

# Party Politics in Turkey

A Comparative Perspective

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## Introduction

Political parties' control over state resources clearly has an impact on the parties' internal organization and the linkages that they form with voters.<sup>1</sup> An understudied dimension of how state control affects parties is the electoral consequence in national elections for the national incumbent party of holding local executive positions. In this chapter, we explore whether and how the incumbent party in Turkey benefits electorally from its partisan ties at the sub-national level. This is an especially important question given the dominance of the nationally ruling party, the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi-AKP), in Turkish electoral politics and the growing concerns about the fairness of elections due to the AKP's incumbency advantage. Within the constraints set by available data on municipal budgets, we explore whether the fiscal opportunities and choices of the AKP's local affiliates further increase the party's votes in national elections. We also compare the AKP's incumbency with the experience of coalition governments during the 1990s.

Analysing national election results, local incumbency and municipal fiscal outcomes in a single case – Turkey – also allows us to address a puzzle in the literature. Studies on subnational fiscal politics not surprisingly show that central governments channel a disproportionate share of grants and transfers to their co-partisans in sub-national governments (Grossman 1994; Rozevitch and Weiss 1993; Worthington and Dollery 1998; Tavits 2009; Brollo and Nannicini 2012), but other works also find that politicians with ties to the national government actually have lower expenditures after controlling for the amount of sub-national governments' revenue (Remmer and Wibbels 2000; Jones et al. 2000). If local government co-partisans of the incumbent national party do not transform their larger resources into expenditures that can win them votes, how do incumbent parties, such as Japan's Liberal Democrat Party, benefit from intergovernmental partisan ties (Scheiner 2005a, 2005b)?

The main theoretical focus of this chapter is to investigate under what conditions and how national incumbent parties benefit electorally from their partisan ties with sub-national governments. We argue that the incumbent party in Turkey, the AKP, has managed to establish a system that allows it to enforce electorally

strategic yet fiscally not explosive policies at the sub-national level. We consider these policies to be “politically efficient”, by which we mean that local AKP politicians can mostly avoid the common pool problem so as to make choices that benefit the party rather than individual politicians. In addition, local affiliates’ choices on spending types allow them to reap political benefits with minor financial costs. While the rules that govern intergovernmental fiscal relationships in Turkey allow discretionary allocation (Mutluer and Öner 2009), not all parties have managed to turn this into an electoral advantage, perhaps due to a shortage of “politically efficient” decision-making. The AKP, however, established a mechanism since coming to power in 2002 through which the party has been able to enforce politically efficient fiscal choices in its affiliated metropolitan municipalities.

In the empirical part of our study, we show that the AKP has indeed benefited electorally from its ties with metropolitan municipalities. Controlling for previous vote share, municipal size, socio-economic development of the municipality and municipal level economic performance prior to elections, the AKP’s votes in national elections increased in metropolitan municipalities governed by the party.<sup>2</sup> We explore intergovernmental fiscal relationships and analyse whether municipalities controlled by the AKP receive more discretionary resources and increase the types of spending that maximise political benefits in municipalities with electoral potential. We then link this budgetary analysis with election results to examine whether these expenditures indeed increase the party’s votes.

Before we present our results, however, we briefly discuss the literature that analyses intergovernmental partisan ties as incumbency advantage and studies on sub-national fiscal choices. We also provide a brief overview of elections and politics in Turkey, and we outline various fiscal rules concerning local governments before elaborating on our argument that AKP-controlled metropolitan municipalities make ‘politically efficient’ fiscal choices that benefit the party electorally.

### **Partisan ties and budgetary choices**

Previous studies in the literature on intergovernmental partisan ties as incumbency advantage have examined the impact of local government incumbency and local party organizations on the national electoral performance of parties. Ames (1994) studies the effect of local party organizations controlled by co-partisan mayors in presidential elections within a competitive multi-party system (Brazil) while Scheiner (2005a, 2005b) analyses the electoral benefits of local government incumbency in a predominant party system (Japan). Both argue that in elections where clientelistic linkages dominate, access to state resources is of outmost importance, which motivates local politicians to affiliate with whichever politician or party controls the allocation of future benefits. Therefore, a two-sided use of state resources takes place with a (possibly implicit) exchange between local and national level politicians. While mayors use local government resources in a clientelistic or pork barrel manner to gain votes, national level politicians (the president in Brazil’s case and the LDP government in Japan’s) allocate central government resources to those sub-national politicians that are affiliated with them.

Even though Scheiner and Ames' analyses have contributed to our understanding of intergovernmental partisan ties as incumbency advantage, the mechanisms through which local government resources are deployed to increase parties' vote shares in national elections are yet to be discussed or examined in detail. Although these studies highlight clientelism as the intermediary link, they do not incorporate an analysis of municipal budgets. Empirically, therefore, we do not know if the co-partisans in Japanese and Brazilian local governments received more resources, which they then spent on patronage or pork barrel types of expenditures.<sup>3</sup>

Another strand of the literature has analysed the fiscal choices and opportunities of sub-national governments. In various countries and regions, including the U.S. (Grossman 1994), Australia (Worthington and Dollery 1998), Scandinavia (Tavits 2009), Brazil (Brollo and Nannicini 2012) and Israel (Rozevitch and Weiss 1993), sub-national governments controlled by a national incumbent party have been shown to have access to greater discretionary resources. Sub-national spending has also been analysed in different contexts.<sup>4</sup> Except for Brazil (Kemahloğlu 2015), partisan ties with national incumbents decrease sub-national spending (Remmer and Wibbels 2000, Jones et al. 2000, Khemani 2002). Jones et al. (2000) and Khemani (2002) argue that the national incumbent's concern with macroeconomic stability and its effects on the party's electoral chances play a critical role in restricting sub-national government expenditure.

