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Building consensus: Shifting strategies in the territorial targeting of Turkey's public transport investment

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Abstract

A growing amount of research explores how the allocation of regional development monies follows electoral reasons. Yet, the existing literature on distributive politics provides different and contrasting expectations on which geographical areas will be targeted. We focus on proportional representation (PR) systems. While in such settings governments have incentives to target core districts and punish foes', we suggest that when incumbents attempt to build a state-party image they may broaden the territorial allocation of benefits and even target opposition out-groups. We exploit data on Turkey's public transport investment for the period 2003-2014 and in-depth interviews to provide results in support of our hypothesis.

Keywords: Public investment; transport infrastructure; distributive politics; politics of development; Turkey.

JEL codes: D72, H70, O18, O43.

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Introduction

The territorial targeting of public resources for strategic electoral reasons has been at the center of significant scholarly work (Golden and Min, 2013). In contrast to conventional regional development approaches, which have frequently seen public interventions as mainly determined by technical socioeconomic considerations, a growing amount of research in economic geography and regional studies has recently explored how the allocation of regional development monies also follows electoral reasons (Aray, 2016; Kitsos & Proestakis, 2018; Lambrinidis, Psycharis, & Rovolis, 2005; Livert & Gainza, 2018; Luca, 2016; Luca & Rodríguez-Pose, 2015; Rodríguez-Pose, Psycharis, & Tselios, 2016).

The existing literature on distributive politics provides numerous predictions on when and why incumbents concentrate their targeting efforts on safe constituencies or on battleground areas (cf. Albertus, 2017; Golden & Min, 2013). Yet, significantly less research has been conducted to explain under what conditions political parties may decide to target constituencies beyond their own strongholds.

The current paper aims to contribute to exploring this question. It focuses on proportional representation (PR) systems, which represent the most common electoral rule in the world (Bormann & Golder, 2013). While usually in such electoral systems governments have incentives to preferentially target core supporting regions and punish foes' (Diaz-Cayeros, Magaloni, & Estévez, 2016; Golden & Picci, 2008), we draw on Cammett (2014) to argue that if the incumbents attempt to build a state-party image they may decide to broaden the territorial targeting of public goods and to even target some of the opposition constituencies.

Turkey is an appropriate case for empirical analysis given its multiparty electoral system, its tradition of discretionary policy allocations, and its government's attempt to build a state-

party image. Besides, the country's public finances are highly centralised. The strong dependence of investments allocation on the central government allows identifying redistribution patterns more easily than in polities where multiple institutional levels are important political arenas and play a role in the geographical targeting of resources.

The research combines Fixed Effect (FE), Tobit, and Instrumental Variable (IV) estimators on a dataset on the allocation of public transportation investment to Turkey's 81 provinces over the period 2003-2014 with 31 in-depth interviews carried out among Turkey's central bureaucracy. The results provide robust evidence about how the growing power by the Turkish government is associated with a shift in the allocation of transport investment from a strategy exclusively aimed at punishing the main secularist opposition and, partly, at cementing core votes in areas with higher 'electoral clout', to one more focused on broadening the incumbent party's electoral base and, likely, displaying its grand vision of Turkey's 'new path'.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: the next section develops the conceptual framework. We subsequently discuss Turkey's institutional environment. The fourth section covers the research design. We then present the results and tests their robustness. The final section eventually leads the discussion to a conclusion.

Building electoral consensus by expanding the territorial distribution of public goods

Over the last two decades, the literature on distributive politics has amassed a growing record of evidence on how politicians use their control over public goods to reinforce their electoral advantage (cf. Albertus, 2017; M. Golden & Min, 2013). Along with *grand* or *programmatic*

forms of redistribution molded by society's beliefs about regional equality and its aversion to territorial imbalances – an issue at the core of local and regional research, a second type of *tactical redistribution* (Dixit & Londregan, 1996) is driven by public actors' political strategies. While geographers were among the first social scientists to explore the topic as early as in the 1970s (cf. Johnston, 1977), the analysis of how public resources are targeted following strategic electoral reasons has recently gained new momentum among regional scholars (Aray, 2016; Kitsos & Proestakis, 2018; Lambrinidis et al., 2005; Livert & Gainza, 2018; Luca, 2016; Luca & Rodríguez-Pose, 2015; Rodríguez-Pose et al., 2016).

A major debate in this literature focuses on whether parties target benefits to “core” as opposed to “swing” districts.¹ The core hypothesis suggests that politicians will likely seek re-election by nurturing their partisan strongholds (Cox & McCubbins, 1986) while, at the same time, not investing in opposition strongholds, which are seen as not worthy (Johnston, 1977). By contrast, the swing hypothesis underlines how politicians preferentially allocate resources to swing or moderate electorates, where the “marginal productivity” of redistribution is higher (cf. Dixit & Londregan, 1996; Lindbeck & Weibull, 1987).

Researchers have linked these different predictions to countries' institutional systems (Milesi-Ferretti, Perotti, & Rostagno, 2002; Rogowski & Kayser, 2002). McGillivray (2004) and Golden and Picci (2008) argue that distributive patterns vary according to two key institutional dimensions: the type of electoral system in place and the strength of political parties over individual politicians. Assuming a strong-party setting (as in Turkey), McGillivray (2004) for example posits that politicians have more incentives to target goods to marginal districts under majoritarian systems, and to party strongholds under proportional representation ones.

The debate between alternative distributive models, however, is not over. In a recent contribution Casas (2018) provocatively claims that, if the ideology of voters is unknown to the incumbent party, political candidates should concentrate their efforts on opposition strongholds rather than on core/swing districts. His argument is that, otherwise, incumbents face the risk of buying the vote of supporters who would have voted for them anyway.

We suggest that each of these alternative predictions may be valid, but contextual to specific circumstances. Different institutional conditions provide different incentives to politicians, which may respond by targeting different quantities/types of goods.

In line with traditional core-voter models, we suggest that if candidates need to build their electoral base, they will focus on favoring their strongholds, at the expenses of the opposition constituencies (Cox & McCubbins, 1986; Golden & Picci, 2008).

Yet, departing away from core-voter models, we contend that when the party base is sufficiently strong, an incumbent aiming to become dominant may then decide to move from a strategy exclusively aimed at winning a core coalition to one also focused on broadening the party appeal. To explain our argument, we draw on the work of Cammett (2014) on the targeting strategies pursued by sectarian groups in Lebanon. As she argues, when groups attempt to widen their power base (through a state-centric strategy), they are more likely to serve members of other communities and “to target more passive supporters and even those with no record of support” for the party (Cammett, 2014, p. 3). This constitutes our first research hypothesis.

