

Electoral Consequences of Administrative Reforms: Empirical Evidence from Turkey

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WHY DO WE CARE?
 Administrative reforms have been tentatively linked to democratic backsliding.

IMPORTANCE, RELEVANCE, and APPLICABILITY:

- Especially in developing countries, incumbents usually have a free hand in initiating these reforms
- This is problematic with respect to democratic accountability. At the same time, it can contribute to democratic backsliding.
- Common process observed in both developed and developing countries

RESEARCH QUESTION

- What are the electoral consequences of administrative reforms? Three electoral outcomes are analysed: Contestation, turnout, and incumbent vote share (also the vote share of parties that initiated these reforms)

THEORY
 The creation of districts, turning districts into provinces and creating metropolitan municipalities out of provinces. The changes create or extent the government apparatus, jobs, extended economic activities, and eligibility for investment coordinated through regional official development agencies. If these reforms are down with capabilities in mind, over time they generate a strong perception on the voters which subsequently is used by the incumbent.

HYPOTHESES

H1: Negative effect on contestation
 H2: Positive effect on turnout
 H3: Positive effect on vote share of Right
 H4: Positive effect on AKP vote share

DATA & METHOD

1. District-level election dataset with covariates to cover between 1961-2018. 12,884 district-election years in dataset.
 2. Method: Time-series estimation for short-run effects. Unbalanced panels mean district fixed effects and district-clustered robust standard errors are used to address serial autocorrelation and heteroskedasticity.

Main Argument:

Administrative reform literature focuses on two motivations:
 1) amalgamation of units for efficiency in services
 2) modifications for clientelistic purposes

Focusing on the long history of administrative reform and presence of clientelism (in increasing magnitude) in Turkey, I demonstrate that administrative reforms have an effect on margin of victory, turnout, and vote share of implementing parties. The success seems to stem from the extensive but “controlled” implementation of these reforms (in line with capabilities for expanding clientelistic services) as opposed to failed examples in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Implications:

1) We need to better incorporate reform phenomenon into vote functions in developing countries, and assess it as one more dimension in the expanding realms on authoritarian politics.
 2) The finding on the “controlled” implementation suggests we need to systematically analyse the effect of administrative reforms on democratic backsliding in countries with different levels of democracy.

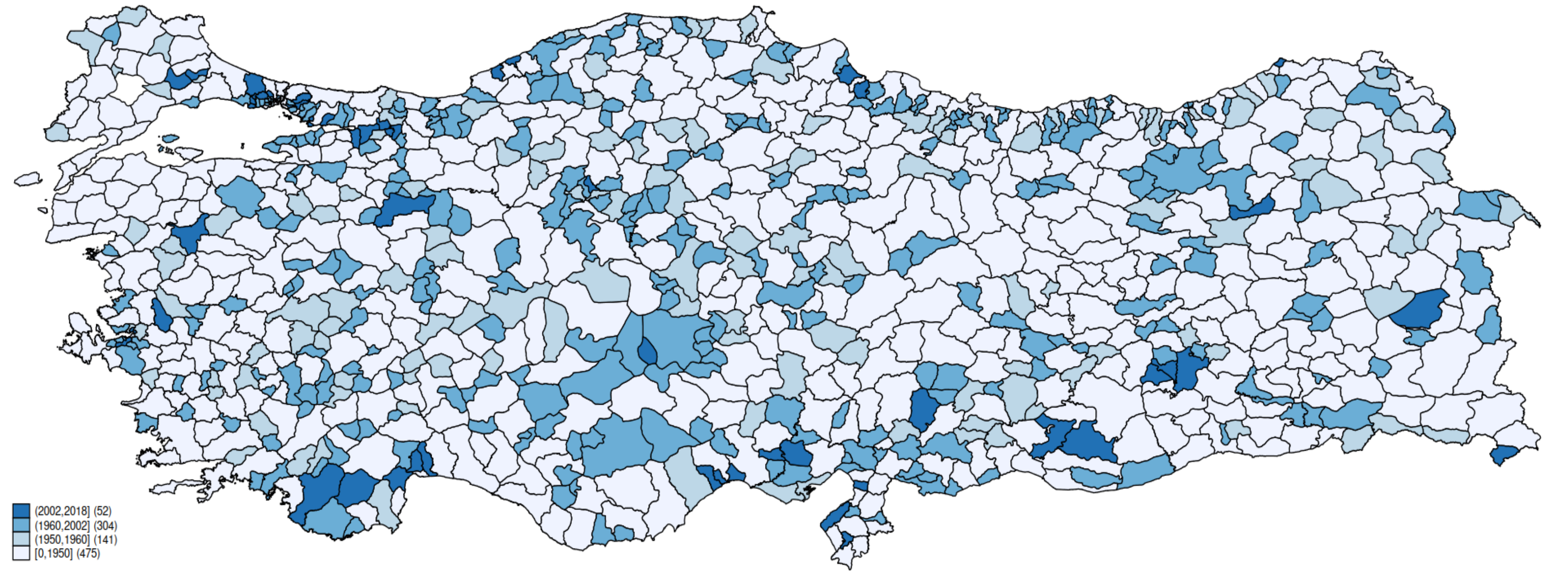


Table 2: Creation of sub-national administrative units in Turkey, 1950–2018

Administrative unit	1950–1960	1961–2002	2002–2018	Totals (2018)
Metropolitan municipality	0	16	14	30
Province	5	19	0	81
District	141	304	52	973

