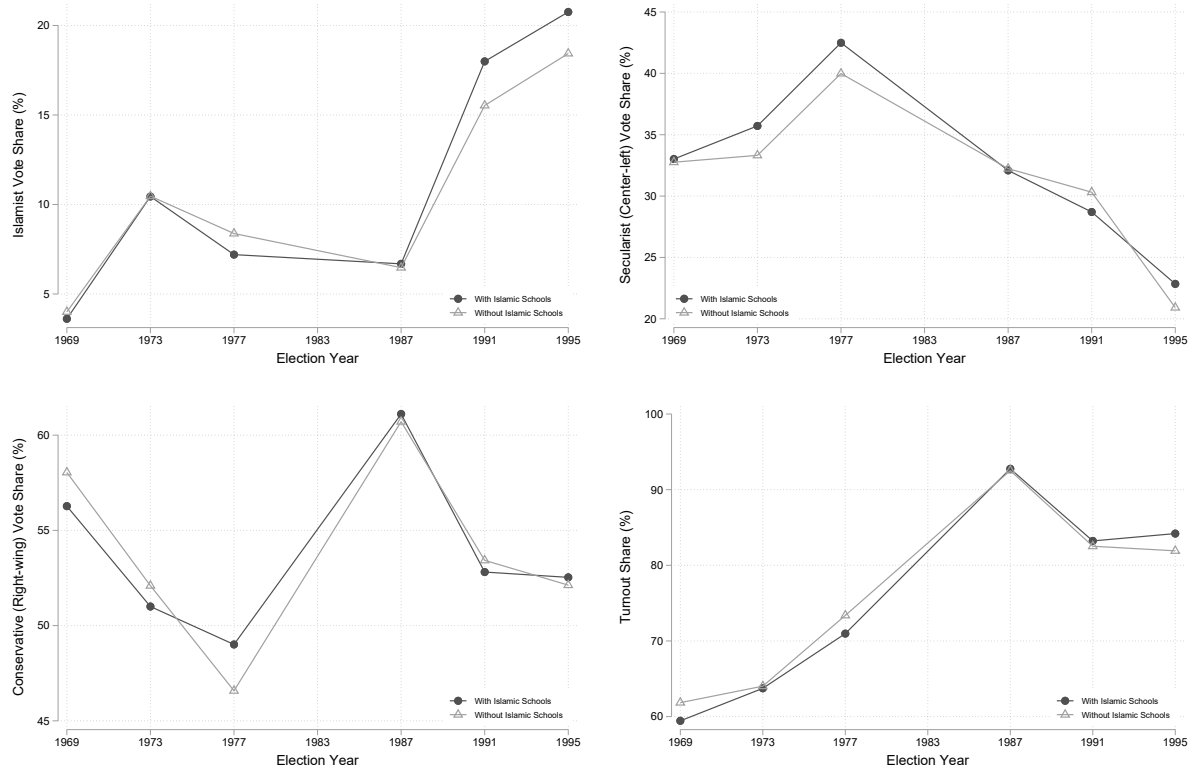
We employ a difference-in-differences empirical strategy to estimate the impact of exposure to Islamic schools on electoral outcomes. Our approach involves comparing electoral results across election years between district centers with and without an Islamic school. The main identifying assumption is that, in the absence of exposure to Islamic schools, electoral outcomes in district centers with Islamic schools would have followed similar trends, on average, as those in district centers without them.

Descriptive evidence. Figure 2 presents the raw data on several electoral outcomes of interest by Islamic school availability, including mean vote shares by party classifications and voter turnout across the six parliamentary elections in Türkiye between 1969 and 1995.[13] Notably, the mean vote shares for Islamist parties followed a similar pattern in

[13]We do not include the 1983 general elections in our analysis, as it was held during military rule, and Islamist parties were not allowed to participate.

district centers with and without an Islamic school before 1974 and remained largely stable until 1987. However, starting with the 1991 election, Islamist parties saw a sharp overall increase in their votes, with a more pronounced rise in district centers with an Islamic school. Meanwhile, conservative parties also experienced an increasing trend in both treated and comparison groups, whereas secularist center-left parties saw a steady decline starting in the 1980s. Overall, the raw data indicates that treated and comparison district centers had similar levels of support for Islamist parties, with parallel trends observed prior to exposure to Islamic schools. After exposure, however, support for Islamist parties grew significantly more in treated district centers during subsequent elections.

Figure 2: Evolution of Electoral Outcomes – Raw Data



Notes: This figure presents the raw mean trends in electoral outcomes across election years for district centers with and without an Islamic school as of 1980.

Specification. To evaluate the impact of exposure to Islamic schools on electoral outcomes, we employ a difference-in-differences strategy and exploit only within-district-center variation over time. We estimate the following empirical specification using TWFE estimator:

$$y_{pdt} = \beta(Islamic_{pd} \times Post_t) + X_{d0}\theta_t + \eta_{pt} + \gamma_d + \delta_t + \epsilon_{pdt}, \quad (2)$$

where y_{pdt} is the vote share (in percentage points) for the different party classifications or the voter turnout rate in district center d of province p in election-year t, where t = 1969, 1973, 1987, 1991, or 1995. $Islamic_d$ is a dummy indicating Islamic school availability in district center d in 1980. $Post_t$ is a dummy that takes value 1 for elections held in 1987 or later and value 0 for previous elections.[14] [15] γ_d and δ_t represent district center and election-year fixed effects, respectively. In some specifications, we replace δ_t with η_{pt}, which represents province-by-year fixed effects. X_{d0} represents a comprehensive set of pretreatment observable characteristics of district centers, as listed in Table 1. These characteristics included in the specification are interacted with election-year dummies.

The specification reported in equation 2 allows us to account for various sources of potential endogeneity. In particular, district center fixed effects account for any time-invariant district center characteristics. Election-year fixed effects capture any shocks common to all district centers in a given election year. Province-by-year fixed effects control for province-specific shocks common to all district centers in a given election year. Finally, the inclusion of a rich set of pretreatment characteristics interacted with year dummies allow those characteristics to have differential effects on electoral outcomes over election years. Robust standard errors are clustered at the district center level.

The key identifying assumption of the difference-in-differences specification is that vote shares in district centers with and without an Islamic school would have followed parallel trends in the absence of exposure to Islamic schools. Under the parallel trends assumption, the estimated β is the coefficient of interest, which reflects the average causal effect of exposure to Islamic schools on electoral outcomes. Although the parallel trends assumption is fundamentally untestable, the absence of pretrends would provide supportive evidence for identification. To investigate pretrends as well as the dynamic evolution of the treatment effect, we also estimate an event-study specification using TWFE estimator:

[14] A recent literature in DID methodology raises concerns about the bias in two-way fixed effect (TWFE) estimators due to staggered adoption designs (Callaway and Sant'Anna, 2021; Goodman-Bacon, 2021). It is important to note that our design, in practice, is not a staggered adoption design since all Islamic schools were opened between 1974 and 1980, therefore treatment switches on for all treated group at the same time.

[15] Although some schools had already opened prior to the 1977 election, the estimate for that year would primarily capture the immediate opening effect, as exposure to these schools was still fresh and many of the relevant channels—such as youth organization formation and ideological socialization—had not yet materialized. For this reason, we exclude the 1977 election from our main pooled difference-in-differences analysis. As shown in Appendix Figure D.15, however, including the 1977 election as treated or not treated yields quantitatively similar estimates.

$$y_{pdt} = \sum_{\substack{t \in \{1969,1977,\\ 1987,1991,1995\}}} \beta_t(\theta_t \times Islamic_{pd}) + X_{d0}\theta_t + \eta_{pt} + \gamma_d + \delta_t + \epsilon_{pdt} \tag{3}$$

where we replace $Post_t$ in equation 2 with year dummies for each election year t and use 1973 as the omitted reference election year. The remaining specification stays the same as in equation 2. Our main outcome of interest is the vote share of Islamist parties. Therefore, we would expect $\beta_t > 0$ from the 1987 election onward—the first for which Islamic school graduates were of voting age, and had the adequate time for local political mobilization—and $\beta_t = 0$ for the 1969 election. As most Islamic schools had opened before the 1977 elections, the estimated coefficient for the 1977 election is not a pure pretrend estimate. It may still capture the effect of the opening of an Islamic school. However, it is unlikely to capture the effect of prolonged exposure because participating students were still below the voting age, and the period required to activate local mobilization of Islamist youth organizations may not have passed, as Islamic schools were new to the corresponding localities. Therefore, we would not expect the estimated β_t for 1977 to be as pronounced as that for later election years.

Electoral impacts of Islamic schools. Table 2 reports the results on electoral outcomes from the estimation of the difference-in-differences specification described in equation 2. Column 1 of Table 2 shows that when we include district center and election-year fixed effects, exposure to Islamic schools is associated with a 1.87 percentage points increase in the Islamist vote share. The estimated effects remain robust after inclusion of province-by-year fixed effects in Column 2 or of pretreatment characteristics interacted with election-year dummies as controls. In the most demanding specification in Column 3 of Table 2, exposure to Islamic schools is associated with a 1.93 percentage points increase in Islamist party vote share, or about 17% relative to the mean. This indicates that the Islamist party vote share experienced a faster increase in district centers with an Islamic school than in other district centers during the period when Islamist party vote shares were on the rise in Türkiye. Overall, exposure to Islamic schools explains about one third of the surge in Islamist party support in district centers between 1973 and 1995, suggesting that Islamic schools were a crucial driving force behind the success of the Islamist party in treated localities.

To corroborate these findings, Figure 3 presents our event-study estimates showing the dynamics of the treatment effects on the Islamist party vote share in the general elections.[16] We use 1973 as the reference election year. We report estimates for several

[16]We present estimates including long term elections in Appendix Figures D.7 and D.8.

specifications: (i) without control variables, (ii) with differential trends by province, and (iii) sequentially adding differential trends by different categories of pretreatment characteristics listed in Table 1. Across all specifications, we find no clear pre-trend in support for Islamist parties. The coefficients of the 1969 elections on the Islamist party vote shares are centered around 0 and statistically highly nonsignificant. This provides supportive evidence on identifying parallel trends assumption, as there are no pretreatment differences in Islamist party vote shares. Even though most Islamic schools opened between the 1973 and 1977 elections, the estimate for the 1977 election is still close to 0 and statistically nonsignificant. This suggests that the provision of Islamic schools did not have an immediate impact, making it unlikely that Islamist voters responded by immediately rewarding the government with increased support for the opening of these schools.

Table 2: Access to Islamic Schools and Electoral Outcomes

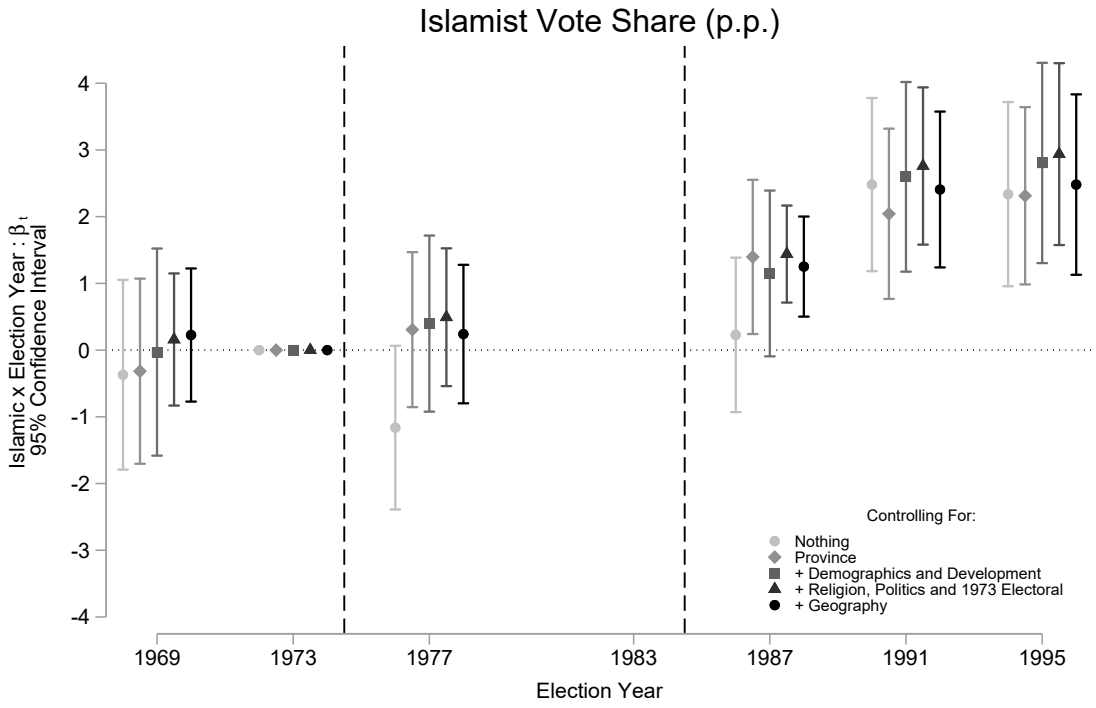
	Outcome: [...] Vote Share					
		Islamist		Conservative	Secularist	Turnout
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Islamic x Post	1.87***	2.08***	1.93***	0.17	-1.93**	1.26*
	(0.53)	(0.46)	(0.53)	(0.96)	(0.84)	(0.66)
Outcome mean:	11.32	11.32	11.32	55.08	30.12	76.61
R^2	0.673	0.806	0.870	0.777	0.819	0.876
N	4065	4065	4065	4065	4065	4065
Clusters	813	813	813	813	813	813
District FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year FE	✓					
Province-by-Year FE		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Development and Demography			✓	✓	✓	✓
1973 Electoral			✓	✓	✓	✓
Religion and Politics			✓	✓	✓	✓
Geography			✓	✓	✓	✓
Sample:	Full	Full	Full	Full	Full	Full

Notes: This table reports estimates β in equation (2) for electoral outcomes. Islamic refers to district centers with an Islamic school in 1980, excluding district centers with an Islamic school prior to 1973. Post is a dummy that takes value 1 for elections held in 1987 or later and value 0 for previous elections. The 1977 election is excluded from the main specification. Columns (3) to (6) include pre-treatment district characteristics, as listed in Table 1, interacted with election-year dummies.
*p<0.1, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01. Robust standard errors clustered at the district center level.

Starting from the 1987 elections, the estimates become positive and statistically significant with an increasing trend. These results suggest that exposure to Islamic schools

increased the Islamist party vote share after prolonged exposure to these schools, when graduates of Islamic schools came of voting age and became active in local politics. The common trends before the 1980s also indicate that Islamic schools were not opened in district centers where Islamist party support was already on the rise relative to the comparison group. Although our analysis centers on Milli Görüş and its affiliated parties before the 1997 military intervention targeting the Welfare Party, it is noteworthy that the estimated effect on Islamist party support peaks in 2002—the year the current Islamist-populist ruling party, the JDP, came to power, as shown in Appendix Figure D.7. The 2002 election, marked by widespread party fragmentation and many vote shares falling just below the 10% electoral threshold, allowed the JDP to secure a single-party majority. Our finding underscores that Islamic schools and Islamist youth movements may have played a key role not only in shaping Erdoğan's leadership within the Islamist movement, but also in building the political base that facilitated the JDP's rise to power.