Indeed, a ‘proto-dominant party’ (Greene, 2010), i.e. a party that is aiming to become a ‘dominant’ political force (Huntington & Moore, 1970; Magaloni, 2006; Sartori, 1976), may increasingly aim at diffusing its presence. We define a party as dominant if it fulfils five criteria (Cinar, 2016; Greene, 2010): (1) it wins elections with a large advantage over

opponents; (2) it enjoys a substantially stronger position within the party system; (3) it governs over a considerable period of time – Greene (2010) suggests at least four elections; (4) it has an unchecked control over most state institutions and resources; (5) it has clear authoritarian tendencies. As it will be discussed in the next section, by the late 2000s Turkey’s AKP increasingly resembled a proto-dominant party.

As a party aspires to become dominant, it may hence become increasingly focused on establishing its image and legitimacy as a state party, since “a would-be hegemonic social force views itself as charged with guiding the destiny of the nation as a whole” (Garner & Garner, 1981, p. 258). This may be particularly important if the incumbents need to broaden their support to implement far-reaching institutional reforms (e.g. altering the Constitution) necessary to consolidate their hold on power. In other words, because they aspire to increase national political power, parties may have an incentive to demonstrate ‘good governance’ credentials by building a reputation for being able to rule effectively (Cammett & Issar, 2010). Our main hypothesis is hence that, under such conditions, incumbents may try to reach beyond their core constituencies to show that their ‘would-be’ hegemonic status is ‘deserved’. As Diaz-Cayeros et al. (2016) argue, along with the increase in the size and the stability of core voters, machines may particularly use non-excludable public goods to target groups beyond their core supporters. This is because while public infrastructures exhibit elements of excludability on a territorial basis, they nevertheless will impact everyone in a constituency independently of their partisanship.

At the same time, and in line with Aytac (2014)’s analysis, we may still expect the incumbents to disproportionately increase their focus to out-groups which are ‘politically palatable’, while disregarding very distant political foes – such as the CHP constituencies in Turkey, which continue to be seen as unworthy. This constitutes our second hypothesis. In

contrast to Aytac (2014), who identifies as close challengers right-wing parties such as the MHP, we however suggest that during the late 2000s – i.e. the phase during which the AKP worked on eliminating checks on executive power (Kaya & Whiting, 2019) – incumbents tried to target Kurdish provinces, which had traditionally been a strong electoral basin for the government (Aktürk, 2011).

The empirical context

Turkey is an appropriate case to test the research hypotheses set above. Until 2017 the country was a parliamentary democracy featuring a closed-list, proportional-representation electoral system. The D'Hondt formula and a national threshold of 10 percent are used to translate votes into parliamentary seats. The country features a multiparty system where parties have clear and distinguishable ideological positions (Aytaç, 2014). Parties act as important 'gatekeepers' for access to the resources of the State and thus play a key role in the political distribution of public resources (Kalayıcıoğlu, 2001).

As early as 1963, the country established an ad-hoc national institution in charge of centrally coordinating and managing the allocation of public investment. The selection of annual projects is based on a three-step process (Luca, 2017). The Ministry of Strategy and Budget (MSB, formerly State Planning Organization, then Ministry of Development) first issues a circular directed to other public agencies stating each year's specific objectives. Such circular mirrors the strategic priorities described in Development Plans and in the Annual Investment Program – all prepared by the same Ministry. Second, all public organisations submit their proposals to the Ministry of Finance and the MSB, in charge of ensuring that projects comply with fiscal and planning documents respectively. A phase of negotiation then occurs between other line ministries and the MSB's experts, before the latter agency finalizes the investment

programs, which are subsequently approved by the High Planning Council and, eventually, ratified by the Parliament.

Through its strong oversight over the bureaucrats of the MSB and the High Planning Council, the Cabinet has significant power in deciding the allocation of public resources across the country. Numerous contributions have indeed shown how Turkey's incumbents have strategically targeted public monies to specific individuals and constituencies (Aytac, 2014; Çarkoğlu & Aytac, 2014; Kemahlioglu, 2008; Luca & Rodríguez-Pose, 2015; Yavan, 2012).

While the presence of strategic targeting in Turkey is well-documented, no research has yet explored the extent to which such a phenomenon has evolved as a consequence of the government's growing powers. Indeed, in the last fifteen years the country has undergone a dramatic political change. After almost a decade of infighting under coalition governments and an economic crisis in 2001, the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AK Party or AKP), which at the time was only 15-months old, unexpectedly won the 2002 elections, garnering more than 34% of the votes. It has enjoyed a parliamentary majority ever since. In the next national elections, it increased its share of the vote first to 46.7% in 2007 and, then, to almost 49.8% in 2011 and, again, 49.5% in 2015.² Kaya and Whiting (2019) distinguish three key phases in the AKP evolution. During the first one (2002-2007), the party exploited its electoral mandate to create a strong executive, building electoral support for its agenda through appealing to its initial base of pious and conservative voters.

In the second phase, started in the late 2000s, the AKP, which had created a strong base and a powerful executive, initiated eliminating checks on their power, and started to increasingly fulfil many of the dominant party criteria described in the conceptual framework (Cinar, 2016). In particular, the years 2008 and 2009 saw the start of two landmark political trials

which deeply altered Turkey's balances of power. Waldman and Caliskan (2017, p. 31) define these investigations as the "trials of the Century", since they have frontally targeted the military and, indirectly, the 'old' Kemalist elite which had controlled the State since the foundation of the Republic by M.K. Atatürk. The *Ergenekon* and, later, *Balyoz* trials shook Turkey's political foundations to the very core, paving the way for the AK Party to overcome the military tutelage (Esen & Gumuscu, 2016), and to develop their project of deep social and economic transformation of the country (George, 2018). Appendix A.1 presents Turkey's index of judicial independence prepared by the World Economic Forum, as well as the country's world ranking, for the available period 2007-2015. The graph points to 2009 as the year when the Turkish institutional environment started deteriorating. As an example, in 2010 the AKP unveiled a new set of constitutional amendments which, among other things, brought about significant structural changes to the judiciary.

During the same period, Erdoğan also started a frontal attack on critical media outlets. In 2009 a \$2.5 billion tax fine was filed against Doğan Yayın, a media conglomerate which had been vocally critical of the government in the run-up of the 2007 elections. Appendix A.2 depicts the evolution of Reporters Without Borders' Turkish international ranking, as well as the Freedom House's Freedom of the Press Index, since the AKP's ascent to power. As the graph shows, 2008 and 2009 represent again the main watershed years. According to the former ranking, the country has fallen from 99th in 2002 to 149th in 2015 in the world while, in 2013, Turkey had more journalists imprisoned than any other country (Reporters Without Borders, 2013).