These findings therefore contradict those of other studies on local partisan ties and incumbency advantage that we discussed earlier. If the national incumbent party limits spending at the local level, how can it benefit electorally from a larger flow of resources to its co-partisans? After providing some brief background information on Turkey, we introduce our argument that some incumbent parties, like the AKP in Turkey, are able to make 'politically efficient' choices at the local level by strategically increasing certain types of expenditure in critical districts.

## **Elections and politics in Turkey**

In contrast to the predominance of coalition (and short-lived single-party minority) governments between 1991 and 2002 (Sayarı 2007), a single-party majority government has ruled Turkey since 2002.<sup>5</sup> Compared to parties in national coalition governments, single-party governments are more likely to take advantage of their control over local governments because the different parties in a coalition are likely to monitor each other's actions to prevent the disproportionate flow of resources to their coalition partner(s)' co-partisans in sub-national governments. Regarding the main question of this study, which is, whether and how partisan ties with local governments contribute to the national incumbent party's electoral performance in national elections, the type of government formed when the AKP first came to power is one critical difference between the two periods analysed in this chapter: the AKP's rule since 2002 and the 1990s.<sup>6</sup>

Another characteristic of the Turkish party system that is relevant for this chapter is the prevalence of patronage and clientelism referred to by many scholars, who have tried to understand the mechanisms of patron–client relationships in

Turkey and their consequences for the party system, the representation of citizen interests, governability and democratic accountability (see Heper and Keyman 1998; Adaman and Çarkoğlu 2000; Kalaycıoğlu 2001; Komşuoğlu 2009; Sayarı 2011; Kemahlioğlu 2012; Kurtoğlu 2012). Partly due to earlier data limitations, studies directly analysing how parties and politicians selectively use state resources to increase their vote shares in elections have emerged only recently. Çarkoğlu and Aytaç (2015) use survey data from list experiments to demonstrate that vote buying took place in the 2011 elections, and that the AKP targeted its core voters as well as other urban citizens with low levels of education. There is also some evidence that metropolitan municipality jobs were used for building politicians' networks within parties, which then supported the parties in their electoral campaigns (Kemahlioğlu 2012).

Both local and national governments in Turkey have provided targeted social assistance. Comparative evidence suggests that such targeted benefits can be allocated in a clientelistic manner (Schady 2000) or universalistic, needs-based manner (Fenwick 2009). Two studies have examined the allocation of such goods by the central government in Turkey. While Aytaç's (2014) analysis of the Conditional Cash Transfer program shows that the AKP targeted districts where the party faced tight competition from an ideologically close party, Yörük (2012) reveals that Green Cards (free healthcare service for the needy) were disproportionately targeted towards the Kurdish minority.

Given that these recent studies reinforce the general understanding that clientelistic or particularistic linkages between citizens and the state play an important role in Turkish elections, insights from previous work on intergovernmental partisan ties would make us expect that national incumbents benefit from their partisan ties with local governments. However, earlier literature suggests that the extent to which national incumbents disproportionately benefit from their partisan ties with local governments is also shaped by the nature of intergovernmental fiscal relations, which we discuss in the following section.

## **Intergovernmental fiscal relations in Turkey**

In this section, we provide information about Turkish local governments and their budgetary opportunities, before discussing the possibilities for political manipulation that arise from intergovernmental fiscal ties. In Turkey, metropolitan municipalities were introduced under Decree Law No. 195 (dated March 23, 1984), which was later turned into the Law on the Administration of Metropolitan Municipalities (No. 3030, dated June 27, 1984), to meet the special needs of large metropolitan cities (Mutluer and Öner 2009). In the period of our analysis (1997–2014), there were 16 such metropolitan municipalities.<sup>7</sup> We exclude other types of municipalities (province, district, and town) from our analysis because systematic budgetary data currently only exists for metropolitan municipalities.<sup>8</sup> Metropolitan municipalities are currently governed under the Law No. 5216 (dated July 23, 2004), introduced as part of a larger decentralisation and state reform process (Mutluer and Öner 2009).

While the Article 23 of the Law on Metropolitan Municipalities stipulates the sources of revenue for metropolitan municipalities, one of their largest sources of revenue, their share of central government revenue in the general budget, is regulated by Law No. 5779 (dated July 2, 2008), which modified some existing rules regarding the transfer of resources from the general budget (Mutluer and Öner 2009). In 1981, Law No. 2380 (dated February 2, 1981) introduced a single rate for tax revenues to be distributed to local governments. Initially, the rate was set to 5% of tax revenues in the general budget, 80% of which was to be distributed by the Bank of the Provinces (*İller Bankası*) in proportion to each municipality's population,<sup>9</sup> while remaining 20% went into a common pool. Different ministries were then responsible for allocating this fund (Mutluer and Öner 2009), which suggests that the central authorities could possess a certain degree of discretion. The common pool was later named the Municipality Fund (*Belediyeler Fonu*) and the amount to be set aside for it was directly tied to the general budget (Kestane 1996).

The exact size of the share to be transferred to municipalities has changed over the years. The early 1980s in particular saw major fluctuations regarding the rules governing the amount transferred from central to local governments (Mutluer and Öner 2009). The percentage to be distributed to municipalities was set to be 9.25 in 1985 (Law No. 3239, dated December 4, 1985), although the actual amount transferred ended up being smaller (Kestane 1996). In 2001, the percentage was reduced to 6% and then to 5% in 2003. Prior to 2008, 35% of transfers to district municipalities within metropolitan municipalities were then transferred to the metropolitan municipalities. The amount was reduced to 30% in 2008.