Figure 3: Islamic Schools and Elections – Islamist Party Support



Notes: This figure reports election-year-specific estimates of β_t in equation 3 on a balanced district-center–year panel. Islamic is a dummy indicating Islamic school availability in district center d in 1980, excluding district centers with an Islamic school prior to 1973. The 1973 election was the last just prior to Islamic school expansion and serves as the reference election. The elections in 1987 is the first in which exposed cohorts would have been eligible to vote. All specifications includes district center fixed effects and election-year fixed effects. In some specifications, we sequentially include province-by-election-year fixed effects and a full set of pretreatment observable characteristics of district centers listed in Table 1 interacted with election-year dummies. Robust standard errors clustered at the district center level.

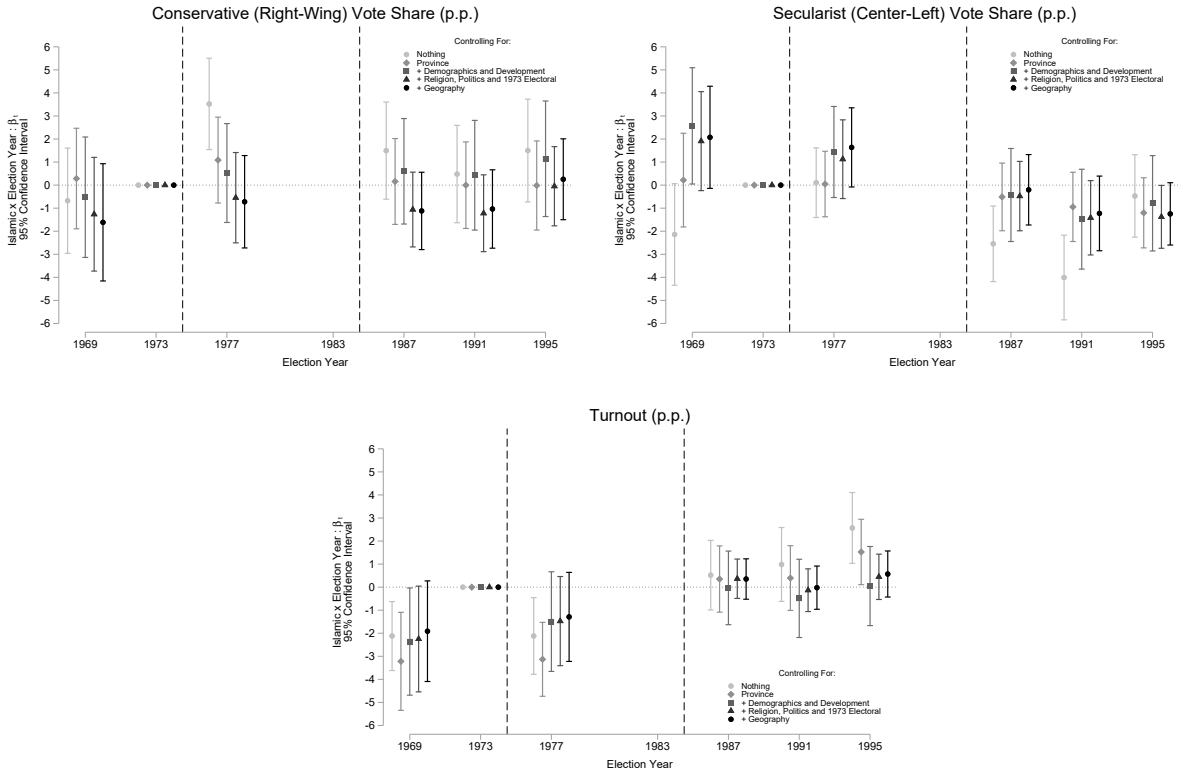
Columns 4-6 of Table 2 present the estimated effects of exposure to Islamic schools for secularist center-left and conservative right-wing vote shares and turnout rates under the most demanding specification. Columns 4 and 5 show that, on average, secularist center-left parties experienced a faster decrease in vote shares in treated district centers after Islamic school access while conservative center-right parties maintained their support. Column 6 suggests that access to Islamic schools is associated with a marginal increase in voter turnout in treated district centers.

To explore the dynamics of the treatment effects, we present our event-study estimates for the related electoral outcomes in Figure 4. This figure reveals temporal heterogeneity in the treatment effects across election years. In top-right panel, there is evidence that the decrease in the secular center-left vote share is partly driven by pretreatment differences, although there is a sizeable decrease for the 1991 and 1995 elections. In top-left, the estimated coefficients for 1987 and 1991 are negative for conservative parties yet estimated imprecisely. The bottom panel also shows that there is a pretreatment difference in voter turnout in favor of the comparison group, yet the difference disappears after treatment, and there is no systematic treatment effect for fully treated election years relative to the 1973 elections.

These findings suggest that exposure to Islamic schools had favorable consequences for the Islamist party. While conservative party vote shares remained similar and the secularist party experienced a decrease in its vote share, there is notable heterogeneity in treatment effects across election years. Nevertheless, on average, the Islamist party decreased its vote margin vis-à-vis other parties in district centers with Islamic schools relative to district centers in the comparison group.

We provide three pieces of suggestive empirical evidence on the sources of strengthened Islamist support and why the center-left emerged as the main electoral loser in treated areas. First, turnout rose more rapidly in treated district centers, as shown in Table 2, suggesting that Islamists were particularly effective at mobilizing new voters. Second, individual-level evidence in Section 5 shows that a new generation of voting male cohorts exposed to Islamic schools during adolescence—at a time when secondary school enrollment was expanding—were more likely to report lower secular values, as shown in Table 7. Third, treatment effects were significantly larger in politically fluid areas that had experienced large swings from the center-left to the right between the 1969 and 1973 elections. In these district centers, Islamist vote shares increased more sharply, while secularist center-left parties suffered steeper losses, as documented in Appendix Figure D.9. Together, these findings point to a combination of mobilization, ideological cohort formation among new voters, and partisan realignment as key drivers linking

Figure 4: Islamic Schools and Elections – Other Outcomes



Notes: This figure reports election-year-specific estimates of β_t in equation 3 on a balanced district-center–year panel. See notes in Figure 3 for specification details. Robust standard errors clustered at the district center level.

Islamic school access to medium-run electoral gains for Islamist parties, with secularist center-left parties emerging as the primary electoral losers.

Robustness to using the matched sample and entropy balancing. Next, we perform a sensitivity analysis of our main results on electoral outcomes by using a more balanced matched sample and employing an entropy balancing method to enhance robustness. To execute the entropy balancing method, we first calculate weights for each district center to create a perfectly balanced sample of treated and comparison groups, following Hainmueller (2012). We then apply these entropy-balanced weights in the specification outlined in equation 2. As seen in Appendix Tables D.3 and D.4, in our most demanding specification, the estimates on the support for Islamist parties are quantitatively similar to our main analysis estimates. Our main estimate is 1.93 percentage points, while the matched sample and the entropy balanced estimates are 2.07 and 1.60 percentage points, respectively. These results indicate that the estimates are largely insensitive to the use of a more balanced matched sample or applying entropy balancing weights, supporting the

robustness of our findings.

5 Mechanism: The Youth Pathway to Electoral Success

Our findings thus far suggest that access to Islamic schools in the very short run led to an increase in the local presence of Islamist youth organizations and, in the medium run, resulted in a rise in support for Islamist parties.

In this section, we explore the underlying mechanisms that drive our main findings on the electoral success of Islamist parties. Specifically, we present evidence that the rise in Islamist political support was not a direct consequence of religious schooling alone but was mediated primarily through the expansion of the Islamist youth organizations, which played a pivotal role in fostering youth activism and creating a new generation of politically engaged individuals who were socialized into Islamist ideology and mobilized into political participation.

Islamic schools and the Islamist youth organization pipeline. By fostering a more homogeneous student body—primarily composed of individuals from religious families—Islamic schools created a suitable environment for identifying and mobilizing young people inclined toward political activism. Through these institutions, students were gradually drawn into Islamist youth movements, where they received structured ideological training and engaged in organized group efforts—thereby reinforcing their commitment to Islamist political causes. This targeted engagement created a structured pipeline through which students transitioned from education into active participation in Islamist movements. As a result, we expect the effect of Islamic school access to be more pronounced in areas where an Islamist youth organization branch was established shortly thereafter, offering the institutional infrastructure necessary to engage, mobilize, and ideologically cultivate students while they were still enrolled in these schools. Once established, these organizations could also attract other religiously inclined youth in the vicinity, regardless of whether they attended Islamic schools, thereby amplifying their reach and political influence.

To test this hypothesis, we conduct two types of analysis. First, we estimate heterogeneous treatment effects of Islamic school access on Islamist party vote share, interacting the DiD term $Islamic \times Post$ in equation 2 with indicators for the local presence of key Islamist youth organizations, such as MTTB and Akinji. This approach allows us to assess whether the political impact of Islamic school access was amplified in areas where youth organizations could serve as ready-made channels for ideological socialization and

mobilization. The remainder of the specification remains unchanged.

Table 3 provides empirical support for our hypothesis, showing that the impact of Islamic schools on Islamist party vote share was significantly stronger in areas with an established local branch of an Islamist youth organization in the late 1970s. The estimated coefficients of the triple interactions are positive and statistically significant for both youth organizations. Notably, the third column shows that when we include the interaction terms between Islamic schools and Islamist youth organizations, the main effect of Islamic schools becomes substantially smaller and loses statistical significance. This suggests that the relationship between Islamic schools and Islamist party support is to a significant extent driven by their association with Islamist youth organizations. Islamic schools mattered politically because they were embedded in a broader mobilization channel. When youth organizations were present locally, they served as the mechanism that translated religious schooling into ideological activation and political alignment. These findings illustrate how institutions that combine education with grassroots mobilization can be especially effective in cultivating ideologically committed youth capable of sustaining long-term political influence. However, this analysis is not fully conclusive as it suffers from potential post-treatment bias given that also the youth organizations are affected by the Islamic schools.

Second, we conduct more formal mediation analysis proposed for difference-in-differences designs by Schenk (2025). The idea is to estimate the effect of Islamic schools both on the Islamic vote share (ATE) and the youth organizations (mediator), and the effect of the mediator on the Islamic party vote share using the variation in the control group of no Islamic schools.[17] Assuming these effects are identified, which requires for example conditional parallel trends, and the homogeneity of the effect of the mediator, we can calculate the mediated effect by multiplying the last two effects.

In addition to our main regression equation 2, we estimate following specifications:

$$y_{pdt} = \beta(Islamic_{pd} \times Post_t) + \alpha(IPYO\ Number_{pdt} \times Post_t) + X_{d0}\theta_t + \eta_{pt} + \gamma_d + \delta_t + \epsilon_{pdt} \quad (4)$$

[17] We estimate a specification regressing the number of Islamist political youth organizations (IPYOs) on Islamist party vote share separately for the full sample, treated, and control district centers. As shown in Appendix Table D.5, the estimated relationships are consistent across all three samples, providing supportive evidence for the validity of our mediation analysis. Appendix Figure D.13 presents the corresponding event study analysis, which indicates that treated and control district centers exhibited similar trends in Islamist vote share prior to IPYO formation. Following the establishment of IPYOs—primarily triggered by access to Islamic schools—district centers with IPYOs experienced a notable increase in support for Islamist parties.

Table 3: Analysis of Mechanisms - Heterogenity by MTTB and Akinji Presence

	Islamist Vote Share			
Outcome:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Islamic x Post	1.93***	1.15**	1.21**	0.63
	(0.53)	(0.55)	(0.54)	(0.56)
Islamic x Post x MTTB		2.55***		2.29***
		(0.72)		(0.71)
Islamic x Post x Akinji			2.03***	1.66**
			(0.76)	(0.75)
Outcome Mean:	11.32	11.32	11.32	11.32
R^2	0.870	0.871	0.871	0.872
N	4065	4065	4065	4065
Clusters	813	813	813	813
District FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Province-by-Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Development and Demography	✓	✓	✓	✓
1973 Electoral	✓	✓	✓	✓
Religion and Politics	✓	✓	✓	✓
Geography	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sample:	Full	Full	Full	Full

Notes: This table reports estimates from a modified version of equation 2, focusing on electoral outcomes. Specifically, we augment the baseline DiD specification by interacting $Islamic \times Post$ with indicators for the local presence of key Islamist youth organizations, such as MTTB and Akinji. Islamic refers to district centers with an Islamic school in 1980, excluding district centers with an Islamic school prior to 1973. MTTB and Akinji indicate the presence of named Islamist youth organizations in 1978. Post is a dummy that takes value 1 for elections held in 1987 or later and value 0 for previous elections. The 1977 election is excluded from the main specification. All columns include pre-treatment district characteristics, as listed in Table 1, interacted with election-year dummies.
*p<0.1, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01. Robust standard errors clustered by district center.

$$IPYO\ Number_{pdt} = \beta(Islamic_{pd} \times Post_t) + X_{d0}\theta_t + \eta_{pt} + \gamma_d + \delta_t + \epsilon_{pdt} \tag{5}$$

where $IPYO\ Number$ denotes the total number of MTTB and Akinji local branches in a given district center. The remainder of the specifications follows equation 2.

Tables 4 and 5 report this analysis. We estimate that about 50% of the total effect of the Islamic schools on Islamic party vote share is mediated via the youth organizations. However, we think this is likely a lower bound given the homogeneous effects assumption required for this analysis. It seems likely that the Islamic schools and youth organizations are complements, and thus, we underestimate the effect of the mediator on the outcome in the mediation analysis.

Specifically, the results indicate that the electoral impact of Islamic schools was

Table 4: Estimation of coefficients needed for mediation analysis

Outcome:	Islamist Vote Share (1)	Islamist Vote Share (2)	IPYO Number (3)
Islamic x Post	1.93***	0.99*	0.44***
	(0.53)	(0.53)	(0.05)
IPYO Number x Post		2.14***	
		(0.46)	
Outcome Mean:	11.32	11.32	0.24
R^2	0.870	0.872	0.825
N	4065	4065	4065
Clusters	813	813	813
District FE	✓	✓	✓
Province-by-Year FE	✓	✓	✓
Development and Demography	✓	✓	✓
1973 Electoral	✓	✓	✓
Religion and Politics	✓	✓	✓
Geography	✓	✓	✓

Notes: Columns (1), (2) and (3) show the estimated parameters obtained from the two-way fixed effect regressions specified in equations 2, 4 and 5, respectively. Islamic refers to district centers with an Islamic school in 1980, excluding district centers with an Islamic school prior to 1973. IPYO Number indicates the number of Islamist youth organizations were present in 1978. Post is a dummy that takes value 1 for elections held in 1987 or later and value 0 for previous elections. The 1977 election is excluded from the main specification. All columns include pre-treatment district characteristics, as listed in Table 1, interacted with election-year dummies.
*p<0.1, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01. Robust standard errors clustered by district center.

significantly channeled through these youth organizations rather than being a direct consequence of schooling itself alone. This pattern is consistent with the broader narrative of our study: youth organizations were not merely complementary actors but central to the political activation process, serving as the organizational backbone that enabled Islamic schools to generate lasting ideological alignment and partisan loyalty. Moreover, we find that the impact of Islamic school access were more pronounced in district centers where Islamic high schools constituted a larger share of the local educational landscape, consistent with the idea that limited secular alternatives magnified the political influence of Islamic schools and the subsequent local youth organization activities. See Appendix Section C for further results and estimation details.

