

**BETWEEN GAPS AND BACKLASHES: UNPACKING TÜRKİYE'S
MIGRATION GOVERNANCE AND DOMESTIC IMPLICATIONS**

by
SAMET APAYDIN

Submitted to the Graduate School of Social Sciences
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Sabancı University
July 2025

**BETWEEN GAPS AND BACKLASHES: UNPACKING TÜRKİYE'S
MIGRATION GOVERNANCE AND DOMESTIC IMPLICATIONS**

Approved by:

Prof. MELTEM MÜFTÜLER-BAÇ
(Dissertation Advisor)

Assoc. Prof. MERT MORAL

Asst. Prof. KERİM CAN KAVAKLI

Prof. GERASIMOS TSOURAPAS

Assoc. Prof. AYŞEN ÜSTÜBİCİ

Date of Approval: July 22, 2025

SAMET APAYDIN 2025 ©

All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT

BETWEEN GAPS AND BACKLASHES: UNPACKING TÜRKİYE'S MIGRATION GOVERNANCE AND DOMESTIC IMPLICATIONS

SAMET APAYDIN

Political Science, Ph.D Dissertation, July 2025

Dissertation Supervisor: Prof. MELTEM MÜFTÜLER-BAÇ

Keywords: migration governance, anti-immigrant party, migration policies,
dispersal policy, public opinion

Türkiye has long served as a country of emigration, transit, and increasingly immigration, positioning it at the centre of regional migration governance. From hosting displaced populations in the early republican era to acting as a buffer zone during the Syrian refugee crisis, Türkiye has functioned both as a place of refuge and a strategic partner in migration management.

This dissertation develops a two-level theoretical framework in which anti-immigrant parties seek to elevate the political visibility of migration, while governing parties adopt selective restrictions to ease local pressures without altering their ideological stance. It traces four transformations in Türkiye's migration governance since the 2010s: legislative activity, institutionalisation, politicisation, and securitisation.

Empirically, Chapter 3 examines the government's dispersal policy using a difference-in-differences design, showing that restrictions on immigrant settlement reduce rental prices but do not erode support for the incumbent AKP. Chapter 4 applies spatial voting models to national survey data, finding that incumbent voters discount President Erdoğan's migration stance, whereas opposition voters reward restrictive alternatives.

Overall, the findings reveal widespread anti-immigrant sentiment across party lines, shaped by fragmented governance that strains local communities but generates only limited electoral backlash. The study contributes to debates on restrictive migration policies, their domestic political consequences, and partisan dynamics in host states.

ÖZET

BOŞLUKLAR VE GERİ TEPELER ARASINDA: TÜRKİYE’NİN GÖÇ YÖNETİŞİMİ VE İÇ POLİTİK SONUÇLARIN İNCELEMESİ

SAMET APAYDIN

Siyaset Bilimi, Doktora Tezi, Temmuz 2025

Tez Danışmanı: Prof. Dr. MELTEM MÜFTÜLER-BAÇ

Anahtar Kelimeler: göç yönetiřimi, göç karřıtı parti, göç politikaları, seyreltme politikası, kamuoyu

Türkiye, uzun süredir göç veren, transit ve giderek artan řekilde göç alan bir ÷lke olarak bölgesel göç yönetiřiminin merkezinde yer almaktadır. Erken Cumhuriyet döneminde savař ve etnik çatıřmalardan kaçan nüfusları barındırmaktan, Suriye m÷lteci krizi sırasında tampon bölge iřlevi görmeye kadar, Türkiye hem bir sığınak hem de göç yönetiminde stratejik bir ortak rolü üstlenmiřtir.