Last but not least, significant setbacks also occurred in the autonomy of the state bureaucracy (Luca, 2017). As an example, in 2008 the Parliament passed Law 5812 on public procurement, increasing state discretion in auction processes, a tool extensively used by the

party to develop a large network of cronies active in the construction sector (Gurakar & Meyersson, 2016). To conclude, numerous contributors have argued how, during the second term in office and particularly after 2009, the AKP started extensively pushing their project of competitive authoritarianism (Esen & Gumuscu, 2016; George, 2018).

In the final phase, whose beginning could be set between 2013 and 2016, the party had gained full control over the state, turning the country into a fully-fledged electoral authoritarian regime (Diamond, 2015; Somer, 2016; Walt, 2015). While data is not yet available to explore distributive patterns during the last phase, we contend that each of the two previous periods correspond to specific targeting strategies.

Research design

Econometric analysis: model, variables, and data

To test our research hypotheses, we propose the following empirical model:

$$G_{i,t} = \beta_1 P_{j,i,t-1} + \beta_2 D * P_{j,i,t-1} + \beta_3 X_{i,t-1} + \alpha_i + n_t + \varepsilon_{i,t}, \quad (1)$$

where (j , i and t respectively denote parties, provinces, and years): $G_{i,t}$ is the amount of investment allocated to each province by the state; $P_{j,i,t-1}$ represents a vector of electoral variables; $D * P_{j,i,t-1}$ is an interaction between a dummy – equal to one in or after the year 2009 (that is, the period after which the incumbent party started aggressively building their hegemony) and zero otherwise – and the electoral variables; $X_{i,t-1}$ is a vector of socioeconomic controls which should determine the allocation of public investment; α_i and n_t are respectively province and year fixed-effects, and $\varepsilon_{i,t}$ is the error term. The setting corresponds to a piecewise model, where coefficients can change in slope before/after a specific moment.

The inclusion of fixed-effects should attenuate the risk of spurious correlations between left- and right-hand side variables caused by unobserved characteristics, as well as cross-sectional common shocks (unfortunately we do not have enough degrees of freedom to include province*year FE interactions in our regressions). The dummy *D* is not included in the model since its effect is already absorbed by the year fixed-effects (cf. Angrist & Pischke, 2009). A one-year lag between left- and right-hand side variables is included considering the investment project cycle. The dependent and the explanatory variables, summarised in Appendixes A.3 and A.4, are described in the following paragraphs. Appendix A.5 provides a pairwise correlation matrix.

Transport investment. The variable consists in the amount of per-capita public investment in transportation infrastructure projects allocated by the central government to subnational units.³ Turkey is a highly centralized country, meaning that the central state plays a dominant role in the allocation and management of public investment. As an example, while the share of local governments' fixed capital investments has more than doubled compared to the early 1990s, in 2001 it was still only 26.5%, and only 29.4% in 2012.⁴ Besides, the fact that most investments are spent by local branches of the central state also reduces the risk of omitted variable bias related to the different absorptive capacity of regions in more decentralised systems.

Amid different lines of investment, we concentrate our attention on transport infrastructure since the provision of such goods has played a prominent role in AKP's distributive politics. This phenomenon contrasts, for example, with the 1990s, during which bringing electricity to rural areas was for example a common strategy to target electoral constituencies. Transportation was particularly favored over other investment areas in the late 2000s. As an example, while according to the 9th National Development Plan the sector should had

accounted for the 26% of total investment over the period 2006/2013, by the end of the period its share had effectively reached 37.4% (Ministry of Development, 2014). Values are expressed in per-capita 1000 Turkish Lira (TL) at 2012 prices and in logarithmic terms.

Party vote shares. Following the theoretical predictions for a close-list, PR electoral system (Golden & Picci, 2008; McGillivray, 2004), we build our argument starting from a core-voter model, according to which strategic targeting is carried out to cement the support of core voters and to punish opponents. We account for the share of votes in national elections of the four main parties – the AK Party, the Republican People’s Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP), the Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*, MHP), and the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi, BDP).⁵

Close race. We also include a variable to control for the alternative expectation that incumbents may target battleground districts where ‘electoral productivity’ is highest. We follow previous work carried out on PR electoral systems, and measure productivity as the vote difference (in absolute value) between the incumbent party and its main challenger in each province (cf. Aytac, 2014). We take the negative of the absolute so that we will expect the variable to show a positive sign, assuming that provinces where the vote difference is lower may receive comparatively more funds. The challenger is the second party where the AKP has garnered the greatest number of votes, or the leading party when this is not the case.

Alternatively, we follow Luca (2016) and measure ‘electoral productivity’ by including the quadratic term of the vote share for the incumbents. The underlying assumption is that the function between their vote shares and ‘political clout’ is nonlinear and bell-shaped (Asher & Novosad, 2017). Provinces where vote shares are very low or very high have low ‘political appeal’ for the party while, by contrast, constituencies where vote shares are at around the mean of their distribution have – on average – higher ‘electoral clout’.

Population. Total provincial population (expressed in Ln) is included in the equation as a measure of agglomeration, as it is customarily considered an important driver of investment allocations.

Population density. The variable is included to account for the potential differences in costs per infrastructure unit between highly and sparsely populated areas.

Car stock. Transport investment may be responsive to the stock of motor vehicles available in a province. We measure the variable by the Ln of the number of cars per 1.000 inhabitants. The number of cars is also a proxy of the provincial level of per-capita wealth.

Provincial development index. This is a composite indicator developed by Turkey's MBS through principal component analysis. The variable is included to account for developmental differentials across provinces, and because it is used by the Ministry to identify priority areas for development.

Capital stock. When governments are committed to reducing regional imbalances in infrastructural endowment, current investment may flow more to provinces where the existing capital stock is lower. To control for such possibility, we develop a measure of infrastructure endowment, calculated following the perpetual inventory method:

$$K_{i,t} = (1 - \bar{\delta}_{i,t}) K_{i,t-1} + (1 - \bar{\delta}_{i,t}/2) G_{i,t} \quad (2)$$

Where for each province i , $K_{i,t-1}$ is the stock of public capital in transport infrastructures at the end of period $t-1$, $\bar{\delta}_{i,t}$ is the annual depreciation rate, and $G_{i,t}$ is the gross fixed capital formation of period t , assuming that new investment is operational in the middle of the year. We assume a depreciation rate of 2.50 percent per annum. The measure is expressed in 2012 prices.⁶

The analysis employs a panel dataset covering 81 Turkish provinces over the period 2003-2014. Because of the one-year lag between left- and right-hand side variables, the length of the panel decreases from 12 to 11 years. Election results (from 2002, 2007, and 2011) were annualised by extending them over each legislature.

The data is collected for provinces, which constitute the power bases of political parties, and the only administrative tier between municipalities (and metropolitan municipalities) and the central state. Provinces yet lack any strong local administrative capacity. The fact that most investments are spent by local branches of the central state also reduces the risk of omitted variable bias related to the different absorption capacity of regions in more decentralised systems.