What type of indoctrination works? We empirically investigate which specific activities undertaken by MTTB were most effective in translating youth mobilization into sustained political support for Islamist parties. To this end, we construct a novel dataset on local MTTB branch activities, using systematic information extracted from the organization's annual reports. We are able to identify the activities of 93 local MTTB branches, while 57

Table 5: Decomposed Effect of Islamic School Exposure on Islamist Support

Y: Islamist Vote Share	Estimate	Std. Err.	95% CI
Total effect on Y	1.93***	0.53	[0.89, 2.98]
Effect of *Islamic* on # *IPYO*	0.44***	0.05	[0.35, 0.54]
Effect of # *IPYO* on Y	2.14***	0.46	[1.23, 3.05]
Indirect effect on Y	0.95†	0.24	[0.47, 1.42]
% mediated	48.94%	25.53%	[-1.09%, 98.97%][1]
			[24.76%, 120.61%][2]
			[20.60%, 117.80%][3]
Direct effect on Y	0.99*	0.53	[-0.06, 2.03]

Notes: The table shows point estimates, standard errors and confidence intervals of the causal effects of interest. They are obtained from the estimated parameters of the regressions. % mediated refers to the ratio of estimated indirect and total effect. Two types of bootstrap-derived confidence intervals are provided for this ratio: normal approximation[1] (assumes normal distribution of bootstrap replicates) and percentile method[2] (based on empirical percentiles of bootstrap distribution). The Anderson-Rubin-based CI[3] is obtained by inverting the AR statistic via bootstrapping. † indicates a significant indirect effect as per the VGVG test.
*, **, *** indicate significance at 10%, 5%, and 1%, respectively.

branches did not report any activity. Accordingly, we focus our analysis on the 93 reporting branches and exclude the remainder. By distinguishing among various forms of engagement—such as educational programs, religious activities, social and cultural events, sports programs, periodic seminars, and *sohbets* (ideological discussion groups)—we isolate the mechanisms through which youth movements converted organizational participation into electoral gains. These data allow a novel window into effectiveness of the details of the indoctrination activities.

Appendix Figure D.11 shows that approximately 80% of local MTTB branches reporting activities organized seminars and around 60% held *sohbet* gatherings—ideological discussion groups which often took place in intimate, home-based settings. In contrast, explicitly religious activities were much less common, with only about 21% of branches reporting them. This pattern underscores that MTTB's mobilization efforts were centered more on political and ideological formation than on direct religious instruction.[18]

To analyze what type of indoctrination works, we build on the earlier heterogeneous effect specification by introducing interaction terms between Islamic school access and indicators for each of the aforementioned activity types undertaken by local MTTB branches. We then estimate a saturated model including all activity types simultaneously, allowing us to assess the relative contribution of each channel to the overall electoral effect. The interaction between indicators for the presence of each activity type and Islamic school access allows us to assess whether the observed electoral effects of youth

[18]For the overlap in activity types across MTTB local branches, see Appendix Figure D.12.

mobilization were driven more strongly by particular forms of activities. Table 6 suggests that *sohbets* stand out as the most influential activity type in driving Islamist political support. The coefficient for the $Islamic \times Post \times MTTB : Sohbet$ interaction is both large and statistically significant, while the effects of other activity types, such as educational, religious, and sports activities, are smaller in magnitude and not statistically distinguishable from zero. This pattern indicates that ideologically intensive and relationally immersive activities were the key drivers of successful political socialization within Islamist youth movements.

Taken together, these results highlight that not all forms of youth engagement were equally effective in shaping political outcomes. While general educational, religious, or social activities had limited electoral impact, ideologically intensive activities like *sohbets* were uniquely positioned to cultivate strong political alignment and sustained commitment among young participants. These results underscore a central insight: youth movements are more likely to succeed in generating politically committed cadres when they prioritize ideological depth and intimate forms of engagement. In the case of Islamist youth mobilization, activities that fostered intense group identity and doctrinal alignment were far more effective than general community-building efforts in translating mobilization into long-term political success.

From school desks to Islamist Party cadres. Like other civil society organizations, Islamist youth movements were shut down in 1980 following the military coup, halting their grassroots political activities and organizational development. However, by that time, these movements had already cultivated a generation of ideologically committed individuals who would later play pivotal roles in Türkiye's Islamist political landscape. Even in the absence of formal youth organizations, many remained politically active—engaging in ideological work, local activism, and party organizing. Islamist schools continued to serve as platforms for identifying and channeling students into Islamist political engagement, sustaining ideological continuity and recruitment efforts. This new pious generation, shaped by the Islamic school–youth movement pipeline, would go on to work for and within Islamist parties, contributing directly to their electoral success.

In what follows, we extend the analysis to the individual level and shift our focus to male cohorts who reached secondary school age after the 1970s Islamic schooling network expansion. Drawing on WVS survey data, we examine whether male cohorts who reached secondary school age after Islamic school expansion were more likely to identify as religious, express less secular views, and ultimately become members of Islamist parties later in life. Using a difference-in-differences framework, Table 7 shows that a relatively

Table 6: Analysis of Mechanisms - MTTB Local Branch Activities

	Islamist Vote Share						
Outcome:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Islamic x Post	1.26**	1.25**	1.24**	1.26**	1.27**	1.26**	1.25**
	(0.56)	(0.56)	(0.56)	(0.56)	(0.56)	(0.56)	(0.57)
Islamic x Post x MTTB	2.66***	3.21***	2.29**	3.03***	2.26	1.21	
	(1.02)	(0.94)	(0.98)	(0.98)	(1.83)	(0.89)	
Islamic x Post x MTTB: Educational	0.78						0.25
	(1.33)						(1.38)
Islamic x Post x MTTB: Religious		-1.41					-1.27
		(1.69)					(1.50)
Islamic x Post x MTTB: Social/Cultural			1.24				0.91
			(1.34)				(1.20)
Islamic x Post x MTTB: Sports				-0.32			-0.60
				(1.42)			(1.32)
Islamic x Post x MTTB: Seminars					0.79		1.18
					(1.86)		(1.00)
Islamic x Post x MTTB: Sohbet						2.86**	3.03**
						(1.19)	(1.24)
Outcome Mean:	11.18	11.18	11.18	11.18	11.18	11.18	11.18
R^2	0.871	0.871	0.871	0.871	0.871	0.871	0.871
N	3780	3780	3780	3780	3780	3780	3780
Clusters	756	756	756	756	756	756	756
District FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Province-by-Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Development and Demography	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1973 Electoral	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Religion and Politics	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Geography	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes: This table reports estimates from a modified version of equation 2, focusing on electoral outcomes. Specifically, we augment the baseline DiD specification by interacting $Islamic \times Post$ with indicators for the local presence of MTTB and various types of branch activities. Islamic refers to district centers with an Islamic school in 1980, excluding district centers with an Islamic school prior to 1973. MTTB indicates the presence of named Islamist youth organization in 1978. The analysis excludes 57 district centers where local MTTB branches did not report any activities. Post is a dummy that takes value 1 for elections held in 1987 or later and value 0 for previous elections. The 1977 election is excluded from the main specification. All columns include pre-treatment district characteristics, as listed in Table 1, interacted with election-year dummies.
*p<0.1, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01. Robust standard errors clustered by district center.

more pious male generation—likely socialized in Islamic schools and often mobilized through youth movements—entered secondary schooling and was more likely to engage in Islamist party politics later in life. In this sense, the Islamic school–youth movement pipeline not only produced committed voters but also future party cadres, ultimately emerging as one of the key driving forces behind the long-run success of Islamist parties

Table 7: Analysis of Mechanisms - Individual-level Survey Evidence

Outcome:	Religious Person (1)	Welzel's Secular Values Index (2)	Member of Islamist Party (3)
	(a) Men		
Some Secondary	-0.178***	0.441***	-0.050**
	(0.027)	(0.086)	(0.016)
Some Secondary x Born after 1962	0.088*	-0.226**	0.047**
	(0.040)	(0.072)	(0.019)
Outcome Mean (1)&(3) or Std.(2):	0.804	0.226	0.046
R^2	0.099	0.124	0.097
N	2636	2700	1676
Wild-clustered Bootstrap (DiD estimate: p-value)	0.07	0.00	0.03
	(b) Women		
Some Secondary	-0.102***	0.414***	-0.002
	(0.027)	(0.029)	(0.009)
Some Secondary x Born after 1965	-0.021	-0.003	-0.013
	(0.033)	(0.047)	(0.021)
Outcome Mean (1)&(3) or Std.(2):	0.804	0.232	0.028
R^2	0.120	0.177	0.086
N	2598	2664	1626
Wild-clustered Bootstrap (DiD estimate: p-value)	0.50	0.93	0.72
Birth-Year FE	✓	✓	✓
Region FE	✓	✓	✓
Wave FE	✓	✓	✓
Income-Group Dummies	✓	✓	✓

Notes: This table presents estimates from equation 6 male and female subsamples separately. The regressions control for birth cohort and group fixed effects, as well as wave, age, income group, and region dummies. The sample consists exclusively of Muslim respondents. The outcome in column 2 is standardized, and the estimated effects can be interpreted in terms of standard deviations. The data are drawn from the World Values Survey (Inglehart et al., 2020).
*p<0.1, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01. Robust standard errors clustered by region. Wild-clustered bootstrap p-values of DiD estimates are reported in the bottom row of the table.

in Türkiye. Notably, we do not observe similar patterns for female cohorts, who were not affected by the Islamic school–youth movement pipeline, as these organizations were exclusively male-dominated. This gendered pattern aligns with the findings of Benzer (2025), who shows that access to Islamic schools, despite their religious orientation, produced outcomes traditionally linked to secularization—such as increased girls' educational attainment, delayed fertility, and higher labor force participation—by easing cultural resistance to schooling in conservative communities. See Online Appendix Section A for a detailed discussion of the empirical strategy and supporting evidence.

Overall, the combined influence of Islamic schools and Islamist youth organizations strengthened the ideological commitment of young male cohorts to Islamist parties, cultivating a generation that was both devout and politically mobilized. This process not only contributed to their sustained electoral success but also played a crucial role in transforming Islamist populists in Türkiye from a marginal political movement into a dominant force capable of reshaping the political and institutional landscape. Over time, the new generation of Islamist activists cultivated through these networks ascended into positions of political power, ultimately becoming the ruling elites of Türkiye (Akyel, 2010; Ozgur, 2012; Yarbay, 2021; Zengin, 2021).

Taken together, the evidence presented in this section reveals a coherent mechanism: Islamic school access catalyzed a youth mobilization process that was channeled through Islamist youth movements, shaped by ideologically intensive engagement, and sustained into adulthood through continued political involvement. What began as educational access evolved into a lasting political powerhouse. This pipeline not only activated young people politically but also embedded them into networks that cultivated long-term loyalty and leadership for Islamist parties. In doing so, it demonstrates how educational and civil society institutions—when strategically aligned—can lay the groundwork for enduring political transformations.

6 Alternative Explanations and Robustness Checks

This section discusses several alternative explanations on the differential increase of Islamist party support in treated district centers. We also perform several additional robustness checks on our primary outcome of interest, namely, the Islamist party vote share.

6.1 Islamic Brotherhoods and Supply of Other Religious Infrastructure

One potential explanation for the increase in the Islamist party vote-share is the increased presence of Islamic brotherhoods (tarikats) in the public sphere after the 1980 coup. The military junta promoted a new ideology called "Turkish-Islamic synthesis" to tame ideological polarization and unrest between nationalist and far-left factions (Yavuz, 1997). This might pave the way for Islamic brotherhoods and organizations to increase their visibility and activities in public. If the increase in Islamic brotherhood activities were also reflected in boosting religiosity and Islamism, we would expect that support for political parties with religious platforms to increase. Therefore, it might be possible that

the changes in Islamist party support were due to Islamic brotherhood activity and its role in boosting Islamism rather than Islamic school exposure.

Although there is no extensive public data on Islamic brotherhoods' presence and activities at the district-center level, we argue that the Islamist party vote share in the 1973 general elections serves as a good proxy. The "partification" of the Milli Görüş movement was spearheaded by a cleric leader within Naqshbandi Tarikat, the most prominent and influential Islamic brotherhood in Türkiye (Yavuz, 1997). Islamic brotherhoods actively supported the Islamist NOS party in the 1973 elections. Importantly, the Islamist vote share from the 1973 election is included as a control in our electoral analysis (in equation 2), interacted with election-year dummies. This specification allows for differential trends across districts based on their pre-treatment levels of Islamist party support. As shown in Column 3 of Table 2 and Figure 3, the estimate remains consistent with the baseline when controlling for the 1973 electoral results. This suggests that our findings are not driven by differential trends in areas where Islamic neighborhoods had already aligned themselves with the Islamist party.

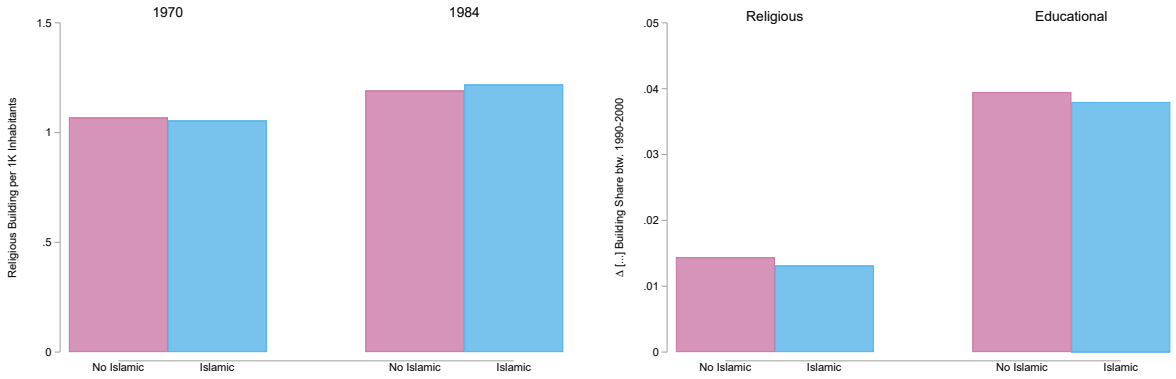
Next, we examine whether a differential increase in demand for religious buildings exists between treated and comparison district centers. If Islamic brotherhood had a higher presence in treated areas, we would expect that the demand for religious services—therefore, the supply of religious buildings—to increase more in treated areas relative to comparison areas. Panel A of Figure 5 shows that the number of religious buildings per 1000 inhabitants was at similar levels in treated and comparison district centers in 1970 and 1984.[19] Panel B of Figure 5 further shows that the change in the share of religious buildings was also at similar levels in treated and comparison areas between 1990-2000. These findings suggest that district centers with an Islamic school did not experience a relatively higher demand for religious buildings, as proxied by the supply of such facilities. Therefore, it is unlikely that the presence of Islamic brotherhoods would differ between treated and comparison areas during this period.