Bu tez, günümüzde, göç karřıtı partilerin göçün siyasi görünürlüğünü artırmaya çalıştığı, iktidar partilerinin ise ideolojik konumlarını deęiřtirmeden yerel baskıları hafifletmek için seçici kısıtlamalar benimsedięi iki düzeyli bir kuramsal çerçeve geliřtirmektedir. Çalışma, 2010’lardan itibaren Türkiye’nin göç yönetiřiminde dört dönüşümü izlemektedir: yasal düzenlemeler, kurumsallařma, siyasallařma ve güvenlikleřtirme.

Ampirik olarak, 3. Bölüm’de hükümetin yabancılara yerleřimini düzenlemeyi amaçlayan daęıtım politikası farkların farkı tasarımıyla (difference-in-differences) incelenmektedir. Bulgular, bu kısıtlamaların kira fiyatlarını düşürdüğünü ancak iktidardaki AKP’ye olan desteęi zayıflatmadığını göstermektedir. 4. Bölüm’de ise ulusal anket verilerine mekânsal oy verme modelleri uygulanmakta, sonuçlar iktidar seçmenlerinin Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan’ın göç konusundaki tutumunu dikkate almadığını, muhalefet seçmenlerinin ise daha kısıtlayıcı alternatifleri ödüllendirdiğini ortaya koymaktadır.

Genel olarak bulgular, göç karřıtı tutumların parti çizgilerinden bağımsız olarak yaygın olduğunu ve parçalı göç yönetiřiminin yerel toplulukları zorladığını, ancak yalnızca sınırlı bir seçimsel tepki ürettiğini göstermektedir. Çalışma, kısıtlayıcı göç politikalarının etkileri, göçün iç siyasi sonuçları ve ev sahibi ÷lkelerdeki partizan dinamikler üzerine yürüt÷len tartışmalara katkı sunmaktadır.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is a great pleasure to express my gratitude to those who have supported and guided me throughout the course of my doctoral studies. This dissertation is the product not only of my own efforts but also of the encouragement, generosity, and expertise of many individuals to whom I am deeply indebted.

My deepest gratitude goes to Prof. Meltem Müftüler-Baç, my advisor. Despite her demanding academic and administrative responsibilities, she never declined a meeting request. Even in her busiest periods, she made time to guide my work and provide invaluable feedback. I am indebted not only for her support during the writing of this dissertation, but also for her role in shaping my development as an academic. I am equally grateful to Assoc. Prof. Mert Moral for his meticulous feedback and countless hours of discussion on research design and methodology. His comments and critiques have been indispensable, and without them, this dissertation would not have reached its current form. My sincere thanks also go to Assist. Prof. Kerim Can Kavaklı, whose thought-provoking questions during committee meetings significantly shaped the chapters presented here. I deeply appreciate the time and commitment he devoted to supporting my work.

I would also like to thank the other members of my dissertation jury. Prof. Gerassimos Tsourapas has been consistently willing to provide support during my studies, and I am especially grateful for his generosity in sharing his survey data for Chapter 4. In addition, collaborating with him on several other projects has greatly contributed to my academic development. I also feel fortunate to have received feedback from Assoc. Prof. Ayşen Üstübcı, one of the most accomplished scholars in the field. Despite the short notice, she kindly accepted my invitation and dedicated her time to offering comprehensive and insightful feedback.

I gratefully acknowledge the partial support of the TÜBİTAK 2214-A program, which enabled me to spend time at the University of Glasgow and complete Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

Having spent many years at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Sabancı University, I owe thanks to many people. I am grateful to all my professors for their guidance and encouragement, and especially to Oya Yeğen, with whom I had the pleasure of serving as a teaching assistant for many years. I am also indebted

to the dedicated administrative staff, including Ayşe, Sumru, Tuğcan, Özlem, and Viket, and in particular to Sedef, whose assistance collectively eased the bureaucratic process of completing and submitting this dissertation.

I would also like to thank my fellow research assistants at FASS and my small but close-knit cohort, Ayşegül and Şeyma, for their friendship and support throughout this journey.