Empirical analysis

Baseline estimates

The baseline analysis adopts a fixed-effect (FE) heteroscedasticity- and autocorrelation-robust estimator. We estimate serial- and spatial-autocorrelation robust standard errors clustered at province level (81 clusters). Table 1 presents the results. Columns (1), (2) and (3) show the baseline estimates without controlling for post-2009 trends. Column (1) does not include controls, which we add in the following ones. Model (2) measures ‘electoral productivity’ through the close race variable. Model (3) accounts for the alternative measure, AKP^2 . We believe the latter better captures Turkey’s electoral dynamics (the R^2 indeed increases). Yet, in the rest of the analysis we will consider close race, a variable more in line with the literature. This will effectively mean we will choose the most conservative estimates.

Table 1. Multivariate regressions of the provincial per-capita public investment in transport infrastructures: robust Fixed Effects estimates (2003-2014).

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
AKP	0.0490 (0.0308)	0.0445 (0.0299)	0.127** (0.0516)	0.0351 (0.0290)	0.102* (0.0547)
CHP	-0.0646** (0.0281)	-0.0785*** (0.0287)	-0.0849*** (0.0264)	-0.0709* (0.0410)	-0.0669* (0.0392)
MHP	0.0337 (0.0498)	0.0257 (0.0495)	0.0217 (0.0496)	0.0438 (0.0535)	0.0429 (0.0542)
BDP	-0.0209 (0.0285)	-0.0341 (0.0282)	-0.0515** (0.0256)	-0.0514* (0.0281)	-0.0576** (0.0261)
Close race	0.0164 (0.0116)	0.0165 (0.0117)		0.00841 (0.0111)	
AKP^2			-0.00117** (0.000463)		-0.000878* (0.000473)
Post#CHP				0.0194 (0.0211)	0.00569 (0.0205)
Post#MHP				0.0114 (0.0213)	0.00123 (0.0204)
Post#BDP				0.0363*** (0.0105)	0.0253** (0.0100)
Observations	891	891	891	891	891
R-squared	0.209	0.222	0.236	0.237	0.244
Number of id	81	81	81	81	81
Prov FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Year FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Controls	no	yes	yes	yes	yes

Robust standard errors in parentheses: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Constant, controls and year dummies are not reported. Controls include: Ln population, Population density, Ln cars per 1.000 inhabitants, Provincial Development Index.

Columns (4) and (5) report the results obtained adding the dummy for the post-2009 period, as well as its interaction with the party vote shares. We do not include the AKP interaction to avoid overfitting the model (robustness checks will show that results are robust to its inclusion). In line with past research, the upper part of the table confirms how allocations are conducted to punish the main CHP opposition and, in part, also to cement AKP votes in areas with high ‘electoral clout’. More precisely, the CHP coefficient is negative and statistically

significant across all specifications. By contrast AKP always shows the expected sign but turns significant only when accounting for its non-linear effect. In contrast, coefficients for the MHP are insignificant across all specifications. Finally, close race shows the expected positive sign, yet it is never significant.

Moving to the rest of the table, the results show important differences in the distributive patterns for the pre- and post-2009 sub-periods. The BDP variable becomes statistically significant and shows distinct trends. Up to 2009 provinces with a high share of votes for the pro-Kurdish party were systematically disadvantaged – a longstanding issue, also linked to the PKK military insurgency and at the root of persistent underdevelopment (Aktürk, 2011; Luca & Rodríguez-Pose, 2015). Yet, after 2009, the trend is significantly inverted. While the overall effect (obtained summing the linear coefficient plus its interacted term) is still negative, results show that the allocation of investment to pro-Kurdish strongholds was markedly lower during the AK Party's first years in office than after 2009. The 10th National Development Plan indeed acknowledges how in the second part of the 2006-2013 planning period “especially in the Southeast Anatolian Region [that, is the area with the highest Kurdish vote shares, A./N.], many projects were completed and approached to final stages of completion by transferring substantial resources” (Ministry of Development, 2014, p. 81).

At the same time, the post-2009 coefficients for the other parties are not significant, suggesting that the government targeted only a specific set of out-groups. This confirms our second research hypothesis. Results are overall robust to controlling for socioeconomic covariates and to provincial fixed-effects. Finally, in column (5) we replace the close-race variable with an alternative measure of ‘electoral productivity’. Controlling for its quadratic term increases the significance of the AKP coefficient, which now becomes marginally significant.

To flesh out more evidence underlying the robust correlations uncovered in Table 1, we revert to 31 semi-structured interviews carried out between October and December 2014 among Turkey's central bureaucrats in charge of the investment project cycle. Appendix A.6 provides a detailed list of interviewees and the methodology used to select them.

The quantitative findings were echoed by our interviewees. One Manager from the former Ministry of Development (now MBS) suggested: "most attention has been on the East, to solve the Kurdish issue. Go around there, they are investing massively".⁷ The same manager further explains:

"In the 1990s governments had a very short life. So [they] would try to do pork-barrelling. Now we have a single political pressure. For example, roads are very costly for Turkey. So the biggest priority would be to enlarge the train network. But the government prefers the high-speed train, and other big projects. Those projects cost not million but billion of monies."

The increase in the allocations to Kurdish-inhabited provinces after 2009 was underlined by other interviewees and is an example of how the AKP tried to channel investment to convince voters about the government's commitment to solve the South-eastern underdevelopment problems.. Another manager explains: "billions of liras are spent just for the highway sector. [...] The Ministry of Transport wants to show people that things are done. And the best way is to build highways".⁸ As we contend, the preferential targeting of Kurdish constituencies – which is robust to controlling for inter-provincial developmental differences – was carried out with an explicit strategic political objective of 'winning over' those areas. Consistently, Aktürk (2011) provides evidence of how, particularly after 2009, the AKP acted as a 'counter-elite' trying to frame a new discourse on nationality based on 'Islamic brotherhood', where the Kurds were a main ally against the old 'Kemalist regime'. As she suggests, this

change was not linked to any external force such as international pressure in the context of the EU-accession negotiations, nor to variations in the intensity of the PKK insurgency.

The would-be hegemonic government may have, in particular, used investment spending to achieve two goals simultaneously: (1) trying to broaden their populist appeal and display their grand vision of ‘New Turkey’ beyond their core constituencies, (2) and, yet, co-opting a politically supportive new elite of entrepreneurs and cronies, who are benefitting from the preferential awards of public procurement independently of the projects’ locations (Bugra & Savaskan, 2014; Gurakar & Meyersson, 2016; Özcan & Gündüz, 2015; Reuter & Gandhi, 2011).