An additional 5% of tax revenues collected within the provincial center of metropolitan municipalities has been transferred to metropolitan municipalities since 1985. In January 2002, this rule was modified under Law No. 4736 (dated January 8, 2002) to introduce a redistributive element. According to the new formula, 40% of the shares were directly transferred to the metropolitan municipality in which this revenue was generated, with *İller Bankası* allocating the remaining 60% among the 16 municipalities based on their population (Mutluer and Öner 2009).<sup>10</sup> The 2008 Law on the Allocation of Tax Revenues to the Municipalities kept the 5% rule intact, but made changes to the municipalities' shares from the general budget tax revenues so that they now received 5.35% in total (2.5% of which went to district municipalities in metropolitan municipality areas) from a larger pool of tax revenues.

Until 2008, municipalities could also get some transfers or aid from specific ministries and agencies included in the central government general budget (Mutluer and Öner 2009). In particular, the Ministry of Finance could include resources in its budget to be transferred at its discretion to municipalities. However, the 2008 legislation reduced the amount of such resources and grouped them under the single category of balancing aid (Mutluer and Öner 2009), though the Treasury can still provide municipalities with some aid for financing investments and projects. In addition, the Treasury must approve municipalities' foreign debts. Although it is not clear what the alternative could be, since the central government would

not want municipalities to borrow extensively or imprudently, this rule allows the central government to make its decisions based on political criteria that might also include concerns for partisan affiliation. In conclusion, this brief overview shows that there are opportunities for political manipulation in municipalities' access to resources, mostly through transfers, national aid and access to foreign debt.

### **“Politically efficient” choices at the sub-national level**

If sub-national government co-partisans of national incumbents have access to greater financial resources that they then use to benefit the party in local (Scheiner 2005a, 2005b) and national elections (Ames 1994), we can expect this advantage to take place through clientelistic and other types of expenditures. However, as some studies discussed earlier show, party affiliates of national incumbents seem to spend less than sub-national governments controlled by other parties. One immediate answer to this discrepancy would point out to the different cases that are studied. Since none of the countries in these two conflicting strands in the literature were investigated during the same time period, one could argue that the findings are case specific and hence not contradictory. We therefore tackle this question empirically by analysing the case of Turkey in the post-1997 period, with a focus on both the budgetary choices of municipalities and the election results.

However, these findings also raise important theoretical questions since they indicate a possible trade-off for the national incumbent party. That is, while it may be able to improve its electoral chances either directly by doling out benefits or indirectly by building up a stronger party organization, if high levels of spending by sub-national governments increase deficits and national debt then this will also threaten macroeconomic stability, which could then also hurt the incumbent national party's electoral chances. Under these circumstances, the party can be expected to choose the “politically efficient” strategy of only targeting selected sub-national governments, from which they can extract the maximum number of votes or seats for the same investment of resources, while putting pressure on other sub-national governments to restrain their levels of spending and debt.

Whether an incumbent national party can effectively influence its co-partisans' behaviour in turn depends on mechanisms of party discipline (Jones et al. 2000). As discussed in many studies, fiscal decentralisation leads to the common pool problem, where sub-national units have no incentive to limit their spending if their expenditures are financed by a common pool of resources and they are faced with soft budget constraints (Treisman 2007, Rodden and Wibbels 2010).<sup>11</sup> Thus, it has been argued that an incumbent party concerned about macroeconomic performance can only limit its co-partisans' spending if it can enforce party discipline (Jones et al. 2000). As argued earlier in the literature, sub-national actors with ambitions to reach national level positions also have an incentive to be loyal to the party's leadership if these leaders both control nominations and those nominations can almost guarantee electoral success (Diaz-Cayeros 2006). Since party leaders in Turkey generally control party nominations and the AKP itself offers a valuable party label, we can expect that the party is able to enforce discipline on



its members in control of sub-national governments. We therefore argue that AKP mayors generally implement the leadership's demands for spending restrictions, even though such restrictions on sub-national expenditures are not imposed universally. Rather, the party guides sub-national spending decisions to target competitive electoral districts through expenditure types that the party expects can be transformed into votes, either because these types of spending are valued highly by citizens or because they are allocated in a clientelistic manner.

One possibility for gaining votes through spending is offered by municipality healthcare. According to surveys, citizens in Turkey expect the government to provide healthcare services (Çarkoğlu and Kalaycıoğlu 2012). Municipality's services usually target disadvantaged and low-income groups that need them the most. Thus, metropolitan municipality services in Turkey include home care for bedridden or elderly patients, transportation of non-emergency patients to hospitals, medical screening (especially for women), education on health and some outpatient care.<sup>12</sup> Both regular and *ad hoc* home care services constitute a substantial portion of municipalities' healthcare services. Those who apply to the municipality are usually supported free of charge after a comprehensive investigation of their socio-economic situation. A medical and social work team visits each applicant's household and provides a report of their social security information and poverty level. Although the scope of municipality healthcare services seems to have narrowed in recent years, especially after the AKP introduced a comprehensive reform program that has included free access to family practices across much of the country since the end of 2010, the remaining municipality services still seem to reach significant numbers of needy citizens and carry electoral potential.<sup>13</sup> While some of these important healthcare services, such as home care, allow some element of discretion since coverage can be denied by the municipality or partisan networks can provide informational advantages, we nevertheless expect that access to these healthcare services is open to citizens regardless of their partisan networks.