6.2 Economic Liberalization and Rising Inequality

Türkiye underwent an extensive economic liberalization process during the 1980s, which led to increased economic activity and rising inequality within society (Aricanli and Rodrik, 1990). Given these circumstances of the period, the Islamist Welfare Party centered its rhetoric on economic development and rising inequality in its party agenda. They introduced a new party manifesto named the "Just Order" (Adil Duzen) that

[19] We do not have information for one-third of district centers in building censuses.

Figure 5: Analysis of Mechanisms - Building Supply



Notes: The figure plots the supply of religious and educational buildings using data from the 1970, 1984, and 2000 building censuses conducted in Türkiye.

focused primarily on addressing economic and social inequalities in society and put less emphasis on Islamism (Yavuz, 1997). The Just Order manifesto is argued to be one of the factors behind the Welfare Party's success in attracting widespread support from different segments of society during the 1990s. If Islamic schools opened in areas affected negatively by economic liberalization and rising inequality during the 1980s, this might increase the support for the Islamist party since their electoral campaign put an important emphasis on addressing such economic and social disparities in society.

To address this possibility, we conduct several robustness checks. First, It is important to note that our preferred specification already accounts for time-variant shocks common to all district centers in a province. Therefore, it should capture a substantial amount of differential regional impact of macro-level shocks. We also include the natural logarithm of population sizes in 1970—as a proxy for economic development—interacted with election year dummies as a control. This should account for macroeconomic shocks that had a differential impact by different population sizes and economic development. Second, we include a measure of market access for every district center as a control in our preferred specification. As shown in Column 3 of Table 2 and Figure 3, the estimate remains robust when controlling for market access and other development-related characteristics. This indicates that the results are not driven by more connected, populous, or urbanized district centers. Last, we control for education, unemployment, and labor force participation rates of the prime-working age population in 1990 interacted with election year dummies. Appendix Figure D.15 shows that our main coefficient is robust to the inclusion of such post-treatment characteristics of district centers that are relevant for macro- and micro-level changes in the economy.

6.3 Other Youth Movements and Political Violence in the 1970s

During the 1970s, Türkiye witnessed intense political mobilization marked by violent confrontations among far-right nationalist and leftist youth movements, which profoundly shaped the period's political polarization. While these groups predominantly employed street violence as their primary strategy, it is important to note that Islamist youth movements emphasized grassroots mobilization, ideological development, and organizational capacity-building. It may still be possible that areas experiencing heightened polarization and violent clashes between far-left and far-right youth movements may have subsequently shaped Islamist political success or contributed to the decline of mainstream parties.

Despite the outsized presence of far-right nationalist and far-left youth movements in street-level violence and political confrontations, their actual electoral influence remained limited compared to mainstream right- and left-wing parties. The parties most closely associated with these movements—the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) on the right and the Workers' Party of Türkiye (TIP) on the left—rarely secured more than 5 percent of the vote throughout the 1970s and often received far less. Furthermore, as shown in Appendix Figure D.14, the vote share for nationalist parties followed a similar trend during the 1970s in both treated and comparison district centers, suggesting comparable levels of polarization and support for far-right violence across these areas. Appendix Figure D.15 also demonstrates that the estimated coefficient for Islamist party support—accounting for initial support for far-right (MHP) and far-left (TIP) parties linked to radical youth movements—remains quantitatively similar.[20] Taken together, this evidence suggests that our main results are not driven by areas that initially had a stronger far-right or far-left presence, potentially experiencing heightened polarization or violent clashes between far-left and far-right youth movements.

6.4 Geographic Sorting

Next, we examine whether our results can be explained by geographic sorting. Türkiye has been experiencing a pattern of migration from rural areas to more urbanized towns and cities since the 1950s. Suppose voters who were more likely to vote in favor of Islamist parties were also more likely to migrate to district centers with an Islamic school or migrate away from other district centers. In that case, our results could be partially explained by geographic sorting. In other words, the relatively higher increase in Islamist

[20] In our sample, the average vote shares of MHP and TIP in the 1969 general election were 3.3% and 2.2%, respectively.

party support in treated areas would reflect the underlying changes in the demographic composition of treated and comparison district centers, instead of exposure to an Islamic school.

To investigate this issue further, we follow an exercise proposed by Acharya, Blackwell and Sen (2016) and Williams (2017) that examines observable differences in characteristics of those who migrated out of (or into) the localities of interest. See Appendix Section B for a formal explanation of the specifications. Appendix Table B.1 shows no systematic differences between migrants from treated district centers and stayers, relative to their counterparts in comparison district centers, across selected attributes—except for economically small differences in age and literacy, which are not statistically significant at the 5% level. Panel B of Appendix Table B.1 shows the results for individuals who migrated into district centers obtained by replacing an individual's 1985 locality of residence with her 1990 district center of residence. The results also show no difference between those who migrated into treated district centers and stayers compared to their counterparts in comparison district centers. Taken together, these findings suggest that geographic sorting is unlikely to explain our results on the faster increase in Islamist party vote shares in treated district centers.

6.5 Other Robustness Checks

We perform several additional robustness checks on our primary outcome of interest, namely, the Islamist party vote share, and report them in Appendix Figure D.15. In the forth row, we include district centers with an Islamic schools before the 1973 expansion as treated in all elections. We exclude 1969 elections where Milli Görüş did not participate elections as a party and 1991 elections in which the Islamist party formed an electoral alliance with two other nationalist right-wing parties, respectively in sixth and seventh row. Eighth row includes the 1977 elections as treated, and ninth row exclude the independents in our 1969 Islamist party classification. Next, we include number of religious, educational and cultural buildings per 1000 individuals interacted with election-year dummy as controls. Lastly, we re-estimate the main regression using 1970 population weights. In an additional specification, we retain these weights while also coding district centers that had an Islamic school prior to the 1973 expansion as treated. The estimates remain similar to the baseline for all robustness checks presented in this section. Finally, in Appendix Figure D.16, we drop a single region at a time from the sample to verify that outlier regions do not drive the estimates, and the results remain robust.

7 Concluding Remarks

This paper studies how anti-establishment outsider political movements can leverage education and youth engagement to build long-run political power. We examine the expansion of state-run Islamic secondary schools in 1970s Türkiye and document that access to these schools substantially increased the likelihood that Islamist youth organizations would form in the same locality. In the following decades, district centers exposed to Islamic schools exhibited significantly higher electoral support for Islamist parties, suggesting a durable pipeline from educational access to political alignment. These effects were concentrated in places where youth organizations emerged shortly after school access and engaged in intensive ideological activities.

We further show that male cohorts exposed to Islamic schooling during adolescence were more likely to express religious views and to become members of Islamist parties later in life. Beyond its effect at the ballot box, the Islamic school-youth organization pipeline helped cultivate a politically engaged and ideologically aligned generation—many of whom remained active in Islamist networks and later participated in party organization and activism. Notably, several members of Türkiye's Islamist ruling elite have backgrounds in Islamic schools or youth organizations, including President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who attended an Islamic school and was active in the MTTB and Akinji (Akyel, 2010; Ozgur, 2012; Yarbay, 2021; Zengin, 2021).

Taken together, our findings suggest that the school–youth organization pipeline transformed educational access into durable political infrastructure. More broadly, we uncover a youth-driven pathway to power—channeled through schools and youth organizations—that enabled an outsider movement to build political influence well before entering office. In doing so, our paper offers a new perspective on how outsider movements can strategically align youth organizations with existing state education systems to lay the groundwork for long-run partisan alignment and political change.

Our analysis highlights two broader implications. First, the youth pathway we uncover may have played a non-negligible role in the success of outsider movements that historically came to power. These movements often built political capacity not through formal institutions alone, but by embedding themselves in education and civil society. By investing in youth organizations and aligning them with school systems, movements operating outside the political mainstream could mobilize future voters and cadres long before gaining electoral power. This logic echoes historical episodes such as the Muslim Brotherhood's use of religious schools and welfare institutions in Egypt, the Hitler Youth in Nazi Germany, and Mussolini's deployment of youth organizations in Fascist Italy. In

each case, educational and youth institutions served not merely to socialize supporters, but to lay the foundations for long-term organizational capacity.

Second, the mechanisms we document may help illuminate contemporary patterns of youth-oriented political mobilization. In recent years, far-right and populist parties across advanced democracies have increasingly invested in youth outreach—through student chapters, online platforms, and tailored ideological content aimed at younger voters. While institutional and temporal context differ from what we study, the underlying logic appears consistent: by embedding themselves in educational and associational spaces, outsider movements seek to cultivate long-term loyalty, recruit future political elites, and shift the ideological landscape over time. These efforts are further amplified by social media, which lowers the cost of organizing and allows youth-oriented messaging to scale rapidly. Our findings provide empirical grounding for understanding these strategies not as isolated campaign tactics, but as part of a broader political logic in which youth mobilization—when coupled with institutional footholds—can play a central role in building durable political influence. It is therefore important to investigate this issue further, for example, by exploring whether similar dynamics are emerging in contemporary democracies—particularly whether youth organizations, amplified by social media, are helping far-right and populist parties consolidate support among younger generations and build pathways to power.

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A Appendix - Individual Level Evidence

We employ a difference-in-differences specification exploiting the fact that Islamic schools only operate at the secondary level and birth-cohort variation in access to Islamic schools using several waves of World Values Survey. Students in Türkiye were attending secondary education between the ages of 11 and 18, and secondary education was not compulsory during our analysis period. Therefore, we assume that men born in 1961 or later were exposed to the increased presence of Islamic schooling in secondary education. On the other hand, female students achieved their legal rights to register in Islamic schools starting from the 1977 school year, so we consider that women born in 1965 or later were exposed. These younger cohorts of men and women who attended secondary education constitute our treatment group. Our simplest specification takes the form:

$$y_{cg} = \alpha + \beta T_{cg} + g_c + c_c + \epsilon_{cg}, \tag{6}$$

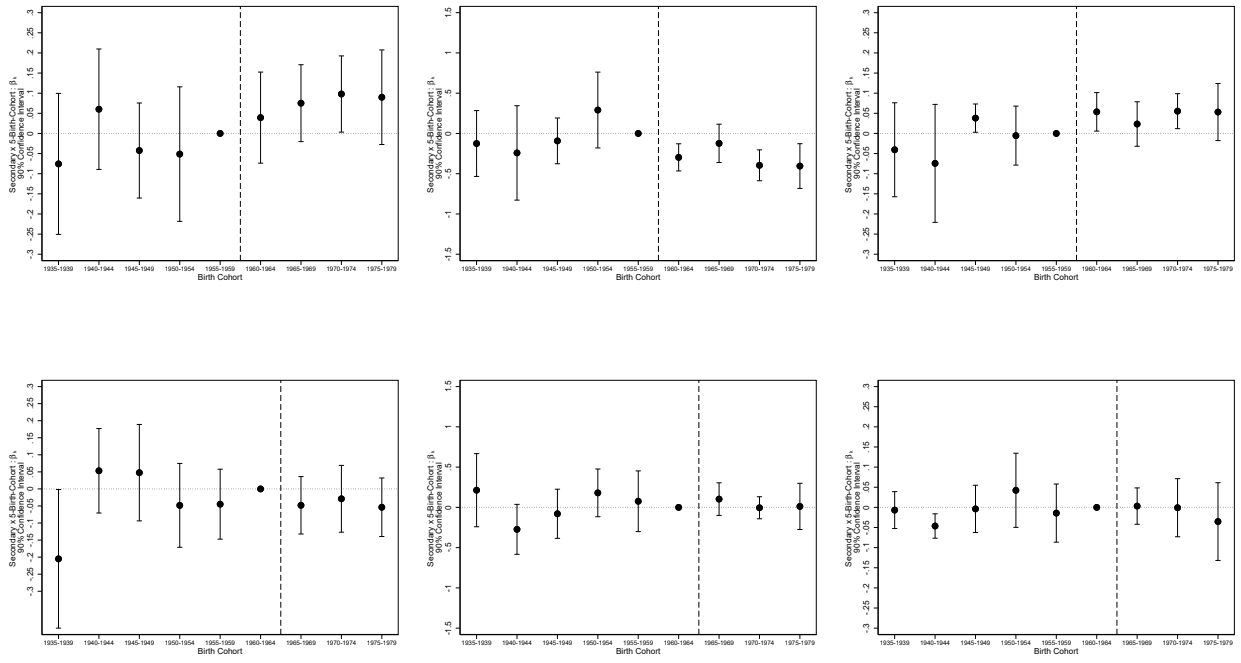
where c indexes birth cohorts, and g indexes an individual's group that is secondary education attendance. The dependent variables consist of binary indicators for Islamist party membership and self-reported religiosity, along with a standardized measure of Welzel's Secular Values Index. T is an indicator for individuals who attended secondary education and came secondary schooling age after access to Islamic schools.[21] Unfortunately, we do not observe the type of school individuals attended. g_c and c_c are group and birth cohort fixed effects. Since we observe birth cohorts repeatedly at different ages across survey years, we include age and survey fixed effects. Our preferred specification also includes individual controls such as income group and region dummies. The coefficient of interest is β, the differential change of outcomes of interest on exposed younger cohorts that attended secondary education. The validity of the difference-in-differences approach relies on two assumptions. First, outcomes of secondary and non-secondary groups would have been following common trends in the absence of increased presence of Islamic schooling in secondary education. Second, there should not be any time-variant shocks or confounding factors that differentially affect individuals with and without secondary education and coincide with the access to Islamic schooling.

Next, we estimate a dynamic difference-in-differences specification that allows the effects of having access to Islamic schools to vary flexibly and across cohorts. To do this, we replace the single dummy indicating affected birth cohorts with 5-birth-cohort indicators. Everything else remains the same as in equation 6. The reference category corresponds to individuals born between 1955-1959 (1960-1964) for men (women). Appendix figure A.1

[21] Note that while first affected birth cohort is 1962 for men, it is 1965 for women.

shows that the difference in relevant outcomes between individuals with and without secondary education remains similar to the reference category and follows common trends for both genders before Islamic school access. However, the trend in Islamist party membership changes in a positive direction starting from the first affected male cohorts and remains consistently negative. There does not exist a similar pattern for women, as estimated coefficients remained about 0 for affected female cohorts.