Robustness tests

The following section aims to discuss the robustness of the econometric analysis. First, spending might be affected by past capital stock levels. Similarly, public investment allocations may also be influenced by past spending, since infrastructure projects frequently stretch over more than one year. Our main specification does not control for capital stock nor lagged investments to avoid potential endogeneity linked to the so-called ‘Nickel bias’. We now test the sensitivity of results to their inclusion. Table 2 presents the outputs. Column (1) reports model (4) from Table 1, while columns (2) and (3) respectively control for capital stocks and lagged investment in the previous three years. The inclusion of capital stocks reduces the significance of the CHP coefficients but not those of the BDP. In model (3), by contrast, the post-2009 BDP coefficient reduce in significance and magnitude yet remaining significant at the 10% level.

Table 2. Multivariate regressions of the provincial per-capita public investment in transport infrastructures: robustness checks (2003-2014).

	(1) FE	(2) FE	(3) FE	(4) FE	(5) FE	(6) FE	(7) Tobit	(8) 2SLS
AKP	0.0351 (0.0290)	0.0318 (0.0289)	0.0285* (0.0159)	0.0413 (0.0302)	0.0315 (0.0296)	0.0381 (0.0296)	0.0375 (0.0300)	-0.0462 (0.0553)
CHP	-0.0709* (0.0410)	-0.0680 (0.0409)	-0.0325 (0.0255)	-0.0873** (0.0434)	-0.0758* (0.0419)	-0.0661 (0.0433)	-0.0710* (0.0424)	-0.134** (0.0560)
MHP	0.0438 (0.0535)	0.0388 (0.0536)	0.0332 (0.0352)	0.0501 (0.0557)	0.0438 (0.0533)	0.0474 (0.0536)	0.0487 (0.0554)	-0.00947 (0.0613)
BDP	-0.0514* (0.0281)	-0.0511* (0.0281)	-0.0130 (0.0193)	-0.0512* (0.0290)	-0.0543* (0.0289)	-0.0482* (0.0287)	-0.0526* (0.0289)	-0.164** (0.0768)
Close race	0.00841 (0.0111)	0.00730 (0.0110)	0.00703 (0.00592)	0.00994 (0.0118)	0.00826 (0.0110)	0.00874 (0.0113)	0.00901 (0.0115)	0.00319 (0.0116)
Post#AKP					0.0280 (0.0225)			
Post#CHP	0.0194 (0.0211)	0.0198 (0.0214)	0.00897 (0.0129)	0.0186 (0.0211)	0.0480 (0.0335)	0.0108 (0.0217)	0.0142 (0.0221)	0.00267 (0.0219)
Post#MHP	0.0114 (0.0213)	0.0140 (0.0215)	-0.00436 (0.0116)	0.00807 (0.0236)	0.0369 (0.0324)	0.0182 (0.0228)	0.0191 (0.0215)	0.0317 (0.0204)
Post#BDP	0.0363*** (0.0105)	0.0379*** (0.0104)	0.0119* (0.00637)	0.0297*** (0.0105)	0.0612** (0.0239)	0.0364*** (0.0109)	0.0376*** (0.0106)	0.0360*** (0.0125)
K stock		-0.0003*** (6.69e-05)						
Lag inv. (1)			0.389*** (0.0480)					
Lag inv. (2)			0.104*** (0.0252)					
Lag inv. (3)			-0.0486 (0.0376)					
Sp.-lag inv.				-0.689 (0.744)				
Observations	891	891	891	810	891	858	891	891
R-squared	0.237	0.244	0.401	0.242	0.238	0.239	0.158	0.237
Nr. of id	81	81	81	81	81	78	81	81
1-st. K-P F								7.111
H J (p-val.)								0.893
Prov FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Year FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

Robust standard errors in parentheses: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Constant, controls and year dummies are not reported. Controls include: Ln population, Population density, Ln cars per 1.000 inhabitants, Provincial Development Index. Column (7) reports the pseudo R-2.

Second, investment in a province may be correlated to spending in its neighbors. If, as an example, an opposition's stronghold was circled by pro-AKP constituencies, the former may benefit from public spending simply because of its geographical location, and the fact that transport infrastructure has a network structure. We hence add spatially-lagged investment among the regressors. The results, presented in column (4), are substantially similar.

Third, we add the Post-2009#AKP interaction, hence controlling for all four main parties simultaneously (column 5). While we believe that the model may be overfit, the coefficients for the BDP interestingly increase in magnitude, reinforcing our main argument.

Fourth, we exclude Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir. Those are Turkey's main cities and might be outliers, potentially receiving spending in projects of national relevance. The results, shown in model (6), are very similar to those of column (1).

Fifth, 3.83% of our observations did not receive any investment.⁹ We hence re-estimate our model adopting a Tobit estimator with a lower limit set to the dependent variable's minimum. Results, presented in column (7), are overall consistent with the baselines.

Sixth, the electoral results may be biased by potential endogeneity. We hence adopt a two-stage least square estimator (2SLS) and instrument our main coefficients of interest (those of the BDP). We design a shift-share instrument replicating the approach followed by Luca (2016). The theory behind the instrument is that national vote pattern changes that are party-specific but external to an individual province reflect exogenous political shocks for that province. We construct the instrument by weighting n_{ib} , which represents the initial electoral result for each province i in the base year b (2002), for the national variation N between time t and the base year b :

$$POL_{iV,t} = n_{i,b} * (1 + (N_t - N_b) / N_b) \quad (3)$$

We consider 2002 as the base year assuming that in such year the electoral results are exogenous, as 2002 elections are considered as a turning point in Turkish politics. Additionally, we also calculate an alternative set of instruments adopting the 1995 elections as the baseline. Since the BDP did not exist in 1995, we use as baseline the results from the *Halkın Demokrasi Partisi* (HADEP, People's Democracy Party). As discussed in Baum et al. (2007) we then test the redundancy of such 'extra' instruments through a LM test. The redundancy hypothesis was rejected. The first-stage estimates are presented in Appendix A.7. The second-stage results, presented in column (8) of Table 2, are very similar to those of model (1).

Finally, Appendix A.8 shows the results obtained replacing the dependent variable with the amount of per-capita investment allocated in sectors other than transportation. As anticipated, distributive patterns in the latter are markedly more evident. Nevertheless, the post-2009 interaction with the BDP remains statistically significant also for the other lines of investment. To conclude, the empirical evidence provides support to our research hypotheses.

Conclusion

The empirical research provides evidence of how the AK Party's growing power is associated to a shift in the allocation of transport investment from a strategy exclusively aimed at punishing the oppositions and, partly, at cementing core votes in areas with higher 'electoral clout' to one more broadly focused on building a state-party image. The analysis uncovers a reduction in the use of public investment as a tool to strategically punish constituencies voting for the pro-Kurdish BDP. While data to analyse allocation patterns for the post-2014 period is not available yet, we have reason to believe that the preferential targeting of Kurdish areas was temporary and may have significantly reduced since the collapse of the 'democratic

opening' between the AKP and Kurdish groups in 2015 (Kaya & Whiting, 2019), and the rise of Turkey's fully-fledged electoral authoritarianism. Indeed, since mid-2015 the AK Party has attempted to maintain its electoral dominance by shifting towards a nationalistic electoral strategy, which included presenting Kurdish nationalism as a security risk and developing an alliance with the ultra-nationalist MHP.