As argued earlier in the literature, another type of expenditure that can reflect patron–client relationships at municipality level is personnel spending (Remmer 2007). However, since public sector patronage is economically inefficient and costly, we again argue that the national party leadership should require personnel expenditures to be restricted in non-competitive districts. The tight formal control that Turkey's central government exerts over municipality personnel decisions under the 2007 Regulation on Principles and Standards in Municipal and Local Government Personnel (Resmi Gazete 26441, February 22, 2007) is further expected to enhance the party's ability to restrict personnel expansion in those districts where such spending does not help the party. Although the regulation introduces standardised norms for the number of personnel that can be hired by municipalities, there is still some room for both the municipalities and the incumbent national party to influence personnel decisions. For example, the particular categorisation of metropolitan municipalities according to population, which created a single municipality category for Istanbul in 2007 and Erzurum in 2010, gave the central government leeway in incorporating electoral calculations



into their oversight role. Therefore, we expect to observe increases in personnel and healthcare spending as electoral competition increases in AKP-controlled municipalities.

As with expenditure, we expect strategic targeting of resources and party favoritism of co-partisans at the local level when distributing resources, and even more so for co-partisans in competitive districts. Revenue sources with discretionary elements, such as foreign debt and aid, are therefore expected to increase when the metropolitan municipality is controlled by the AKP and when national elections in the district are competitive. Concerns over macroeconomic performance and overall levels of government spending, however, introduce an additional dimension in the allocation of resources. Since, as the national incumbent, the AKP must be cautious about the economic costs of sub-national spending, another means through which the party can reap electoral benefits is by restricting the resources of opposition-controlled municipalities, especially when elections in these municipalities are competitive. This strategy not only has advantages with respect to economic performance, it also benefits the AKP electorally in competitive districts by curtailing the opportunities of the opposition. Accordingly, we expect foreign debt and aid to decrease when the metropolitan municipality is not controlled by the AKP and when national elections in the district are competitive.

In summary, we expect resource allocation to be influenced by partisan affiliation and expenditures to be shaped by strategic targeting of competitive districts when the party, as in the case of the AKP, can impose discipline on its sub-national members.

## **Data and analysis**

The first group of regressions (Tables 7.1–7.2) examined whether political variables, including incumbency ties, have a significant effect on metropolitan municipality budgets.<sup>14</sup> The dependent variables are various budgetary outcomes derived from the final accounts of metropolitan municipalities, which are analysed to determine *whether metropolitan municipalities controlled by the AKP received more (discretionary) resources and spent more in competitive districts*. On the revenue side, we analysed total aid channeled to the municipality and foreign debt as discretionary resources. In terms of expenditures, we expected personnel and healthcare expenditures to be manipulated for political reasons.<sup>15</sup> In the second part, we analysed electoral outcome (AKP's vote share) as the dependent variable to understand if the fiscal choices of the AKP's co-partisans in local governments help explain the increase in the party's votes in national elections (Table 7.3).<sup>16</sup>

The main explanatory variable is *incumbency advantage*, coded as 1 in provinces where the AKP controls the metropolitan municipality and 0 otherwise. In the second part of the analysis, this variable was interacted with budgetary variables to see if they had a positive effect on the AKP's electoral strength. To understand if fiscal decisions are made strategically to benefit the party in national elections we included electoral competition in the national elections and interacted this with the incumbency variable in the first part of the analysis.

Table 7.1 Effects of incumbency and competition on municipality revenues

<i>Variables</i>	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	<i>Aid</i> <i>Year</i> $\geq 2006$	<i>Aid</i> <i>2006 &gt; Year</i> $> 2002$	<i>Aid</i> <i>Year</i> $\leq 2002$	<i>Foreign Debt</i> <i>2006 &gt; Year</i> $> 2002$	<i>Foreign Debt</i> <i>Year</i> $\leq 2002$
Incumbency	53.43**	20.82***	-0.04	-37.66	-0.61
affiliation (IA)	(24.53)	(2.85)	(0.15)	(46.77)	(6.51)
Competition in	1.99**	2.51**	0.57***	58.31***	1.43
national elec.	(0.81)	(0.97)	(0.14)	(15.58)	(2.11)
(CN)					
IA*CN	9.99	3.28*	-0.01	-66.08***	2.48
	(13.92)	(1.66)	(0.09)	(10.60)	(4.11)
Competition in	-25.67	65.07	-3.32*	87.00	2.85
local elections	(68.61)	(39.05)	(1.69)	(82.28)	(18.74)
Local election	-0.03	-0.36***	0.28***	-2.04**	0.95***
timing	(0.50)	(0.11)	(0.04)	(0.70)	(0.12)
National election	-0.14	-1.58***	-0.38***	-7.01***	-1.05***
timing	(0.37)	(0.28)	(0.06)	(1.96)	(0.18)
District	-13.05*	-7.05*	0.94**	1.78	0.04
magnitude	(6.34)	(3.68)	(0.35)	(1.91)	(2.79)
Socio-economic	10.12**	1.70**	-0.77***	5.01*	-1.76*
development	(3.49)	(0.63)	(0.16)	(2.66)	(0.93)
Change in econ.	-0.08	-71.30***	0.23***	42.02	0.76
performance	(7.78)	(11.35)	(0.04)	(60.42)	(0.47)
Municipal size	-148.21	44.24	-25.01***	-32.25***	-69.06*
	(302.74)	(26.02)	(5.19)	(4.44)	(39.01)
Constant	1380.7	-554.9	417.5***	296.5	1145.6*
	(4026.1)	(390.9)	(81.5)	(369.2)	(609.0)
Observations	133	46	90	46	90
Number of	16	16	15	16	15
groups					

Standard errors in parentheses \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

Competition in national elections with proportional representation implies competition for the last seat in each electoral constituency.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, the variable for competition in national elections is generated by measuring the difference between the remaining votes of the political party that gained the last seat and the remaining votes of the mayor's party if the political party with which the current mayor is affiliated failed to gain the last seat in the relevant province. If the mayor's party gained the last seat in a province, competition in national elections was measured by the difference between the remaining votes of the mayor's party and its closest candidate as they competed for the last seat.