Finally, my deepest gratitude goes to my family. To my mother and brother, who stood by me throughout my graduate years and offered constant support, I am profoundly thankful. Above all, my most heartfelt thanks go to my wife, Nurbanu. Without her unwavering support and encouragement over the past several years, not only would this dissertation have remained unfinished, but completing this journey would have been far more challenging and lonelier.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iv
ÖZET	v
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Identifying the Gap and Puzzle Formulation	4
1.2. The Turkish Political Context	11
1.3. Structure of the Dissertation	14
2. EVOLUTION OF MIGRATION GOVERNANCE AND RE- STRICTIVE SHIFTS	16
2.1. The New Legal Framework: Law on Foreigners and International Protection.....	19
2.1.1. Core Regulations of the LFIP	21
2.1.1.1. Visas and entries	21
2.1.1.2. Residence permits	22
2.1.1.3. Removal (Deportation)	24
2.1.2. Temporary Protection	27
2.1.3. Law on International Labor Force.....	28
2.2. Institutionalization: The (Directorate General) Presidency of Migra- tion Management	29
2.3. Relying on Old Approaches: The Securitization of the Border	31
2.3.1. Border-walls	32
2.3.2. EU Externalization.....	34
2.4. Restrictive Policy Shift and Politicization	36
2.5. Conclusion	38

3. HOW (NOT) TO INTEGRATE IMMIGRANTS: THE IMPACT OF DISPERSAL POLICIES ON HOUSING MARKET AND ELECTORAL OUTCOMES	40
3.1. Theoretical Framework	43
3.2. Dispersal Policy	44
3.3. Research Design	47
3.3.1. Data and Empirical Model	48
3.4. The Dispersal Policy and Rental Market	54
3.5. Sensitivity Checks	59
3.6. Reward or Punish: Dispersal Policy and Electoral Outcomes	63
3.7. Conclusion	67
 4. WHEN MIGRATION MATTERS: SPATIAL VOTING IN THE 2023 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS	 70
4.1. Theoretical Framework	73
4.1.1. Contextual Shifts ahead of the 2023 Elections	74
4.1.2. Proximity and Migration Policy Preferences	77
4.2. Research Design	84
4.3. Results	89
4.4. Robustness Test	94
4.5. Conclusion	96
 5. CONCLUSION	 98
 BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	 101
 APPENDIX A.....	 117
A.1. Equivalence and Placebo Tests	119
A.2. Market Value (Original vs. Log Scales).....	121
A.3. Robustness Tests.....	122
 APPENDIX B.....	 125
B.1. Survey Questions	125
B.2. Summary Statistics	128
B.3. Robustness Check.....	129

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1. Closed neighborhoods by districts (announced by the MoI)	46
Table 3.2. Matching estimates on Δ Cumhur Alliance vote share.....	66
Table 4.1. Conditional logit estimates of alternative spatial utility function	89
Table 4.2. Conditional logit estimates of with party-identification	92
Table A.1. Difference-in-differences estimates.....	117
Table A.2. Population by district and geographical area	118
Table B.1. Summary statistics	128
Table B.2. Chapel Hill expert evaluation	129
Table B.3. Conditional-logit estimates of spatial utility function	129
Table B.4. Conditional-logit estimates with alternative issues.....	130
Table B.5. Conditional-logit estimates of spatial utility function Incum- bent vs. opposition blocs	132
Table B.6. Logistic regression estimates with difference in proximity.....	133