Figure A.1: Analysis of Mechanisms - Dynamic Difference-in-differences



Notes: The figure plots coefficient estimates and 90% confidence intervals from the interaction between secondary-educated group and an indicator for 5-birth-cohorts. The regression controls for birth cohort and group fixed effects, as well as for wave, age, income-group and region dummies. The sample only consists of Muslims. The Welzel's Secular Values Index outcome is standardized, and the estimated effects can be interpreted in terms of standard deviations. The data are from the World Values Survey.

We also estimate a triple differences specification to formally compare the differential changes in related outcomes of affected cohorts by gender. To do it, we interact every term in equation 6 with a gender indicator. We exclude cohorts born between 1962 and 1964 since only men had access to Islamic schools for these cohorts. Triple difference specification relaxes the previously mentioned second assumption of difference-in-differences by assuming that the possible bias due to time-varying shocks or confounding factors that might affect secondary and non-secondary educated groups differentially would be similar for both genders.

Appendix Table A.1 reports the double and triple interaction coefficients for related outcomes. The triple differences estimate in Table A.1 reveal that the gender differences

in self-reported Islamist party membership also increased in favor of men. Overall, our results suggest that the establishment of an Islamic school increased Islamist political activism led by men at the district-center level in the short run and further enabled affected male cohorts to work for Islamist politics later in their life.

Next, we conduct a similar analysis for ideology-related outcomes. Dynamic difference-in-differences specification in Appendix Figure A.1 further shows that the difference in relevant outcomes between individuals with and without secondary education remains similar to the reference category and follows common trends for both genders before Islamic school access. However, the trend in secular values sharply changes in a negative direction starting from the first affected male cohorts and remains consistently negative. There does not exist a similar pattern for women, as estimated coefficients remained about 0 for affected female cohorts.

Last, Appendix Table A.1 reports the double and triple interaction coefficients from a triple differences specification for related outcomes on ideological change. Columns 1-2 of Appendix Table A.1 show that affected male cohorts are less likely to report secular values by about one-fifth of a standard deviation and more likely to self-identify as religious by about one-fourth of a standard deviation compared to affected female cohorts. While we cannot precisely test how much of the effect of Islamic schools on electoral outcomes is due to ideological change, we show that male cohorts who participated in secondary education during the increased presence of Islamic schooling had weaker secular values. In contrast, affected female cohorts had their secular values remained unchanged, and as a result, the gender gap in secular values had enlarged. Overall, these results align with our hypothesis on the gendered impacts of the Islamic school expansion of 1970s Türkiye on ideological change.

Table A.1: Analysis of Mechanisms - Triple Differences

Dependent Variable:	Religious Person (1)	Welzel's Secular Values Index (2)	Member of Islamist Party (3)
Secondary x Born after 1965	-0.002	-0.035	-0.005
	(0.039)	(0.068)	(0.012)
Secondary x Born after 1965 x Male	0.100	-0.207**	0.051*
	(0.060)	(0.063)	(0.024)
Outcome Mean (1)&(3) or Std.(2):	0.804	0.227	0.037
R^2	0.116	0.154	0.117
N	4527	4633	2774
Wild-clustered Bootstrap (p-value)	0.13	0.02	0.06
Birth-Year FE	✓	✓	✓
Group FE	✓	✓	✓
Wave FE	✓	✓	✓
Age FE	✓	✓	✓
Individual Controls	✓	✓	✓

Notes: This table presents double and triple interactions from a triple difference specification derived from 6. The regression controls for birth cohort and group fixed effects, as well as for wave, age, income-group and region dummies interacted with gender indicators. The sample only consists of Muslims. Cohorts born between 1962 and 1964 are excluded since only men had access to Islamic schools for these cohorts. The Welzel's Secular Values Index outcome is standardized, and the estimated effects can be interpreted in terms of standard deviations. The data are from the World Values Survey.
*p<0.1, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01. Robust standard errors clustered by region.

B Appendix - Geographic Sorting Analysis

For this exercise, we use the 1990 5% sample obtained from the Turkish Statistical Institute. This sample provides information about a respondent's current locality of residence as well as the locality of residence five years prior to the census. This allows me to identify individuals who migrated from (to) each district center. Then, we test for differences in observable attributes of those mobile individuals relative to those of stayers. Specifically, we estimate the following regression:

$$Attributes_{idp} = \gamma_1 Out(in) - migrant_i + \gamma_2 Islamic_{ipd} + \gamma_3 Out(in) - migrant_i \times Islamic_{ipd}^{1985} + \gamma_4 (X^{1985} d0) + \delta_p^{1985} + \epsilon_{idp}, \tag{7}$$

where $Attributes_{idp}$ corresponds to various observable characteristics of individual i from district center d in province p and $Out(In) - Migrant_i$ is an indicator variable for whether the individual migrated out of (into) a district center. X_{ipd}^{1985} corresponds to the pretreatment controls for the district center where the individual resided in 1985, while δ_p^{1985} corresponds to fixed effects for the district center of residence in 1985. The coefficient of interest here is w, which captures potential differences between those who migrated out of (into) and those who remained in treated district centers relative to the corresponding differences for comparison district centers.

Table B.1: Geographic Sorting

Panel A. Out-Migrants vs. Stayers

Dependent Variable:	Age	Female	≥ Jun. High Degree	Any Degree	Literate	Worked Last Week	Rent
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Islamic x Out-Migrant Status	-0.212	0.006	-0.003	-0.002	-0.003	0.005	-0.008
	(0.405)	(0.004)	(0.018)	(0.010)	(0.007)	(0.009)	(0.035)
R^2	0.021	0.001	0.032	0.046	0.054	0.011	0.061
N	859507	860238	859727	859727	860100	725221	794011
Clusters	813	813	813	813	813	813	813
Province FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Baseline Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Panel B. In-Migrants vs. Stayers

Dependent Variable:	Age	Female	≥ Jun. High Degree	Any Degree	Literate	Worked Last Week	Rent
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
In-Migrant Status	-0.492*	0.002	-0.018	-0.013	-0.015*	-0.002	0.013
	(0.265)	(0.007)	(0.017)	(0.010)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.021)
R^2	0.019	0.001	0.030	0.043	0.049	0.011	0.071
N	862251	862976	862486	862486	862865	727601	795308
Clusters	813	813	813	813	813	813	813
Province FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Baseline Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes: This table reports estimates of equation (7). Islamic refers to district centers with an Islamic school in 1980, excluding district centers with an Islamic school prior to 1974. $Out(In) - Migrant_i$ is an indicator variable for whether the individual out(in)-migrated from(to) a district center. X_{ipd}^{1985} corresponds to the baseline controls for the district center where the individual resided in 1985, while δ_p^{1985} corresponds to fixed effects for the district center of residence in 1985.
*p<0.1, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01. Robust standard errors clustered by district center of residence.

C Appendix - Treatment Effect Heterogeneity by Prevalence of Islamic Schools

To analyze treatment effect heterogeneity by the prevalence of Islamic schools, we collect data on the number of secular high schools as of 1972. Using this, we construct an prevalence variable that captures the share of Islamic schools among all high schools in each district center. We then estimate the following specification to examine how the treatment effect varies across districts with different levels of Islamic school prevalence:

$$\begin{aligned} y_{pdt} = \beta\, Islamic_{pd} \times Post_t + \alpha\, Islamic_{pd} \times Post_t \times Islamic\ Prevalence_d \\ + \zeta\, Islamic\ Prevalence_d \times \theta_t + X_{d0}\theta_t + \eta_{pt} + \gamma_d + \delta_t + \epsilon_{pdt} \end{aligned} \tag{8}$$

where $Islamic\ Prevalence_d$ measures the prevalence of Islamic high schools, calculated as the number of Islamic high schools divided by the sum of secular high schools (as of 1972) and Islamic high schools in district center d. The remainder of the specification follows equation 2.

Column (1) of Appendix Table C.1 presents evidence that the political impact of Islamic school access is significantly amplified in areas where Islamic high schools comprised a larger share of the local secondary school system. The coefficient on the interaction between treatment and Islamic school prevalence is positive and statistically significant, suggesting that Islamist party vote share increased more in treated districts with limited exposure to secular schools. This pattern implies that the ideological influence of Islamic school access was stronger where competing secular institutions were less prevalent and treatment intensity were higher at the high school level.

Table C.1: Heterogeneous Effect by Islamic High School Intensity

	Outcome: [...] Vote Share			
	Islamist Party (1)	Conservative (2)	Secularist (3)	Turnout (4)
Islamic x Post	0.77	1.20	-3.01**	0.82
	(0.81)	(1.40)	(1.22)	(0.82)
Islamic x Post x Islamic Prevalence	2.97**	-2.55	2.28	-0.33
	(1.30)	(1.80)	(1.60)	(1.17)
Outcome mean:	11.32	55.08	30.12	76.61
R^2	0.871	0.777	0.820	0.876
N	4065	4065	4065	4065
Clusters	813	813	813	813
District FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Province-by-Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Development and Demography	✓	✓	✓	✓
1973 Electoral	✓	✓	✓	✓
Religion and Politics	✓	✓	✓	✓
Geography	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sample:	Full	Full	Full	Full

Notes: This table reports estimates β and α in equation (8) for electoral outcomes. Islamic refers to district centers with an Islamic school in 1980, excluding district centers with an Islamic school prior to 1973. Post is a dummy that takes value 1 for elections held in 1987 or later and value 0 for previous elections. measures the prevalence of Islamic high schools, calculated as the number of Islamic high schools divided by the sum of secular high schools (as of 1972) and Islamic high schools in district center d. The 1977 election is excluded from the main specification. All columns include pre-treatment district characteristics as controls, as listed in Table 1, interacted with election-year dummies.
*p<0.1, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01. Robust standard errors clustered at the district center level.

D Appendix - Additional Results

Figure D.1: Curriculum of Islamic Schools in 1975

Islamic Junior High Schools	
Common Courses	Cumulative (h)
Turkish	15
Maths	12
Social Studies	10
Science	9
Foreing Language	9
Arts	3
Music	3
Physical Education	3
Morals	3
Total (h)	**67 (72%)**

Islamic High Schools	
Common Courses	Cumulative (h)
Turkish Language and Literature	15
History	6
Art History	1
Geography	6
Maths	10
Physics	7
Chemistry	5
Biology	5
Psychology	2
Philosophy	6
Morals	2
Foreign Language	12
Physcial Education	3
National Security	3
Total (h)	**83 (60%)**

Religion Courses	Cumulative (h)
Quran	9
Arabic	9
Religion Studies	8
Total (h)	**26 (28%)**

Religion Courses	Cumulative (h)
Quran	16
Arabic	14
Doctrines	2
Islamic Theology	2
Religious Studies	6
Islamic Jurisprudence	2
Quranic Exegesis	6
Prophetic Tradition	6
Life of Prophet	1
Public Speaking	2
Total (h)	**57 (40%)**

Source: Öcal (1999).

Figure D.2: Curriculum of Secular Schools in 1975

Secular Junior High Schools	
Common Courses	Cumulative (h)
Turkish	15
Maths	12
Social Studies	10
Science	9
Foreing Language	9
Arts	3
Music	3
Physical Education	3
Morals	3
Total (h)	**67 (72% w/max elec.)**
Elective Courses	Cumulative (h)
Technical or Arts Electives	12-24
Religion Studies	2
Total (h)	**14-26 (28% w/max elec.)**

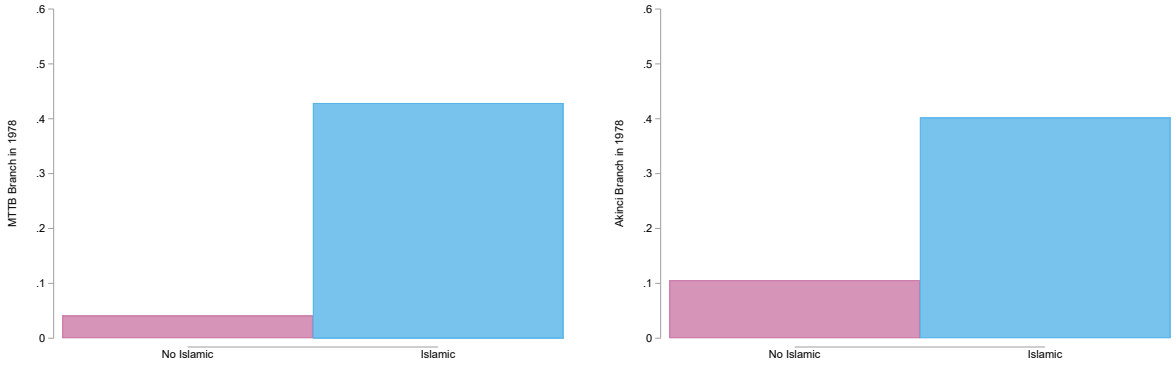
Secular Academic High Schools (Literature Track)	
Common Courses	Cumulative (h)
Turkish Language and Literature	16
History	6
Art History	2
Geography	5
Maths	11
Physics	6
Chemistry	4
Biology	5
Psychology	2
Philosophy	6
Morals	2
Foreign Language	12
Physcial Education	3
National Security	2
Total (h)	**82 (92%)**
Elective Courses	Cumulative (h)
Technical or Arts Electives	5
Religion Studies	2
Total (h)	**7 (8%)**

Source: MEB (1974).

Figure D.3: Locations of Islamic Schools

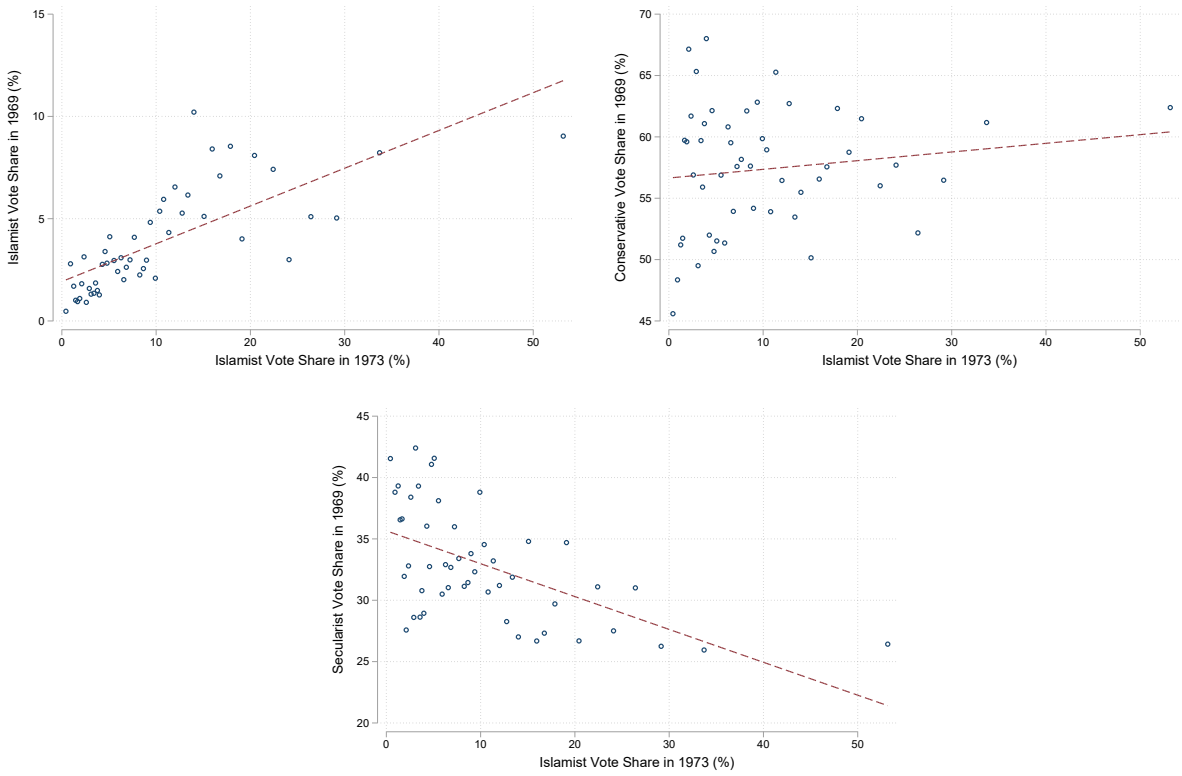
Notes: Map of Türkiye showing the geographic locations of Islamic schools in 1980. Each dot represents a district center as of 1990.