To control for cofounders, we include competition in local elections, timing of elections, and district size in the budgetary analysis. Competition in local elections was measured by the difference between the vote shares of the top two parties,

Table 7.2 Effects of incumbency and competition on municipality expenditures

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Personnel Year > 2002	Personnel Year ≤ 2002	Healthcare All years
Incumbency affiliation (IA)	-3.57 (2.91)	-3.54* (1.89)	0.32 (0.45)
Competition in national elections (CN)	-0.18 (0.23)	-2.12*** (0.29)	-0.003 (0.016)
IA *CN	-0.48 (0.40)	1.48 (1.02)	-0.69** (0.24)
Competition in local elections	-16.09*** (4.53)	24.51*** (2.48)	-0.63 (1.06)
Local election timing	0.10 (0.08)	-0.53*** (0.11)	0.009** (0.004)
National election timing	0.12 (0.09)	0.81*** (0.09)	-0.004 (0.005)
District magnitude	0.55 (0.41)	-0.02 (0.54)	0.21 (0.13)
Socio-economic development	-0.47 (0.32)	2.91** (1.17)	0.13** (0.06)
Change in economic performance	6.03** (2.09)	0.73** (0.31)	0.14** (0.05)
Municipal size	-9.79 (9.09)	111.69*** (9.587)	-14.74*** (4.20)
Constant	193.7 (141.6)	1829.6*** (235.9)	202.3*** (56.3)
Observations	178	90	89
Number of groups	16	15	13

Standard errors in parentheses \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

meaning the leading party and its closest competitor, since simple plurality is used in Turkish mayoral elections. Note that the measures of electoral competition are generated from the difference in vote shares. Hence, political competition variables are expected to have a negative effect on outcome variables since the difference between two parties' vote share decreases as competition becomes tighter.

We control for election timing since the previous literature suggests that government expenditures increase at election time. Our election timing variables measure the time, in months, before an upcoming local or national election. These proximity variables are expected to have a negative effect on the outcome variables since elections are closer when the election timing variable decreases. The literature also suggests that smaller districts result in candidate-oriented elections (Carey and Shugart 1995), which is likely to increase the distribution of material benefits. Accordingly, if electoral candidates can influence municipality decisions then districts with fewer seats are more likely to see strategic manipulation of fiscal choices. Therefore, district size was included as a control variable.

*Table 7.3* Effects of fiscal choices on the AKP's (and its predecessors') vote share in national elections

<i>Variables</i>	<i>(1)</i>	<i>(2)</i>
	<i>AKP's vote</i>	<i>AKP's vote</i>
AKP lagged	0.525*** (0.115)	0.705*** (0.107)
AKP incumbency	0.078** (0.032)	0.059 (0.151)
Healthcare spending		-0.885 (0.710)
AKP incumbency* Healthcare spending		1.719* (0.816)
Spending per cap		-17.074 (11.257)
AKP incumbency* Spending per cap		11.067 (11.309)
Personnel spending		-0.183 (0.241)
AKP incumbency* Personnel spending		-0.585 (0.515)
Investment spending		0.160 (0.147)
AKP incumbency* Investment spending		0.004 (0.181)
Change in economic performance	-0.000** (0.000)	0.005* (0.002)
Economic development	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.005*** (0.002)
Socioeconomic development	-0.321 (2.550)	3.140 (3.868)
Municipal size	-0.029** (0.014)	-0.030* (0.017)
AKP's National Incumbency (Year > 2002)	0.051 (0.037)	
Constant	0.581*** (0.251)	0.314 (0.380)
Observations	94	32
R-squared	0.709	0.935

Standard errors in parentheses \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

In the models that have electoral outcomes as the dependent variable, we also control for the party's previous vote share. While vote share in previous elections is an effective way to control for general level of support in a district, changes in a party's popularity may depend on the constituency's socio-economic composition. Therefore, two socio-economic control variables were also included in the analyses: literacy rate as a proxy for socio-economic development, and changes in the amount of bank deposits as an indicator of the changes in the district's economic performance.<sup>18</sup> Controlling for population, measured by the number of

voters in the electoral analysis enabled us to adjust for size of municipality. These socio-economic variables were also included in the models with fiscal outcomes as the dependent variables. Finally, in analysing vote shares we controlled, whenever possible, for economic development (measured by bank deposits) and the AKP's national incumbency (i.e. for years after 2002) to account for potential differences across pre- and post-AKP periods.

## **Results and discussion**

We first present the results from the analysis of revenue items (Table 7.1). Columns 3 and 5 analyse the period of coalition governments prior to AKP's taking power in 2002.<sup>19</sup> Because metropolitan municipalities' reports since 2006 have varied widely in how they present foreign debt information, we only analyse foreign debt for 1997–2005, when the Turkish Statistical Institute (Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu-TÜİK) collected and published this information. Since aid and funds were reported together prior to 2006 and private aid has been included under total aid since 2006, we analyse these periods separately for this revenue item. For the analysis of 2003–2005, we do not include fixed effects because there the national election competition variable did not change during this period.