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1. The correlation of the success of Zafer Party and the presence of Syrian refugees	3
Figure 1.2. Theoretical framework of migration governance and domestic politics	9
Figure 3.1. The sample coverage – Sahibindex	50
Figure 3.2. Population distribution in Istanbul.....	50
Figure 3.3. Panel view: unrestricted and restricted samples	51
Figure 3.4. Change in average rental prices	52
Figure 3.5. Event-study	54
Figure 3.6. Population by treatment	56
Figure 3.7. SES scores by treatment	57
Figure 3.8. Event-study (log transformed dependent variable)	59
Figure 3.9. Event-study (with inversed probability-weighting)	62
Figure 3.10. Balance tests (Mahalanobis distance vs. propensity score)	65
Figure 4.1. Box plot of perceived and self-placed policy position on refugees	80
Figure 4.2. Proximity measurement Perceived vs. objective (mean) candidate positions	81
Figure 4.3. Utility loss function Linear vs. quadratic	86
Figure 4.4. Predicted probability of choosing President Erdoğan Distance and party identification	93
Figure 4.5. Average marginal effect of proximity Incumbent vs. opposition	94
Figure 4.6. Predicted probabilities using the difference in proximity.....	95
Figure A.1. Equivalence test	120
Figure A.2. Placebo test	120
Figure A.3. Distribution of the dependent variable	121
Figure A.4. Robustness checks with log-transformed market value	121
Figure A.5. Panel view (strongly-balanced sample)	122

Figure A.6. Event-study (strongly-balanced sample)	123
Figure A.7. Event-study (control group: not-yet treated)	123
Figure A.8. Event-study (all periods in the sample)	124
Figure A.9. Event-study (removing new dwelling projects)	124
Figure B.1. Predicted probability of vote choice Non-separability of preferences	131

1. INTRODUCTION

More than a decade ago, the unforeseen turmoil in the Middle East and North Africa caused one of the largest displaced populations in the modern world. Without providing full remedies to the crisis at hand, Europe is now faced with another refugee inflow, this time coming from a closer region. The escalation of the war between Russia and Ukraine caused Europe to host more than 5 million Ukrainian refugees.¹ The numbers were far smaller for the Syrian refugees (slightly over 1 million registered in 2022) as the European countries were far more unprepared to react.² The lessons learned from the earlier crisis allow the European Union (EU) and national authorities to handle the Ukrainian refugee inflows relatively more efficiently. For the first time in history, the Union activated provisions of the 2001 Temporary Protection Directive which gave superior rights to Ukrainian refugees over other groups of immigrants (Carrera et al. 2022). During the Syrian refugee crisis, the national authorities and local citizens have challenged the authority of the EU due to its lack of control over the issue.

The reactions from the public have changed the landscape of the political scene in many European countries. The migration crisis in 2015 caused serious cleavages in electoral institutions of most European countries by the rise of extreme parties with their emphasis on anti-immigration discourse. For instance, Golden Dawn in Greece (Dinas, Matakos, and Hangartner 2019; Hangartner et al. 2019) and National Front in France (Edo et al. 2019) has gained significant electoral success. Furthermore, the same discourses also led to Euroscepticism (see, Dennison and Geddes (2018) for its role in Brexit). All in all, the radical right parties (RRPs) have garnered ubiquitous support across Europe.³ However, the last decade showed that their successes are somewhat asymmetric across different regions. To have two represen-

1. “Ukraine Refugee Situation,” *UHHCR*, August 1, 2023.

2. “Syria Refugee Crisis – Globally, in Europe and in Cyprus,” *UHHCR*, March 18, 2021.

3. In this study, I use radical right parties to refer wide range of political parties including but not limited to protest, extreme-right, populist right parties based on their common ground on being anti-immigrant without denying the rest of the differences they might have (for further discussion on this see Fennema (1997)).

tative examples from different parts of Europe to different extents, one can look at the small German town of Ostelsheim, and one of the founding members of the EU, Italy. In Germany, a Syrian refugee, Ryyan Alshebl has become the first mayor in Europe with a Syrian background after winning the 2023 local elections;⁴ while in the latter case, Giorgia Meloni won the 2022 parliamentary elections as the most right-wing government in the country since the Second World War.⁵ In Germany, the conditions that led to the success of Alshebl did not remain unchallenged and one of the most extreme parties in Europe, AfD also won its first local municipality in the same election.⁶ Moreover, their failure to garner support from citizens vis-à-vis the increasing number of immigrants in their regions runs contrary to their political existence.