Figure D.4: Islamic schools and Islamist youth organisations



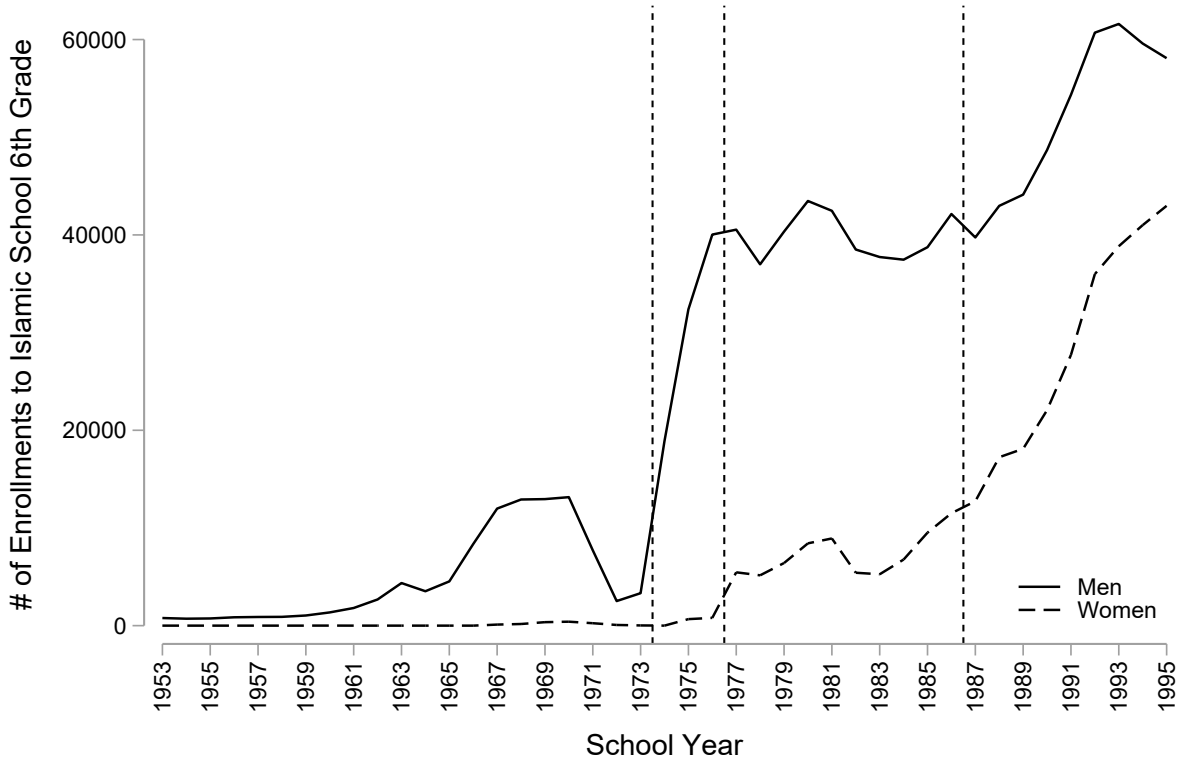
Notes: The figure plots share of MTTB and Akinji local branch presence as of 1978 for district centers with and without an Islamic school.

Figure D.5: Relation between 1969 and 1973 Electoral Outcomes



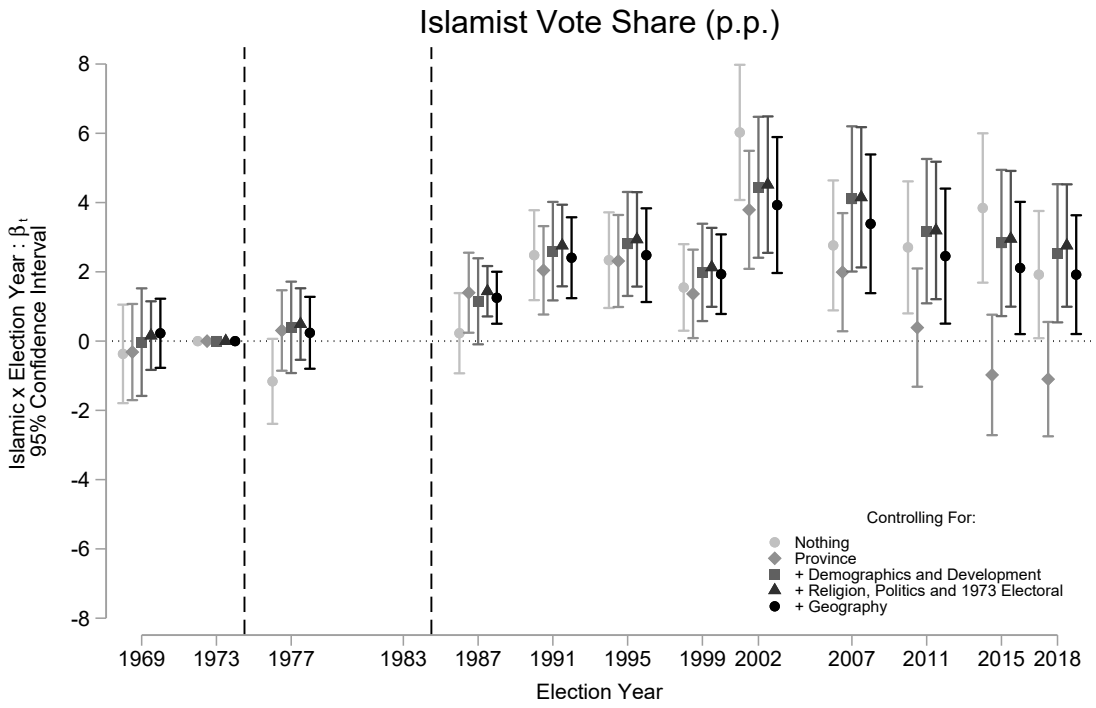
Notes: This figure shows the bivariate relationship between selected electoral outcomes of the 1969 and 1973 elections.

Figure D.6: Enrollments to Islamic School 6th Grade by Gender



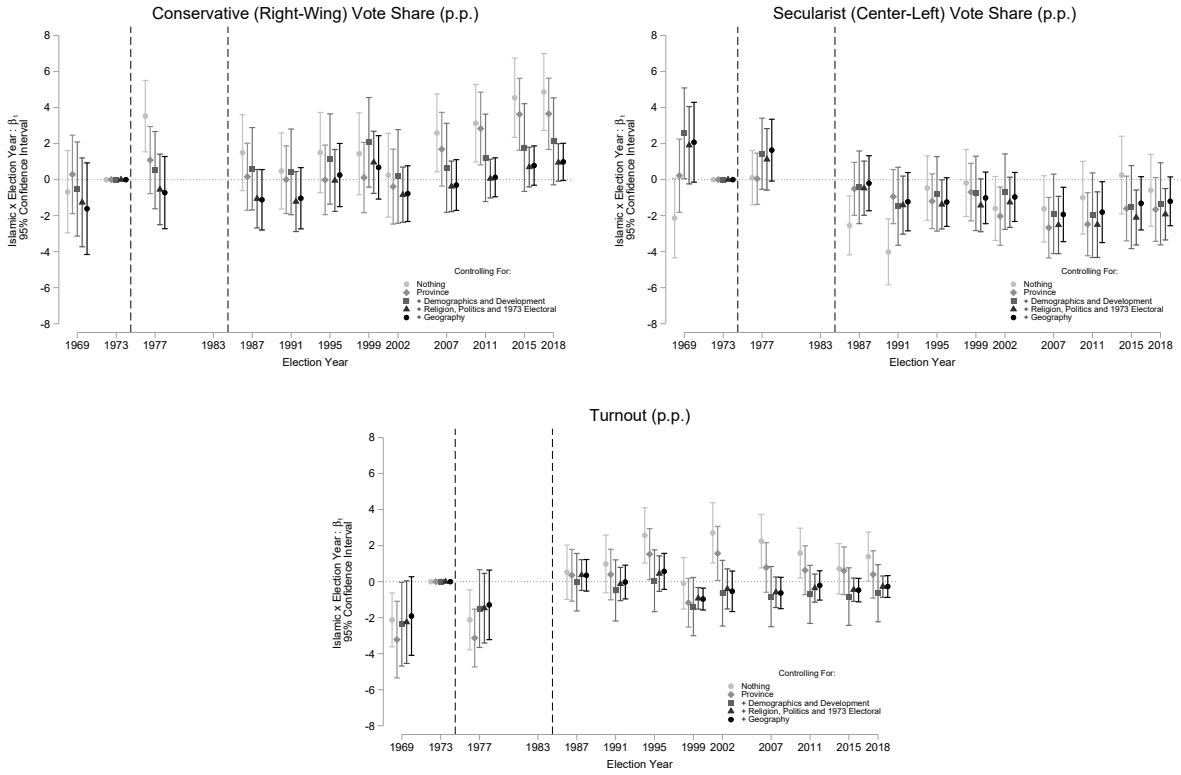
Notes: This figure shows the evolution of Islamic school 6th grade enrollment rates in a given school year by gender.

Figure D.7: Islamic Schools and Elections – Islamist Party Support in the Long Term



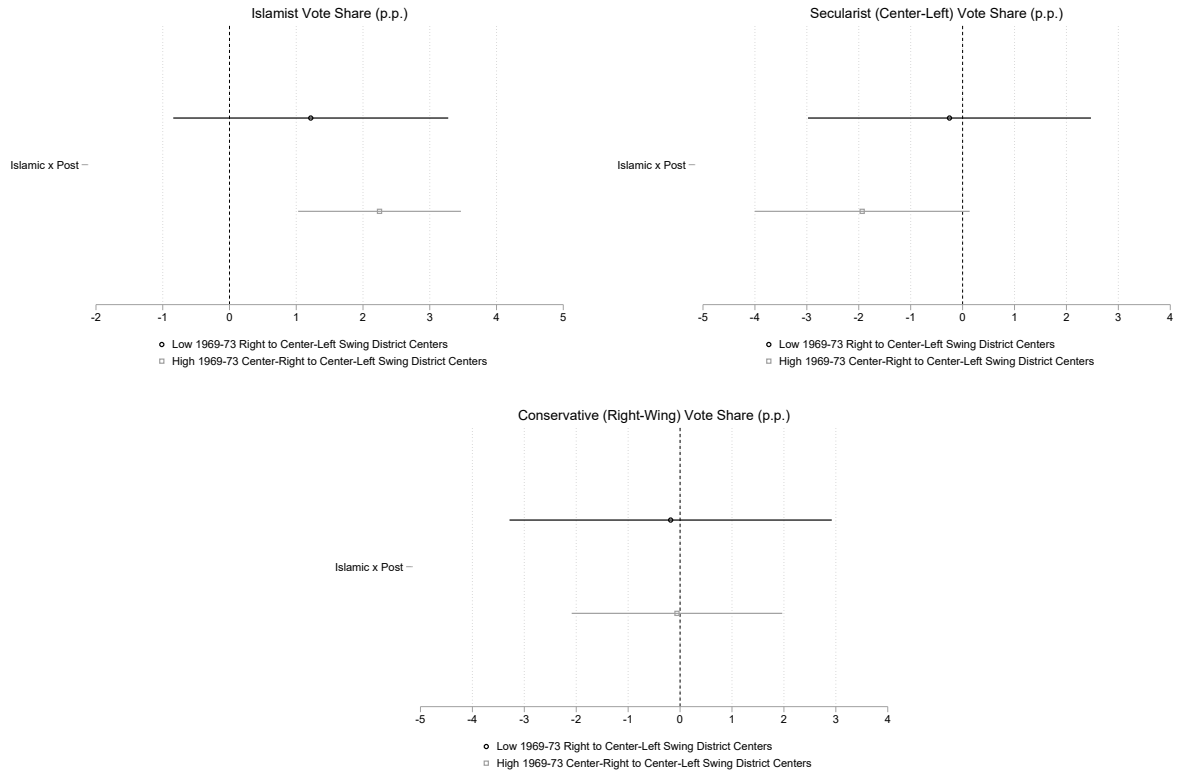
Notes: This figure reports election-year-specific estimates of β_t in equation 3 on a balanced district-center–year panel.$Islamic_d$ is a dummy indicating Islamic school availability in district center d in 1980, excluding district centers with an Islamic school prior to 1973. The 1973 election was the last just prior to Islamic school expansion and serves as the reference election. The elections in 1987 is the first in which exposed cohorts would have been eligible to vote. All specifications includes district center fixed effects and election-year fixed effects. In some specifications, we sequentially include province-by-election-year fixed effects and a full set of pretreatment observable characteristics of district centers interacted with election-year dummies. Standard errors clustered at the district center level.