The results provide a clear evidence of the strategic allocation of discretionary revenues to AKP-controlled municipalities. As we predicted, since 2006, more aid has been channeled to AKP mayors in competitive districts, where extra votes for the party in the national elections are especially important because these votes can easily turn into parliamentary seats. Column 1 of Table 7.1 shows that when national elections were competitive (i.e. when the competitiveness variable equals 0), AKP-affiliated municipalities received notably more aid, with a large, statistically significant coefficient of incumbency affiliation (53.43). Figure 7.1 shows that, in less competitive districts, partisan ties with the AKP are not associated with higher levels. The coefficient of national election competitiveness (1.99) indicates that municipalities that are not controlled by the AKP receive less aid when they are more competitive. Since aid forms only a small share of municipality revenues – on average 26 Turkish Lira per 100 people compared to 2,075 Turkish Lira average total revenue per 100 people – the overall effect on resource allocation is not large. However, in terms of the aid's distribution across municipalities, affiliation with the AKP and competition for the last parliamentary seat in districts play major roles.

Regarding 2003–2005 (Table 7.1, Column 2), we again see that AKP-affiliated metropolitan municipalities received statistically significantly more aid (20.82) when the elections were very competitive. A surprising finding is that, during this period, the marginal effect of incumbency remained statistically significant even as elections became less competitive and the size of the effect increased.<sup>20</sup> In line with the post-2006 findings, as competitiveness in national elections increases, the amount of aid received by non-AKP municipalities decreases.

The incumbency advantage for aid does not seem to have existed at all before the AKP took power, i.e. pre-2002 (Column 3). However, there is evidence of

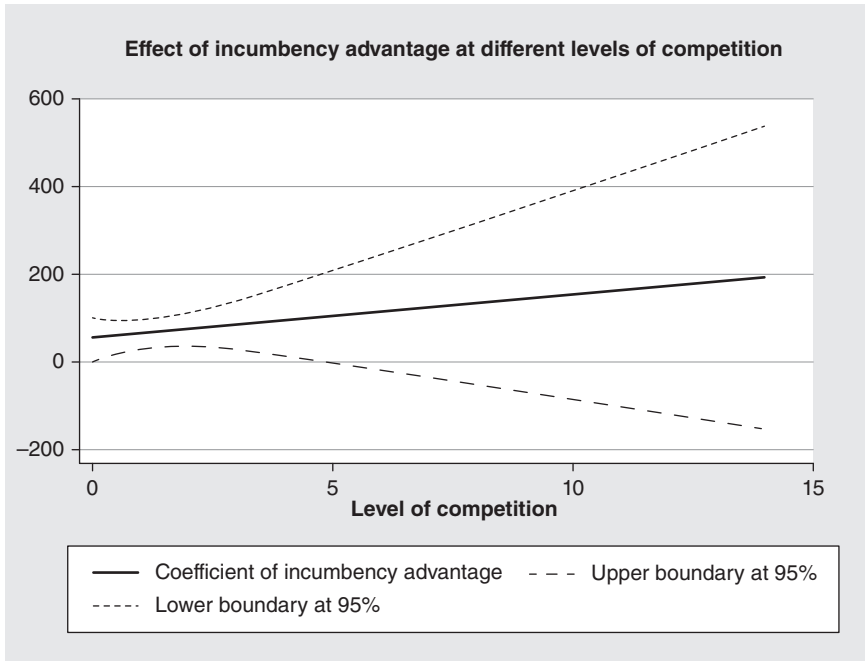


Figure 7.1 Conditional effect of incumbency advantage on aid

favoritism against competitive municipalities – whether incumbent or opposition controlled – prior to the AKP’s coming to power in 2002.<sup>21</sup> In sum, under AKP rule, but not prior to its rule, there seems to have been strategic allocation of aid towards the national incumbent’s co-partisans in districts facing nationally competitive elections. Our results suggest that some learning may have taken place during the AKP’s tenure in government as less competitive districts under AKP control also received extra aid during the party’s early years in government. Aid revenues turn out to be a resource that has been allocated significantly less to competitive opposition-affiliated municipalities at all times included in our analysis.

Turning to another revenue item that allows possibilities of discretion – foreign debt – we again find interesting results. First, foreign debt levels do not seem to be associated with partisan ties at local level, whether for the pre-AKP or AKP periods. In other words, incumbent-controlled municipalities do not seem to have gained any advantage in taking on more foreign debt. However, during the early years of the AKP national government (2003–2005), national election competition decreased the foreign debt acquired by opposition-controlled municipalities (58.31), whereas there is no evidence of the reverse impact on AKP-controlled municipalities.<sup>22</sup> That is, although AKP-affiliated municipalities did

not benefit from the opportunity to receive more foreign debt when facing competition, opposition-affiliated municipalities were significantly disadvantaged whenever their districts were competitive in the national election. Further, we should note that opposition-controlled municipalities were not disadvantaged in the pre-AKP period (Column 5).

Although not presented here, we also analysed total revenue. We found that control of the metropolitan municipality by the national incumbent party had no effect on total revenues available to that municipality in either period under analysis.

Most of the control variables had no consistent effects on the municipalities' access to resources, except for local and national election timing variables. Local election timing had an interesting effect during the AKP's early years in power. During this period, revenue sources tend to increase as local elections approach whereas the opposite is true for coalition governments prior 2002. In contrast, resources allocated to municipalities increased in all periods covered in our analysis as national elections drew closer, except for the post-2006 period.

While most demographic variables have inconsistent effects on revenue items, one important finding is that districts with fewer parliamentary deputies receive more aid during the AKP period whereas they received less before the AKP came to power. Furthermore, prior to AKP rule, socio-economically developed districts had restricted access to these revenue resources whereas they have received more after 2002.