The implications of the analysis for theory and policy are threefold. The paper first contributes to the literature on distributive politics by addressing a previously unexplored gap. The empirical evidence supports our conceptual framework, according to which significant increases in the incumbents' electoral success may lead to changes in targeting strategies, even within the same electoral rules. We explain our findings drawing on Cammett (2014)'s theoretical framework, and suggest that along with the increase in the size and the stability of the core voters, party machines may broaden the targeting of non-excludable public goods in a way to attract the support of groups outside of their core constituencies. At the same time, we may expect incumbents to target only specific out-groups which are politically 'appealing' – such as the Kurds in the late 2000s – while, at the same time, disregarding old foes such as the secularist CHP.

Second, the analysis can inform the debate on local and regional development policy-making. How a more effective economic policy to tackle regional imbalances should be developed remains hotly discussed. Too frequently, however, the effective delivery and implementation of policies across regions fail not simply because of 'wrong' policy tools, but because of political distortions which affect the distribution of resources. The current paper contributes to a growing research agenda interested in the politics of local and regional development, and suggests that geographers and regional scholars need to engage more with the political economy of policy-making. The analysis also sheds new light on contemporary Turkey.

Although the country was an early mover in developing regional development policies, interventions have recorded a limited effectiveness. The results suggest that distributive politics might be one of the factors contributing to such ineffectiveness.

Finally, the research also provides a preliminary contribution to the growing literature on electoral authoritarian regimes (such as contemporary Turkey, Russia, Hungary, and Venezuela). In such systems incumbents are still selected by relatively free elections, but they systematically abuse state resources, repress the opposition and media, and harass government critics to the point of significantly constraining any democratic opponents (Levitsky & Way, 2010; Schedler, 2006). Rather than orchestrating sudden breaks with democracy, would-be competitive authoritarian leaders have learned how to come to power through democratic elections, and then to gradually undermine ‘from within’ democratic norms and institutional constraints (Kendall-Taylor & Frantz, 2016). A significant amount of research has explored the mechanisms through which electoral authoritarian regimes operate and remain in power (Diaz-Cayeros et al., 2016; Greene, 2010; Magaloni, 2006; Schedler, 2006). Yet, numerous gaps remain in our understanding of why, and through which specific mechanisms, such regimes arise in the first place.¹⁰ The current analysis helps shedding preliminary light on such issue, by showing how governments aspiring to political hegemony may target specific constituencies to strategically build support. Future research is necessary to measure voters’ responsiveness to such targeting strategies.

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Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Data availability

The data used in the empirical analysis is available on request. Please email the corresponding author at dl622@cam.ac.uk.

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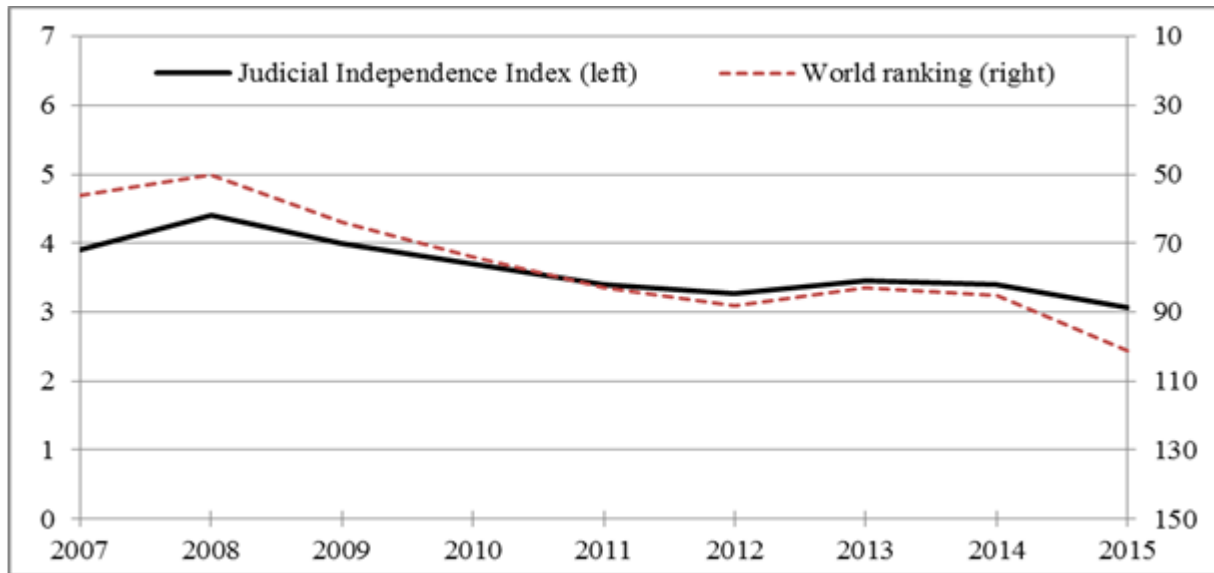
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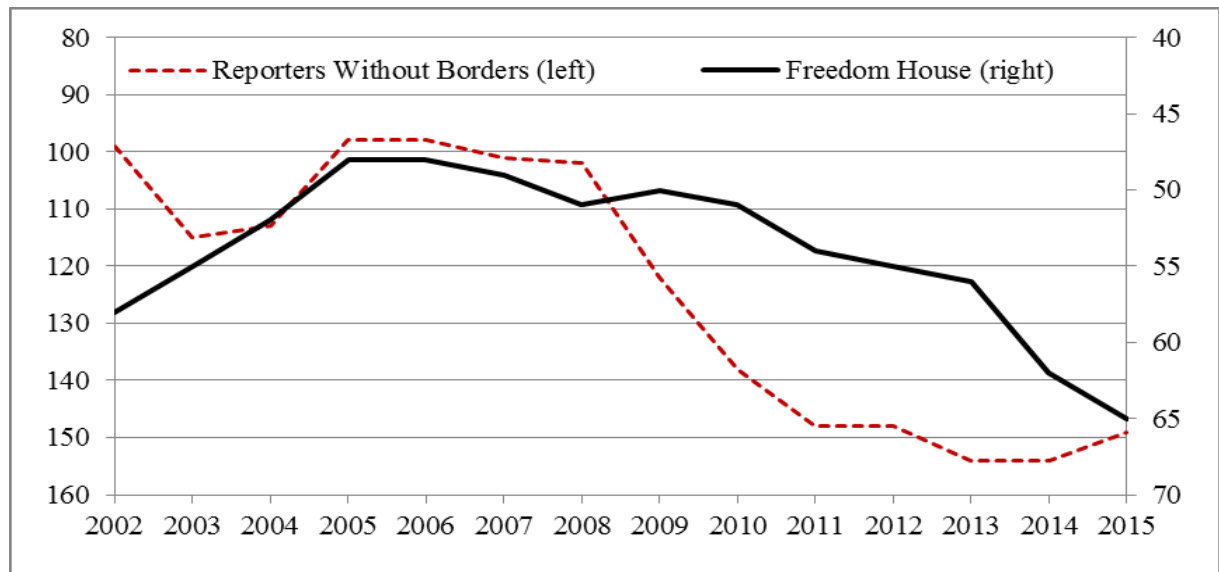
Appendix