Figure D.8: Islamic Schools and Elections – Other Outcomes in the Longer Term



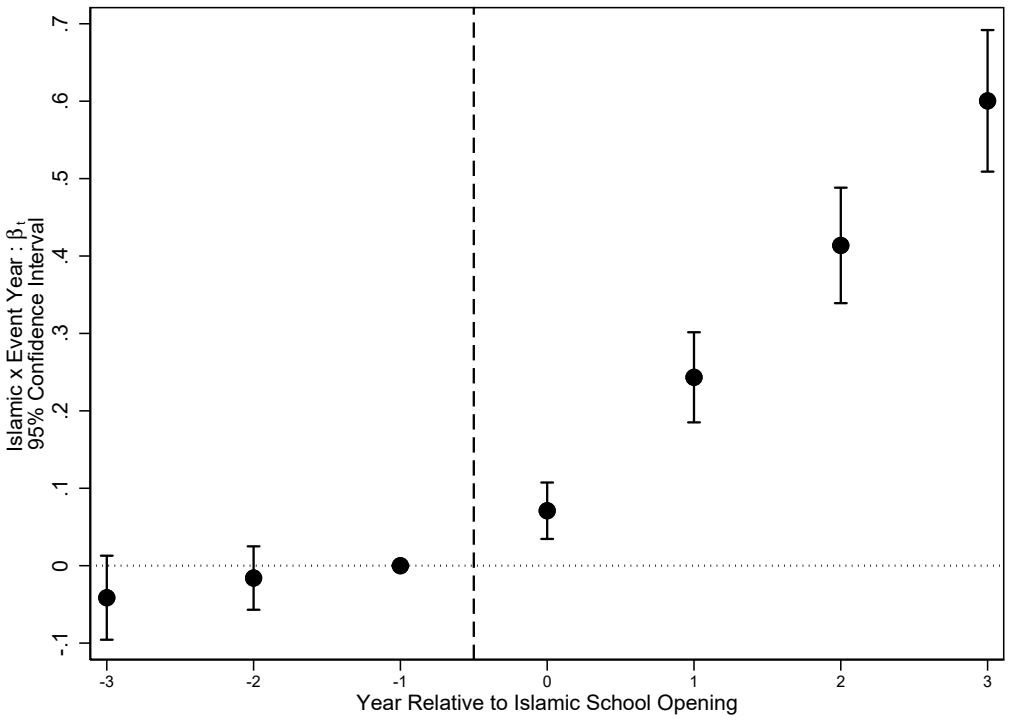
Notes: This figure reports election-year-specific estimates of β_t in equation 3 on a balanced district-center–year panel.$Islamic_d$ is a dummy indicating Islamic school availability in district center d in 1980, excluding district centers with an Islamic school prior to 1973. The 1973 election was the last just prior to Islamic school expansion and serves as the reference election. The elections in 1987 is the first in which exposed cohorts would have been eligible to vote. All specifications includes district center fixed effects and election-year fixed effects. In some specifications, we sequentially include province-by-election-year fixed effects and a full set of pretreatment observable characteristics of district centers interacted with election-year dummies. Standard errors clustered at the district center level.

Figure D.9: Islamic Schools and Elections – Evidence from Swing District Centers, 1969–1973



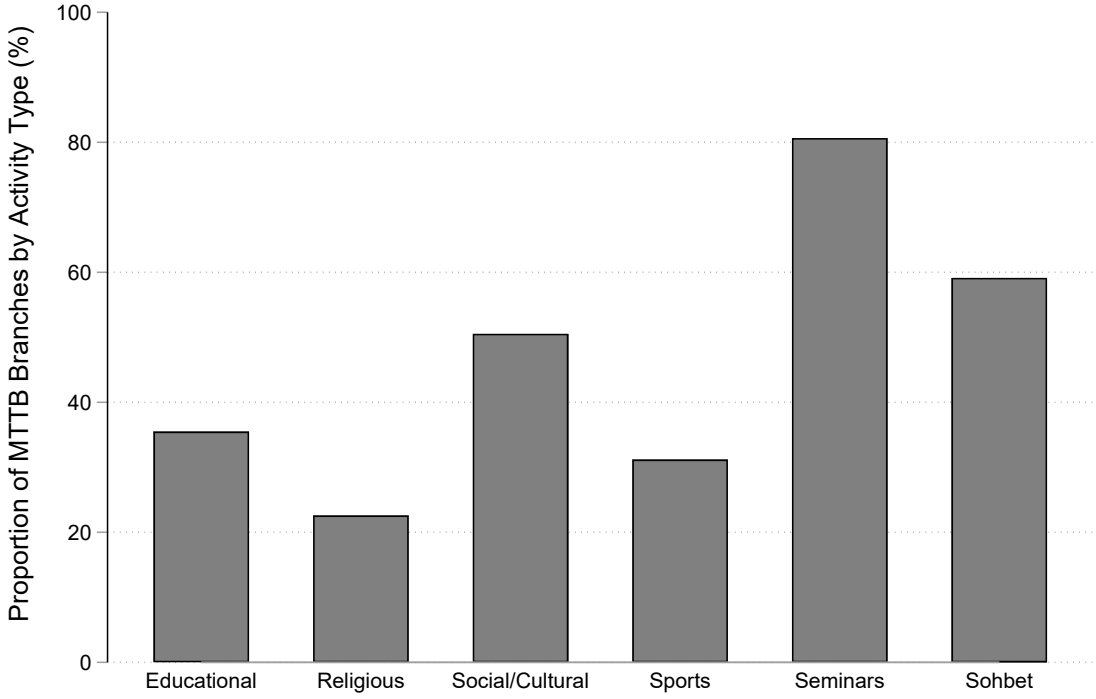
Notes: This figure presents the estimates of β in equation 2 with 95% confidence intervals, separately for high and low swing subsamples. High and low swing subsamples are defined based on the district-level shift in vote shares between the 1969 and 1973 general elections. Specifically, we construct a swing measure capturing the extent to which support for the conservative right bloc declined while support for the secularist center-left increased. Districts above the median of this measure are classified as high-swing (stronger right-to-left shift), and those below as low-swing. See Table 2 for details related to specification.

Figure D.10: Islamic Schools and MTTB openings



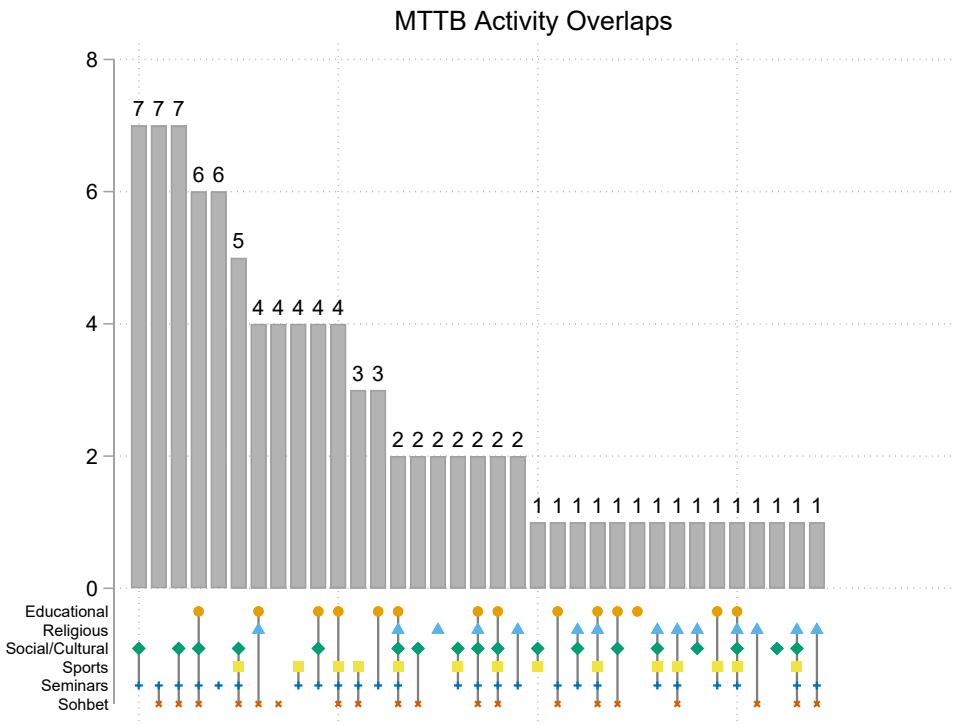
Notes: This figure reports estimates of event-study specification in equation 1 using TWFE estimator. Endpoints are binned. The omitted category is t=-1.

Figure D.11: MTTB Activity Summary: Proportions



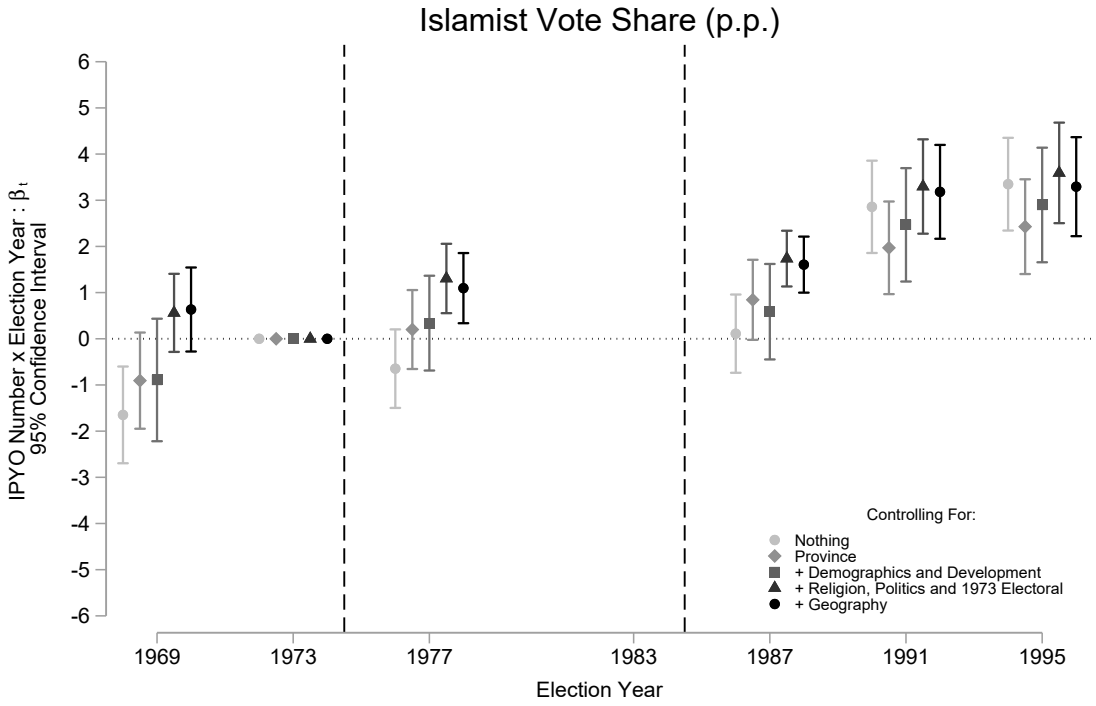
Notes: This figure plots the proportion of MTTB local branches that engaged in each activity type. The analysis is limited to 93 branches for which activity information is available, as 57 local branches did not specify any activities. Source: MTTB (1980).

Figure D.12: MTTB Activity Summary: Overlaps



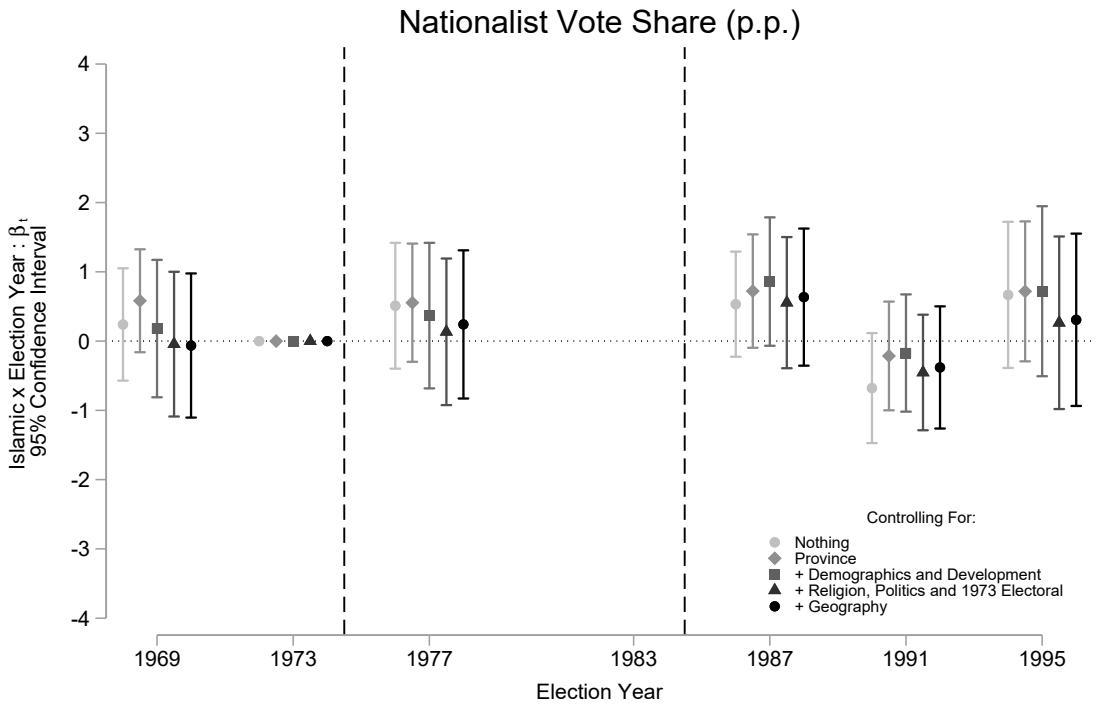
Notes: This figure visualizes the overlap in activity types across MTTB local branches. Each vertical bar represents the number of branches that engaged in a specific combination of activities, indicated by the filled dots below the bar. The analysis is limited to 93 branches for which activity information is available, as 57 local branches did not specify any activities. Source: MTTB (1980).