Table 7.2 turns to the analysis of expenditures. The availability of standardised data on personnel spending allows us to compare the pre- and post-2002 periods. After 2002, personnel spending seems unaffected by either incumbency advantage or competition in national elections (Column 1),<sup>23</sup> but competition in local elections does increase it, with a large and statistically significant effect size (-16.09). In line with the previous literature, incumbency affiliation reduces personnel spending in the pre-2002 period (Column 2). In other words, municipalities affiliated with the national incumbents of the pre-2002 coalition governments seem to spend less on personnel than those not controlled by any of the governing parties. Prior to 2002, opposition-affiliated municipalities also tend to increase personnel spending when their constituency was competitive in national elections, with a large negative effect (24.52), in contrast to the post-2002 AKP era.

For healthcare spending, data is only available since 2002. As we predicted, metropolitan municipalities controlled by mayors from the AKP increase healthcare spending when national elections are competitive (Column 3). The statistically significant marginal effect of national election competition is -0.70 with a standard error of 0.25. In contrast, opposition-controlled municipalities do not seem to increase healthcare spending if their district is electorally competitive.

Turning to the control variables, we can see that the effect of change in economic performance is consistent across both types of spending, with municipalities tending to spend more on personnel and healthcare in districts with better economic performance. None of the other control variables has any consistent effect on expenditure items.



Our final analysis looks at the effect of budgetary choices on election results (Table 7.3). Column 1 presents data from the base analysis where the AKP's vote share and its predecessor parties are compared without including budgetary items. The results show that the AKP increased its votes more in the metropolitan municipalities that it controlled. Column 2 analyses the impact of healthcare, personnel and investment spending, and spending per capita. Even though incumbents might not strategically allocate each of these expenditure types, we were interested in understanding the electoral effects of major items in a municipal budget. We therefore analysed all these items in a single model since the amount spent on one budgetary item may constrain other expenditure. We excluded revenue items from the election analysis on purpose because voters do not have direct information about municipality revenue unless they try to request or find the information personally.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, they will be directly affected by how much local governments spend on the items that we analyse here.

The results show that only an increase in healthcare spending had a direct effect on the AKP's vote share. The marginal effect of healthcare spending is 0.834 with a standard error of 0.40. That is, although healthcare expenditure forms a relatively small share of metropolitan municipalities' budgets, a 1% rise in municipality healthcare spending leads to a marginal 0.8% increase in the AKP's vote share.

Regarding the control variables, the results show that the AKP gained votes as the national government from improvements in economic performance, measured by changes in the amount of bank deposits, taking fiscal choices into account. In addition, the AKP's national vote share also increased in poorer districts, as the sign of the coefficient for economic development variable was negative (Column 2).

## **Conclusion**

The main question considered in this chapter was whether and how local government incumbency and the partisan ties with the national government can contribute to a political party's electoral performance in national elections. We explored this question by analyzing the AKP's rule in Turkey in comparison to the coalition governments of the 1990s. We predicted that the AKP should benefit from intergovernmental ties because, as a single-party government without checks by coalition partners, it can efficiently channel discretionary resources to its co-partisans at the sub-national level. In addition, and possibly unlike previous national governments in Turkey and parties in other countries that have not benefitted from intergovernmental partisan ties, the AKP government can impose fiscal discipline on its co-partisans at the sub-national level to target competitive districts with electorally valuable (but possibly economically inefficient) types of expenditures. Our empirical findings in general supported these predictions in that metropolitan municipalities affiliated with the AKP have indeed received more discretionary resources and have spent more on healthcare in electorally competitive districts.

We also found that increased municipality healthcare spending brings votes for the AKP nationally. Even though within the scope of this chapter we cannot

fully identify the nature of party-citizen linkage regarding access to metropolitan municipalities' healthcare services, such spending seems less likely to be prone to clientelism – if clientelism necessitates contingency (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007) – compared to some other kinds of spending, such as personnel. Therefore, our results suggest that, in contrast to the arguments of previous studies that emphasise clientelistic spending at the local level for intergovernmental partisan ties to create an incumbency advantage (Scheiner 2005a, 2005b; Ames 1994), clientelism might not be necessary. As long as citizens value their municipalities' spending and there is an element of strategic targeting of some constituencies, ruling parties may be able to benefit from their ties with sub-national governments.

Regarding personnel spending during the AKP era, we found no support for the restraining effect of national government control. Unlike pre-2002 coalition parties, the AKP does not seem to be willing or able to convince its affiliates in the metropolitan municipalities to reduce personnel spending. This result is even more puzzling given the central government's formal control over personnel decisions since 2007. Furthermore, decisions on personnel spending do not seem to meaningfully affect vote shares of either the AKP or its predecessors. There is yet another difference between the pre- and post-AKP periods concerning personnel spending: While local electoral competition is associated with increased municipality personnel spending after 2002, the opposite is observed for the pre-2002 period. Although further analysis is required, these results seem to suggest, as noted by Kemahlioğlu (2012), that intra-party politics may play a role in personnel spending.