To be more specific, the increasing number of immigrants is associated with the decline in RRP's vote share in Austria (Steinmayr 2016), in France (Vertier and Viskanic 2023), and across Europe (Hoxhaj and Zuccotti 2021). Similar to the differentiated success of RRP's, Czaika and Lillo (2018) emphasize the asymmetric spread of anti-immigrant attitudes among European citizens across different regions between 2002 and 2014; however, there are still gaps in our understanding of the role of RRP's in spreading those sentiments. Thus, the asymmetric public reaction to the immigration crisis -not just across Europe but also within national boundaries, requires further analysis.

During the Ukrainian crisis, on the other hand, the EU perceived that a similar domestic pressure would not come because the people who are in need shared cultural characteristics with European citizens. Due to various reasons such as the role of symbolic threat, a conscience collective, and ethnicity, local citizens are more positive toward Ukrainians (De Coninck 2023). Recently, Clayton, Ferwerda, and Horiuchi (2022) highlight the general support for Ukrainian refugees across Europe, although the citizens prefer them to settle in distant regions (*not in my backyard attitudes*). While it is yet to be foreseen in the upcoming days whether European citizens would react to the increasing number of Ukrainians in their neighborhoods, one place where we continue to see the disputed migration issue is Türkiye.

Before the elections in 2023, the long-heated immigrant issue in Türkiye manifested itself after a well-known right-wing nationalist politician Ümit Özdağ founded the Victory Party (*Zafer Partisi*, ZP hereafter). Although the party was not able to pass the 7% national threshold by gaining only 2.5%, it certainly caused further

4. "Syrian refugee sworn in as mayor of German town," *Al Jazeera*, July 8, 2023.

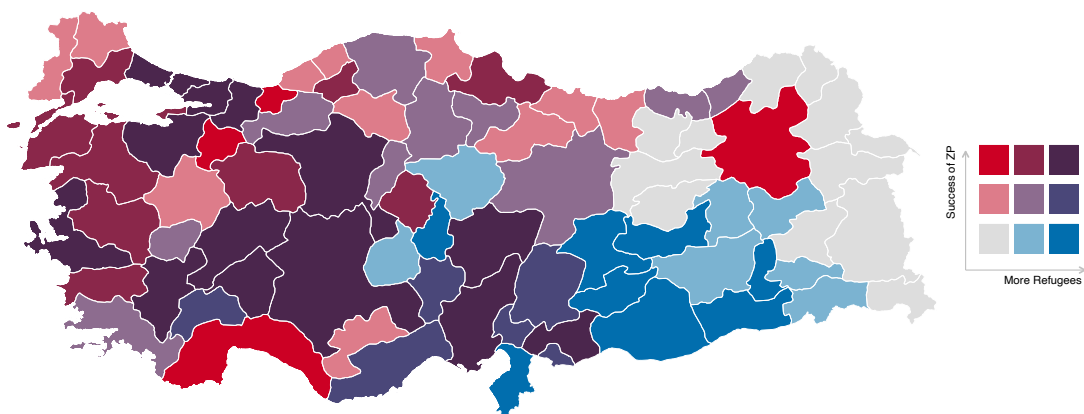
5. "Giorgia Meloni: Italy's far-right wins election and vows to govern for all," *BBC*, September 26, 2022.

6. "Germany: Far-right AfD party wins first mayoral race in landmark victory," *Le Monde*, July 3, 2023.

politicization of the issue.