Figure D.13: IPYOs and the Support for Islamists



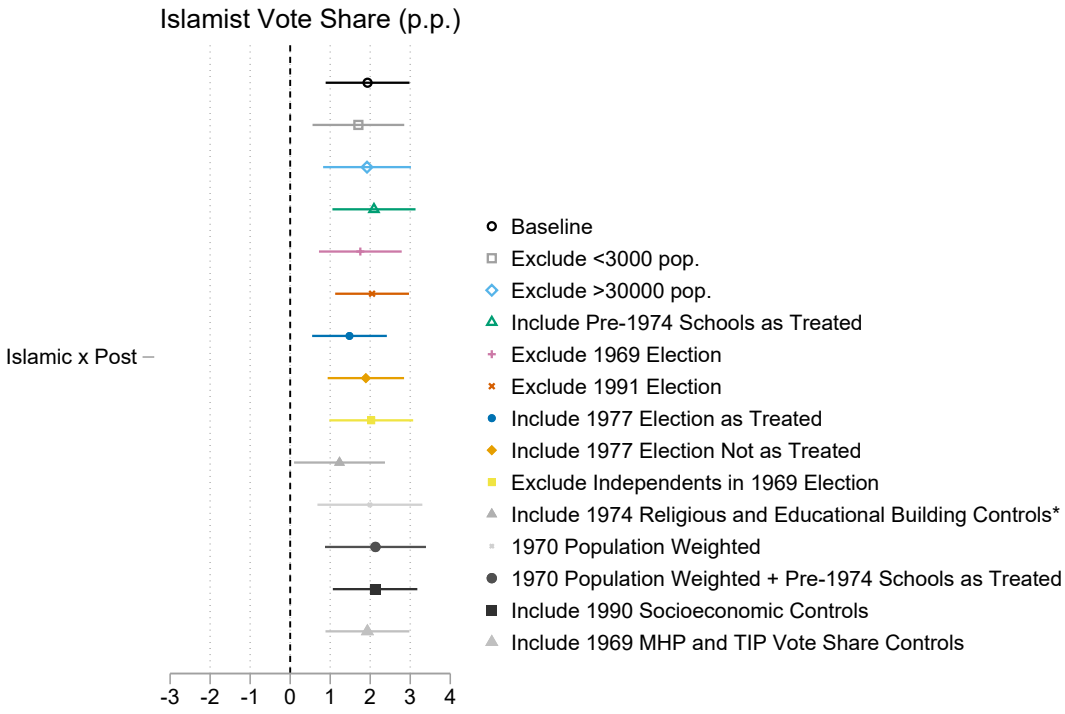
Notes: This table presents estimates of a modified version of specification in 3 where we replace our treatment variable *Islamic* dummy with *IPYO Number*. *IPYO Number* refers to he number of MTTB and Akinji local branches in a given district center in 1978, excluding district centers with an Islamic school prior to 1973. The 1973 election was the last just prior to Islamic school and IPYO expansion and serves as the reference election. All specifications includes district center fixed effects and election-year fixed effects. In some specifications, we sequentially include province-by-election-year fixed effects and a full set of pretreatment observable characteristics of district centers listed in Table 1 interacted with election-year dummies. Robust standard errors clustered at the district center level.

Figure D.14: Islamic Schools and Elections – Nationalist Party Support



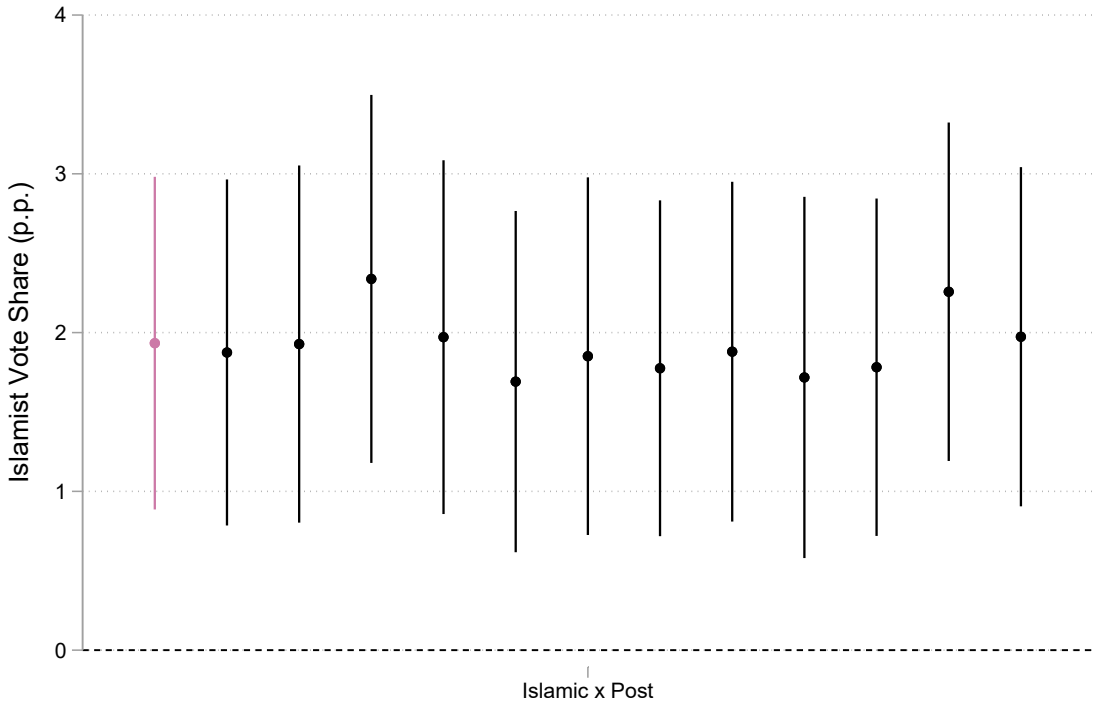
Notes: This figure reports election-year-specific estimates of β_t in equation 3 on a balanced district-center–year panel for nationalist party support. $Islamic_d$ is a dummy indicating Islamic school availability in district center d in 1980, excluding district centers with an Islamic school prior to 1973. The 1973 election was the last just prior to Islamic school expansion and serves as the reference election. The elections in 1987 is the first in which exposed cohorts would have been eligible to vote. All specifications includes district center fixed effects and election-year fixed effects. In some specifications, we sequentially include province-by-election-year fixed effects and a full set of pretreatment observable characteristics of district centers interacted with election-year dummies. Standard errors clustered at the district center level.

Figure D.15: Other Robustness Checks



Notes: This figure presents the estimates of β in equation 2 from several robustness checks for Islamist party vote share. See Table 2 for details related to specification.
* This specification misses about 250 district centers with no information on religious and educational buildings in 1974.

Figure D.16: Leave One Region Out at a Time



Notes: This figure presents the estimates of β in equation 2 leaving one NUTS1 region out at a time. See Table 2 for details related to specification.

Table D.1: Construction of Party Classifications

Year	Political Parties	Classification
1969	Republican People's Party, Unity Party	Center-left Secularists
1969	Nation Party, Independents in provinces with Milli Gorus candidates	Islamist
1969	Republican Reliance Party, Justice Party, Republican Reliance Party, Nationalist Movement Party, New Türkiye Party	Center-right Conservatives
1973	Republican People's Party, Unity Party	Center-left Secularists
1973	National Salvation Party, Nation Party	Islamist
1973	Justice Party, Democratic Party, Republican Reliance Party, Nationalist Movement Party	Center-right Conservatives
1977	Republican People's Party, Unity Party	Center-left Secularists
1977	National Salvation Party, Nation Party	Islamist
1977	Justice Party, Democratic Party, Republican Reliance Party, Nationalist Movement Party	Center-right Conservatives
1987	Social Democratic Populist Party, Democratic Left Party	Center-left Secularists
1987	Welfare Party	Islamist
1987	Motherland Party, True Path Party, Nationalist Worker's Party, Reformist Democracy Party	Center-right Conservatives
1991	Social Democratic Populist Party, Democratic Left Party	Center-left Secularists
1991	Welfare Party	Islamist
1991	Motherland Party, True Path Party	Center-right Conservatives
1995	Republican People's Party, Democratic Left Party	Center-left Secularists
1995	Welfare Party	Islamist
1995	Motherland Party, True Path Party, Nationalist Movement Party, Rebirth Party, New Party	Center-right Conservatives

Notes: This table presents the construction of ideological classifications of political parties used in the main analysis over a period between 1969 and 1995.

Table D.2: Balance Table (Matched Sample)

	Comparison	Treated	Test [treated = comparison]	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Fixed effects:				Province
Demography and Development				
log distance nearest historical trade node	4.007	3.965	-0.042	0.068
	(1.069)	(0.887)	(0.109)	(0.087)
log distance nearest historical trade route	3.259	3.152	-0.108	-0.015
	(1.347)	(1.400)	(0.147)	(0.126)
log population 1970	8.859	9.054	0.195**	0.283***
	(0.929)	(0.822)	(0.097)	(0.083)
log market access 1970	-1.032	-0.923	0.110	-0.083
	(2.637)	(2.116)	(0.267)	(0.202)
log distance railroads 1973	2.815	2.847	0.031	0.067
	(2.011)	(1.936)	(0.214)	(0.212)
1973 Elections				
Islamic vote share 1973	9.669	10.284	0.616	0.780
	(9.113)	(7.849)	(0.940)	(0.882)
Secular vote share 1973	34.839	35.654	0.815	1.811
	(15.406)	(14.483)	(1.628)	(1.650)
Conservative vote share 1973	50.979	51.002	0.023	-2.811*
	(15.934)	(15.181)	(1.690)	(1.592)
Turnout share 1973	64.074	63.564	-0.510	-0.032
	(9.530)	(8.744)	(1.000)	(0.988)
Religion and Politics				
People's Houses 1945	0.452	0.548	0.095*	0.194***
	(0.500)	(0.499)	(0.054)	(0.059)
Turkish Hearts 1931	0.262	0.346	0.084*	0.058
	(0.441)	(0.476)	(0.049)	(0.050)
log distance to Ankara	5.954	5.846	-0.108*	-0.014
	(0.634)	(0.542)	(0.065)	(0.021)
log distance to Istanbul	6.115	5.972	-0.143	0.024
	(1.060)	(0.948)	(0.110)	(0.026)
Ataturk visited	0.135	0.180	0.045	0.058
	(0.343)	(0.385)	(0.038)	(0.044)
Inonu visited	0.254	0.290	0.036	0.053
	(0.437)	(0.455)	(0.048)	(0.054)
Historic religious sites per 1,000 pop. (5 km)	0.299	0.313	0.014	0.031
	(0.617)	(0.699)	(0.069)	(0.076)

Continued on next page

	Comparison	Treated	Test [treated = comparison]	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Historic religious sites per 1,000 pop. (10 km)	0.611	0.578	-0.032	-0.028
	(1.346)	(1.581)	(0.153)	(0.147)
Geography				
log distance to coast	3.809	3.773	-0.036	0.266**
	(1.809)	(1.712)	(0.192)	(0.116)
log elevation	6.124	6.139	0.014	0.082
	(1.219)	(1.181)	(0.130)	(0.084)
Ruggedness	119.306	113.949	-5.356	-7.238
	(78.430)	(76.195)	(8.370)	(8.495)
Mean temperature	12.609	12.396	-0.214	-0.078
	(3.598)	(2.931)	(0.366)	(0.202)
Annual precipitation	663.182	658.122	-5.061	-9.624
	(232.872)	(236.203)	(25.190)	(13.029)
Suitability Index for Potato	0.398	0.412	0.014	0.019
	(0.165)	(0.176)	(0.018)	(0.017)
Suitability Index for Maize	0.248	0.268	0.020	0.036**
	(0.179)	(0.187)	(0.020)	(0.018)
Suitability Index for Tobacco	0.236	0.271	0.035*	0.016
	(0.180)	(0.192)	(0.020)	(0.016)
Suitability Index for Barley	0.396	0.424	0.028	0.028*
	(0.179)	(0.206)	(0.020)	(0.016)
Suitability Index for Wheat	0.398	0.423	0.025	0.025*
	(0.161)	(0.185)	(0.018)	(0.015)
Suitability Index for Oat	0.419	0.456	0.037*	0.035*
	(0.191)	(0.224)	(0.022)	(0.018)
Suitability Index for Olive	0.144	0.171	0.027	0.017
	(0.173)	(0.185)	(0.019)	(0.014)
Suitability Index for Cotton	0.198	0.183	-0.015	-0.016
	(0.220)	(0.235)	(0.024)	(0.018)
Observations	126	272		

Table D.3: Access to Islamic Schools and Electoral Outcomes (Matched Sample)

	Outcome: [...] Vote Share					
		Islamist		Conservative	Secularist	Turnout
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Islamic x Post	2.05**	2.07***	2.07***	0.62	-2.51**	0.29
	(0.80)	(0.65)	(0.68)	(1.07)	(1.11)	(0.57)
Outcome mean:	11.39	11.39	11.39	54.61	30.70	76.54
R^2	0.723	0.862	0.907	0.832	0.864	0.960
N	1990	1940	1940	1940	1940	1940
Clusters	398	388	388	388	388	388
District FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year FE	✓					
Province-by-Year FE		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Development and Demography			✓	✓	✓	✓
1973 Electoral			✓	✓	✓	✓
Religion and Politics			✓	✓	✓	✓
Geography			✓	✓	✓	✓
Sample:	Matched	Matched	Matched	Matched	Matched	Matched

Notes: This table reports estimates β in equation (2) for electoral outcomes, using the matched sample described in Section 4. Islamic refers to district centers with an Islamic school in 1980, excluding district centers with an Islamic school prior to 1973. Post is a dummy that takes value 1 for elections held in 1987 or later and value 0 for previous elections. The 1977 election is excluded from the main specification. Columns (3) to (6) include pre-treatment district characteristics, as listed in Table 1, interacted with election-year dummies. *p<0.1, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01. Robust standard errors clustered at the district center level.

Table D.4: Access to Islamic Schools and Electoral Outcomes (Entropy balanced)

	Outcome: [...] Vote Share			
	Islamist	Conservative	Secularist	Turnout
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Islamic x Post	1.60***	0.67	-1.86**	0.10
	(0.53)	(0.80)	(0.77)	(0.46)
R^2	0.904	0.836	0.869	0.949
N	4065	4065	4065	4065
Clusters	813	813	813	813
District FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year FE				
Province-by-Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Development and Demography	✓	✓	✓	✓
1973 Electoral	✓	✓	✓	✓
Religion and Politics	✓	✓	✓	✓
Geography	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sample:	Full	Full	Full	Full

Notes: This table reports estimates β in equation (2) for electoral outcomes using the full sample, after re-weighting the observations using entropy balancing following Hainmueller (2012). Islamic refers to district centers with an Islamic school in 1980, excluding district centers with an Islamic school prior to 1973. Post is a dummy that takes value 1 for elections held in 1987 or later and value 0 for previous elections. The 1977 election is excluded from the main specification. All columns include pre-treatment district characteristics, as listed in Table 1, interacted with election-year dummies. *p<0.1, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01. Robust standard errors clustered at the district center level.

Table D.5: IPYOs and the Support for Islamists

Outcome: Islamist Vote Share	(1)	(2)	(3)
Number of IPYOs x Post	2.38***	2.32***	2.22**
	(0.45)	(0.60)	(1.05)
Outcome Mean:	11.23	11.90	10.98
R^2	0.872	0.924	0.867
N	4065	1440	2555
Clusters	813	288	511
District FE	✓	✓	✓
Province-by-Year FE	✓	✓	✓
Development and Demography	✓	✓	✓
1973 Electoral	✓	✓	✓
Religion and Politics	✓	✓	✓
Geography	✓	✓	✓
Sample:	Full	Treated	Control

Notes: This table presents estimates of a modified version of specification in 2 where we replace our treatment variable *Islamic* dummy with *IPYO Number*. We estimate this modified specification separately for the full sample, as well as for treated and control district centers, defined based on Islamic school access, as reported in columns (1)–(3). *IPYO Number* refers to he number of MTTB and Akinji local branches in a given district center in 1978, excluding district centers with an Islamic school prior to 1973. *Post* is a dummy that takes value 1 for elections held in 1987 or later and value 0 for previous elections. The 1977 election is excluded from the main specification. All columns include pre-treatment district characteristics, as listed in Table 1, interacted with election-year dummies.
*p<0.1, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01. Robust standard errors clustered by district center.

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