Appendix A.1. Judicial independence in Turkey, 2007-2015 (Judicial Independence Index, Turkey's ranking in the world).



Source: own elaboration on data from World Economic Forum.

Appendix A.2. Press freedom in Turkey, 2002-2015 (Reporters Without Borders's Turkish ranking in the world, Freedom House's Freedom of the Press Index).



Source: own elaboration on data from Reporters Without Borders, Freedom House.

Appendix A.3. Description of variables and sources of data.

Variable	Variable description	Source
Public investment	Per-capita fixed capital investment in transport and communication infrastructures, Ln Turkish Liras (2012 constant prices)	Turkey's Ministry of Development
AKP votes	% of votes for the AKP	European Election Database
CHP votes	% of votes for the CHP	
MHP votes	% of votes for the MHP	
BDP votes	% of votes for the BDP (or other Kurdish party) and for independent candidates	
Close race (Vote difference)	Negative absolute value of the vote difference between the incumbent party and its main challenger in each province	Own calculation
Close race (AKP ²)	Quadratic share of votes for the AKP	Own calculation
Population	Total number of inhabitants, expressed in Ln	OECD (2003/2009), Turkstat (2007/2013)
Population density	Population per Km ²	Own calculation
Cars per 1.000 persons	Total number of cars per 1.000 inhabitants, expressed in Ln	Own calculation on data from Turkstat Regional Database
Provincial development index	Synthetic index measuring the provincial level of socioeconomic development (rescaled from 0 to 1). It takes into account economic (statistics on manufacturing, constructions, agriculture, value added, investments and finance) and, to a lesser extent, social factors (demographic structure, employment, education, health and various developmental parameters)	Own calculation on data from Turkey's Ministry of Development
Infrastructure stock	Per-capita infrastructure stock at the end of each previous year, Ln Turkish Liras (2012 constant prices)	Own calculation on data from Turkey's Ministry of Development

Appendix A.4. Summary statistics.

Variable	Mean	St. Dev.	Minimum	Maximum
Public investments (ln)	2.69	2.09	-4.61	9.21
Pre-2009	2.32	2.44	-4.61	9.21
Post-2009	3.15	1.46	-4.61	6.64
AKP votes	43.44	15.41	6.49	84.82
CHP votes	17.54	10.20	0.90	57.50
MHP votes	12.22	6.90	0.00	44.92
BDP votes	9.67	16.69	0.00	79.87
Close race	-25.53	15.34	-70.40	-0.10
AKP2	2,127.22	1,303.08	42.25	7,194.43
Population (ln)	13.19	0.92	11.08	16.47
Population density	113.99	268.43	8.76	2,725.23
Cars per 1.000 persons (ln)	4.04	0.75	1.69	5.38
Provincial development index	0.00	0.99	-1.72	4.16

Appendix A.5. Pairwise correlations among variables.

	Inv.	AKP	CHP	MHP	BDP	Cl. R.	Pop	P. dens.	PDI	Cars
Inv.	1.000									
AKP	0.250*	1.000								
CHP	0.098*	-0.262*	1.000							
MHP	-0.022	0.127*	0.240*	1.000						
BDP	-0.122*	-0.426*	-0.458*	-0.495*	1.000					
Close race	-0.105*	-0.595*	0.420*	0.120*	-0.006	1.000				
Pop	0.167*	0.048	0.174*	-0.100*	-0.094*	0.091*	1.000			
Pop. Dens.	0.131*	0.001	0.168*	-0.066*	-0.066*	0.106*	0.507*	1.000		
PDI	0.131*	-0.039	0.543*	0.235*	-0.499*	0.238*	0.516*	0.577*	1.000	
Cars	0.149*	0.260*	0.563*	0.503*	-0.781*	0.142*	0.324*	0.196*	0.710*	1.000

Significance: * $p < 0.05$.

Appendix A.6. List of interviewees and sample selection.

- (1) Retired manager, Undersecretary of Treasury, Ankara, 24/10/2014.
- (2) Senior manager, Ministry of Development, Ankara, 2/10/2014.
- (3) Senior planning expert, Ministry of Development, Ankara, 3/10/2014.
- (4) Director, Turkey's Economic Policy Research Foundation (TEPAV), Ankara, 27/10/2014.
- (5) Senior planning expert, Ministry of Development, Ankara, 27/10/2014.
- (6) Manager, Ministry of Development, Ankara, 28/10/2014.
- (7) Senior planning expert, Ministry of Development, Ankara, 30/10/2014.
- (8) Finance expert, Ministry of Finance, Ankara, 19/11/2014.
- (9) Finance expert, Ministry of Finance, Ankara, 19/11/2014.
- (10) Manager, Ministry of Finance, Ankara, 21/11/2014.
- (11) Finance expert, Ministry of Finance, Ankara, 2/12/2014.
- (12) Manager, Ministry of Development, Ankara, 1/12/2014.
- (13) Manager, Ministry of Development, Ankara, 2/12/2014.
- (14) Finance expert, Ministry of Finance, Ankara, 3/12/2014.
- (15) Finance expert, Ministry of Finance, Ankara, 3/12/2014.
- (16) Manager, Ministry of Development, Ankara, 3/12/2014.
- (17) Senior manager, Ministry of Development, Ankara, 4/12/2014.
- (18) Manager, Ministry of Development, Ankara, 5/12/2014.
- (19) Planning expert, Ministry of Development, Ankara, 5/12/2014.
- (20) Manager, Ministry of Development, Ankara, 8/12/2014.
- (21) Manager, Ministry of Development, Ankara, 10/12/2014.
- (22) Planning expert, Ministry of Development, Ankara, 11/12/2014.
- (23) Manager, Ministry of Development, Ankara, 11/12/2014.
- (24) Planning expert, Ministry of Development, Ankara, 15/12/2014.
- (25) Planning expert, Ministry of Development, Ankara, 15/12/2014.
- (26) Manager, Ministry of Development, Ankara, 16/12/2014.
- (27) Manager, General Directorate for Highways (KGM), Ankara, 22/12/2014.
- (28) Senior scholar, Bilgi University, Istanbul, 2/10/2012.
- (29) Senior scholar, Boğazici University, Istanbul, 13/10/2014.
- (30) Manager, Delegation of the EU to Turkey, Ankara, 23/09/2013.
- (31) Senior manager, Delegation of the EU to Turkey, Ankara, 23/09/2013.