The news disclosed that the opposition presidential candidate, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu was willing to cede Interior Ministry and Intelligence Services in return for their support in the second round of presidential elections.⁷ The main opposition party, Republican People’s Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP hereafter), has shifted radically in its position on restrictive policies toward immigrants from 2014 to 2019 (Chapel Hill Expert Survey) and apparently, this radicalization has continued. However, the election results since 2015 and most recently in 2023, emphasize the uneven success of anti-immigrant policies. In certain regions that host above-national average Syrian refugees, the Turkish electorate showed no response to these policies; whereas in other regions, despite Syrian numbers being relatively lower, anti-immigrant politicians received considerable support. Figure 1.1 shows the success of the ZP in certain regions in 2023 election, which do not host a significant share of Syrian refugees. For instance, the Zafer Party gained significant support in cities such as Erzurum and Antalya (highlighted in red), despite both hosting refugee populations below the national average.

Figure 1.1 The correlation of the success of Zafer Party and the presence of Syrian refugees



Along with the Syrian refugee crisis, Türkiye has been hosting a significant amount

7. “Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, Ümit Özdağ’ın "gizli protokol" açıklamasını doğruladı: 6’lı masadan sert tepkiler,” *Le Monde*, July 22, 2023.

of different ethnic immigrants that allow us to move one step further than a particular group of immigrants. On top of 2.6 million Syrian refugees under temporary protection, as of 2025,⁸ Türkiye is hosting 85,000 Russian and 35,000 Ukrainian citizens with residence permits, albeit compared to 2022 their numbers have been decreasing.⁹ Last but not least, more than 200,000 irregular immigrants, mostly consisting of Afghans, are detained last year.¹⁰ All in all, the asymmetric success of anti-immigrant politicians along with the stock as well as the flow of various categories of immigrants presents Türkiye as a unique case to study the association between migration governance and domestic consequences.

Despite a substantial literature on migration governance in the EU and the electoral effects of mass inflows, scholars have devoted limited attention to reactive, place-specific restrictions adopted by non-Western host states or to the political aftershocks those measures produce in terms of public backlashes. Existing studies tend to treat Türkiye either as a testing ground for EU externalization efforts or as a case of humanitarian admissions, leaving unexamined how recent policy shifts by the incumbent reshape local dynamics and voter behavior. This dissertation addresses that gap by analyzing the macro-economic and electoral consequences of the policy shifts after tracing them.

1.1 Identifying the Gap and Puzzle Formulation

Existing studies tend to utilize responses to question such as “immigrants are generally good for economy” or “culture is generally harmed by immigrants” to capture economic and cultural aspects of the immigration, respectively. However, such questions suffer from series of problems that might not answer the main research question at hand.

First of all, they completely ignore the complex interplay among attitudes, preferences, and issue-saliency. Albeit tend to be treated as the same, some authors draw a clear line between them. According to Druckman and Lupia (2000, 4), “*preferences are rankings derived from comparative evaluations,*” whereas following psychologists, attitudes are defined as general evaluations of an object. Therefore, the preferences are about ranking choices among alternatives that are inherently driven by the attitudes. Kustov, Laaker, and Reller (2021), for instance, treat both

8. “Temporary Protection,” *PMM*, July 10, 2025.

9. TurkStat. “Adrese Dayalı Nüfus Kayıt Sistemi Sonuçları 2024.” <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=53783>. Accessed July 10, 2025.

10. “Irregular Migration,” *PMM*, July 27, 2023.

preference and attitudes alike and analyze nine survey panel data sets underlines the long-term stability of immigration preferences and attitudes. Although sudden individual or contextual changes cause disturbances in opinions, the authors show these attitudes tend to be short-term and quickly revert to an individual's long-term equilibrium. Furthermore, Czaika and Lillo (2018) emphasize the asymmetric spread of anti-immigrant attitudes among European citizens across different regions between 2002 and 2014. Thus, even if we assume that attitudes and preferences are the two sides of the same coin, how then we can explain the sudden surge of RRP's popularity as well as extreme policy stances on the migration policies around the world if they are stable over time and spatially distributed?