As mentioned earlier, we cannot directly compare the period of AKP rule with any earlier periods of single party rule in Turkey because we lack local fiscal data prior to 1997. However, although we cannot empirically test this claim, one implication of our argument is that other single-party governments were unable to leverage intergovernmental partisan ties as an incumbency advantage because they could not induce their sub-national co-partisans to restrain spending in non-competitive districts while encouraging expenditure types that would gain them votes in districts that were competitive in national elections. One possible explanation for how the AKP has managed to establish such a system may relate to Turkey's polarised political environment since 2002 (Sayarı 2007). In addition to the role of centralised election candidate nominations in Turkish political parties, AKP leaders may have had more leverage over their sub-national co-partisans because these politicians had few alternatives to being nominated by the AKP. After a certain point, this could become self-sustaining because affiliation with the dominant party carries so much advantage for sub-national politicians. We therefore suggest that future studies compare non-polarised and polarised political systems with discretionary intergovernmental fiscal relationships to see if our findings can be generalised beyond the Turkish context.

Our findings have considerable implications for the future of Turkish politics, where the AKP's dominance has raised increasing concerns about fair electoral competition. In addition to widely-discussed harassment of the opposition and unfair media coverage during the November 2015 elections and the 2017

referendum, expectations that horizontal accountability will be further weakened following recent constitutional changes are raising doubts about upcoming elections. Our results show that asymmetric control of state resources is an additional concern that is likely to favor the incumbent party and further reduce the competitiveness of elections in Turkey.

## Notes

- 1 An earlier version was presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, 2012, the Annual Meeting of the European Political Science Association, Berlin, 2012 and the Workshop on Democracy and Regime Change, Istanbul, 2014. We thank all the conference and workshop participants for their valuable feedback. The research for this project was funded by Marie Curie International Reintegration Grants, under grant agreement n° 256527. Özge Kemahlioğlu is grateful for this support.
- 2 See the section on empirical analysis for details on the measurement of the variables and sources of data.
- 3 Scheiner (2005a) examines the impact of central government resources in Japan on the LDP's local election performance.
- 4 Dahlberg and Johansson's (2002) analysis of ecological investment programs in Sweden, however, does not support the idea that the nationally governing party allocated more resources to its co-partisans.
- 5 While the June 2015 elections did not lead to a single party winning an absolute majority of parliamentary seats, a coalition government could not be formed, so snap elections were held in November 2015.
- 6 Clearly there still remains the question of why the Motherland Party (Anavatan Partisi-ANAP) could not turn itself into a dominant party in the 1980s. Unfortunately, the lack of data on metropolitan municipality budgets prior to 1997 prevents us from analysing the role of partisan ties across different levels of government as a possible factor.
- 7 Sakarya became a metropolitan municipality in 2000.
- 8 Although we would expect similar mechanisms to work for smaller municipalities as well, the effect of incumbency is likely to be stronger in metropolitan municipalities since they control larger budgets.
- 9 The bank is associated with the Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning.
- 10 In 2003, the Constitutional Court nullified this change (decision #77), but with the 2008 law, 70% is now directly transferred to the metropolitan municipality where the taxes are collected, and 30% is allocated according to population.
- 11 See Jones et al. (2000) and Treisman (2007) as examples.
- 12 Information on healthcare services by the metropolitan municipalities was gathered through their webpages, which usually include a link on services (*hizmetler*), municipality service reports (*Faaliyet Raporu*) and interviews conducted with the heads of healthcare departments of four (out of 10) AKP-controlled metropolitan municipalities. The webpages were accessed and interviews were conducted between December 2013 and February 2014.
- 13 Aile Hekimliği, Accessed February 5, 2014 [www.ailehekimligi.gov.tr/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=54&Itemid=213](http://www.ailehekimligi.gov.tr/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=54&Itemid=213)
- 14 Data between 1997 and 2005 were taken from the TÜİK website. After TÜİK stopped publishing final account data in 2005, the rest of the dataset between 2006 and 2014 was gathered from metropolitan municipalities individually. Though there may be some problems with the budgeting process at the local level (Şeker 2011), we assume that these problems occur randomly and hence do not bias our results.

- 15 Expenditure items are analysed as percentages of total spending. Total spending and revenue variables are standardised with the WDI deflator measure and per capita values are included. In the election analysis, weighted averages for the preceding 12 months are used for all budgetary and economic variables.
- 16 The election results data are gathered from TÜİK's webpage. The November 2015 elections are not included in the analysis because we do not have the budgetary data for 2015. We instead use 2014 budgetary data for the analysis of June 2015 elections.
- 17 The distribution of seats in Turkey is based on the d'Hondt formula. Using this, we redistributed the seats in each province in order to measure the effort that the mayor's party needs in order to gain one more seat.
- 18 Literacy and population data are taken from TÜİK, according to censuses conducted in 1990 and 2000, with data for years in between extrapolated, assuming a linear increase. Starting from 2007, demographic data are provided by TÜİK annually, based on an address-based population registration system. The data on bank deposits are taken from the webpage of the Banks Association of Turkey. Unfortunately, data on other indicators, such as economic growth or unemployment, do not exist for the whole period of analysis. For budgetary data, fixed effect regressions with Driscoll and Kraay standard errors are estimated to take into account district heterogeneity, heteroscedasticity, serial correlation and cross-sectional dependence (Hoechle 2007).
- 19 For the pre-2002 period the municipality is coded as affiliated with a national incumbent if any one of the coalition partners controlled the mayor's position.
- 20 A graphical illustration is available from the authors upon request.
- 21 The coefficient of national election competitiveness' marginal effect when the municipality is affiliated with the national government is 0.56 with a standard error of 0.17.
- 22 The coefficient for national election competition when the municipality is controlled by the AKP is -7.77 with a standard error of 5.44.
- 23 When we control for the 2007 changes regarding local government personnel with an indicator variable that takes on the value of one starting in 2008, the results remain similar. We find an overall decrease in personnel spending in the post-2007 period.
- 24 Some larger municipalities provide budgetary information on their website. However, the number of these municipalities is very small.

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