Interviews were carried out between October and December 2014 (Four of the interviews were conducted during a pilot research phase between October 2012 and September 2013).

We first contacted officials occupying key positions in the project cycle. Each of them was

then asked to provide further contacts. A snowball selection of interviewees was hence nested into the initial purposive sampling. The final sample includes 31 interviewees, including 18 civil servants from the Ministry of Development and 13 individuals from other organisations. We preferentially targeted the Ministry of Development because it held the principal responsibilities for the allocation and coordination of public investment. We conducted interviews with individuals external to the Ministry to cross-validate information. We intentionally decided not to interview politicians on the ground that their responses would be significantly biased by partisan views, particularly under the contemporary climate of deep political polarization. Interviews lasted on average between 60 and 90 minutes and were carried out in both Turkish and English. Following the corruption scandals of 2013, involving four ministers, the government had started purging the civil service from personnel considered politically close to the investigators. Considering the sensitivity of the questions being asked, interviews were not recorded. Such choice was taken after two of the first interviewees denied permission. Interviewees were also guaranteed anonymity. In order to increase the respondents' eagerness to discuss institutional issues more freely, interviewees were accessed only after having secured the support of trusted individuals who could 'warrant' the interviewer's trustworthiness. Finally, interviewees were asked to provide information on their most-followed media outlets. Such information was used to 'control' for respondents' heterogeneous political views – which may influence perceptions about the use of public monies by the government.

Appendix A.7. First-stage estimates of the 2SLS results from column (8) of Table 2. Column (1) reports the estimates for the BDP variable, while column (2) the results for the interaction term Post#BDP.

	(1) BDP	(2) Post#BDP
BDP_iv	1.685*** (0.379)	-0.243 (0.212)
BDP_iv2	-1.050*** (0.293)	0.0739 (0.170)
Post#BDP_iv	-0.130 (0.0846)	0.443*** (0.153)
Post#BDP_iv2	0.0909 (0.0740)	0.535*** (0.111)
Observations	891	891
R-squared	0.744	0.926
Number of id	81	81
Prov FE	yes	yes
Year FE	yes	yes
Controls	yes	yes

Robust standard errors in parentheses: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. Constant, controls and year dummies are not reported. Controls include: Ln population, Population density, Ln cars per 1.000 inhabitants, Provincial Development Index.

Appendix A.8. Multivariate regressions of the provincial per-capita public investment in transport infrastructures and all other lines of public capital investment: robust Fixed Effects estimates (2003-2014).

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Transportation		Other sectors	
AKP	0.0445 (0.0299)	0.0351 (0.0290)	0.00649 (0.00819)	0.00389 (0.00779)
CHP	-0.0785*** (0.0287)	-0.0709* (0.0410)	-0.00365 (0.00985)	-0.00964 (0.0107)
MHP	0.0257 (0.0495)	0.0438 (0.0535)	0.00171 (0.0126)	0.0134 (0.0178)
BDP	-0.0341 (0.0282)	-0.0514* (0.0281)	0.00495 (0.00884)	-0.000812 (0.00853)
Close race	0.0165 (0.0117)	0.00841 (0.0111)	0.00152 (0.00349)	-0.000860 (0.00360)
Post#CHP		0.0194 (0.0211)		0.0109* (0.00639)
Post#MHP		0.0114 (0.0213)		-0.00481 (0.0102)
Post#BDP		0.0363*** (0.0105)		0.00936** (0.00364)
Observations	891	891	891	891
R-squared	0.222	0.237	0.357	0.367
Number of id	81	81	81	81
Prov FE	yes	yes	yes	yes
Year FE	yes	yes	yes	yes
Controls	yes	yes	yes	yes

Robust standard errors in parentheses: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Constant, controls and year dummies are not reported. Controls include: Ln population, Population density, Ln cars per 1.000 inhabitants, Provincial Development Index.

Endnotes

¹ A related strand of literature focuses on individual voters rather than aggregate constituencies. In this case, the second hypothesis is generally sub-divided into two further predictions: The first suggests that incumbents will allocate larger shares of goods to indifferent voters, who are ideologically-indifferent or undecided and are more susceptible to vote in exchange for material benefits. The second prediction forecasts that politicians favor voters in constituencies with tight electoral contests (Corstange, 2018). While conceptually distinct, these two hypotheses are frequently discussed interchangeably.

² The Party only experienced a reduction in the June 2015 polls, when its score dropped to 40.9%, to re-obtain the 49.5% of votes in the November 2015 snap elections.

³ We do not unfortunately have data on whether allocations refer to investment in new projects or maintenance.

⁴ Annual Development Programs, Ministry of Strategy and Budget, <http://www.sbb.gov.tr/yillik-programlar/>, accessed on 3/12/2018.

⁵ Under the allegation of supporting the PKK, successive Kurdish parties have been repeatedly banned from elections. The BDP succeeded to the Democratic People's Party (Demokratik Halk Partisi, DEHAP), closed in August 2005, and the Democratic Society Party (*Demokratik Toplum Partisi*, DTP), created in November 2005 and banned by the Constitutional Court in December 2009. Running as independent candidates and then agglomerating into a single group after elections has also been a strategy to circumvent the minimum national thresholds. We therefore consider, at each election, the party in place at that moment, as well as Kurdish and independent votes combined.

⁶ Our investment data is only available from 1984 onward, meaning that we cannot measure capital flows before that year. Although imprecise, we believe that the measure provides a satisfactory proxy for within-provinces variations in capital stocks. As underlined by one anonymous referee, the measure is unable to capture the quality of the infrastructure stock. We don't yet have any better proxy.

⁷ Interview with a Manager from the Ministry of Development, Ankara, 1/12/2014.

⁸ Interview with a Senior Manager from the former Ministry of Development, Ankara, 4/12/2014.

⁹ We thank one anonymous referee for flagging out such potential issue.

¹⁰ There exist excellent pieces of work on the origins of authoritarian regimes (inter alia: Huntington & Moore, 1970; Luebbert, 1991; Riley, 2010). However, they focus on the emergence of fully authoritarian regimes in the Twentieth Century rather than of contemporary competitive authoritarian systems. Similarly, the work by Levitsky and Way (2010) focuses on how competitive authoritarianism develops out of autocratic regimes, not democracy.