Note: Figures before 1950 are included in the 2018 totals.
 Source: Directorate of Provincial Administration

Table 1: Second-order administrative units for some developing countries

Country	Name of unit	Number of units	Population/unit
Brazil	Municipality	5,568	37,990
Peru	District	1,838	17,928
Philippines	Municipality	1,488	67,863
Turkey	District	973	85,508
India	District	739	1,677,084
Vietnam	District	595	163,594
Argentina	Department	513	88,453
Indonesia	Regency	416	613,413
Kenya	Sub-county	262	181,543
Ghana	District	216	143,856
Cambodia	District	193	86,626
Uganda	County	167	255,862
Pakistan	District	154	1,349,185
Ethiopia	Zone	68	1,606,241
Bangladesh	District	64	2,521,511
South Africa	District	44	1,330,863

Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, CIA World Factbook

Table 3: Metropolitan municipalities created by AKP in 2012

	Population (2012)	Percent of total	Population density (km ²)	Density versus national average
Sanlıurfa	1,762,075	2.33	91.57	Lower
Hatay	1,483,674	1.96	268.58	Higher
Manisa	1,346,162	1.78	100.91	Higher
Balikesir	1,160,731	1.53	79.59	Lower
Kahramanmaraş	1,063,174	1.41	73.22	Lower
Van	1,051,975	1.39	50.28	Lower
Aydın	1,006,541	1.33	124.01	Higher
Denizli	950,557	1.26	78.33	Lower
Tekirdağ	852,321	1.13	137.69	Higher
Muğla	851,145	1.13	67.26	Lower
Mardin	773,026	1.02	88.04	Lower
Malatya	762,366	1.01	62.18	Lower
Trabzon	757,898	1.00	163.76	Higher
Ordu	741,371	0.98	126.49	Higher

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute

Table 5: Administrative Reforms and Contestation, 1961-2018

	Estimates
Lagged margin (t-1)	.314*** (.015)
Transition to Metropolitan Municipality Status	1.57 (.86)
Transition to Province Status	3.87* (1.8)
Transition to District Status	5.91*** (1.79)
ln(District Urban Population)	-4.81*** (.992)
ln(District Rural Population)	-4.33*** (.725)
ln(No Formal Education)	-3.11*** (.637)
ln(University and Higher Education)	4.3*** (.481)
ln(Educational Gender Gap)	2.99*** (.518)
Constant	74.9*** (10.1)
District Fixed Effects	Yes
N	7685
R ²	0.28

*p < 0:05, **p < 0:01, ***p < 0:001

Table 6: Administrative Reforms and Turnout, 1961-2018

	Estimates
Lagged turnout (t-1)	.502*** (.009)
Margin of victory	-.019*** (.005)
Transition to Metropolitan Municipality Status	.85*** (.252)
Transition to Province Status	-.087 (.429)
Transition to District Status	-1.35** (.424)
ln(District Rural Population)	-5.08*** (.506)
ln(District Female Population)	6.2*** (.576)
Constant	31.4*** (3.43)
District Fixed Effects	Yes
N	10209
R ²	0.34

*p < 0:05, **p < 0:01, ***p < 0:001

Table 7: Administrative Reforms and Vote Share, 1961-2018

	Estimates
Lagged Vote Share of Right Parties (t-1)	.22*** (.017)
Transition to Metropolitan Municipality Status	1.79** (.691)
Transition to Province Status	3.58* (1.68)
Transition to District Status	-3.54* (1.7)
ln(Educational Gender Gap)	2.22*** (.299)
ln(District Rural Population)	-2.98*** (.584)
ln(District Male Population)	2.75** (.905)
District Youth Bulge	-42.3*** (6.08)
ln(University and Higher Education)	-5.73*** (.511)
Constant	89.9*** (6.43)
District Fixed Effects	Yes
N	7686
R ²	0.15

*p < 0:05, **p < 0:01, ***p < 0:001

Table 8: Administrative Reforms and Vote Share of AKP, 2002-2018

	Estimates
Lagged AKP Vote Share (t-1)	.491*** (.024)
Transition to Metropolitan Municipality Status	1.49* (.652)
ln(Educational Gender Gap)	-.627 (.474)
ln(District Urban Population)	-.874 (.467)
District Urban Dependency Ratio	-2.75*** (.719)
District Urban Youth Bulge	-4.75* (2.03)
ln(University and Higher Education)	-3.76*** (.384)
Constant	67.2*** (6.91)
District Fixed Effects	Yes
N	4695
R ²	0.31

*p < 0:05, **p < 0:01, ***p < 0:001

↑ Descriptive Observations ↓
↑ Estimation Results ↓