At this point, the substantial body of the literature highlights the saliency factor and how it can increase the importance of the issue for the citizens that eventually affect the domestic politics. In theory, if the saliency and preferences of an individual are the functions of the same factor -such as the number of immigrants; in practice, the differentiation of saliency and preference might not be important. However, looking at 17 European countries between 2004 and 2016 shows saliency and preferences of European citizens are associated with different individual characteristics (Hatton 2021). This is because, saliency is a relative issue such that during extreme economic or political crises, despite its importance, individuals may form their electoral opinions beyond migration-related issues. This process also helps us to understand why anti-immigrant preferences are more prevalent than pro-immigrant ones. Even in times and places where they have equal representation among citizens, the anti-immigrant individuals give more importance to the issue compared to pro-immigrant individuals, who only hold preferences but do not consider them during election times; hence, we generally observe RRP's but not pro-immigrant parties (Kustov 2023).

Despite being valuable with their findings, the cross-national studies tend to overlook the causal mechanism of how RRP's utilize the migration issue from different angles and increase its saliency. Recently, for example, Lahdelma (2023) challenges both theories of economic resource allocation and group-conflict theory by focusing on Finland. Comparing the 2012 and 2017 suggests while rural areas are more anti-refugee at the baseline level, as resettled refugees contribute to the unresolved socioeconomic situation these attitudes are reversed and citizens in the rural areas vote for the candidates with more non-restrictive policies. In a similar vein, by dividing ethnic and cultural factors into national and religious identifiers, Yitmen and Verkuyten (2018) show that while stronger identification with nationality is associated with more negative attitudes toward Muslim refugees, stronger religious group identification was associated with more negative feelings toward non-Muslim minor-

ity communities. Consequently, as emphasized elsewhere, the majority of the factors in the literature are considered additive explanations without giving enough credit to the conditionality that contextual characteristics create (Drazanova 2022; Hoxhaj and Zuccotti 2021) and perhaps more concerningly how RRP exploit those conditions. Therefore, the issue of saliency and how it can change vis-à-vis responses of other parties are under-theorized in the literature beyond Hopkins (2010)’s “politicized places,” which highlights the role of political elites in mobilizing migration as a political issue.

Second, neither preference nor attitude questions address policy outcomes but rather oriented toward policy preferences. To capture the contextual determinants, the studies often add share of immigration numbers as a control variable to observe variation cross-sectional variation. Yet they do not question the actual policy outcome. What happens when the policy preferences of citizens converge with a political actor? Under what conditions they support these actors or they are driven by individual traits and characteristics?

Comparative evidence on migration reforms underscores why policy context should matter. Broader issue-voting research suggests policy reforms on migration governance, indeed matter, but dependent on the context though only a handful of studies examine the application of issue voting to migration. As an example, Abou-Chadi and Helbling (2018) track liberal and restrictive reforms in the Netherlands, Germany, and Denmark. They emphasize the rise of issue voting following immigration-related reforms. In contrast, Kustov (2024) shows that such pro-immigration reforms neither result in a negative shift in immigration preferences nor increase the salience of the issue among voters. Moreover, these reforms do not trigger backlash or lead to greater support for populist parties. Taking individual characteristics into account, however, Vrânceanu and Lachat (2021) argue that liberal policies adopted by political parties also shift citizens toward a more liberal stance on immigration.

Unlike more permissive and liberal policies, restrictive policies during the migration crisis have a more explicit impact on voting behavior and attitudes. For example, during the 2015 “migration crisis,” EU countries faced increasing pressure at both internal and external borders. On the one hand, Sweden implemented strict border controls at the Danish border, while the EU reached an agreement with Türkiye to control maritime borders in the Aegean Sea. Utilizing these quasi-experimental settings, Solodoch (2021) highlights a decrease in negative sentiments toward immigrants in Sweden, as well as a downward trend in the vote share of AfD in Germany. These broader findings echo the Turkish case, underscoring how actual policy outcomes and context shape migration and domestic consequences.

Against this backdrop, Abou-Chadi and Helbling (2018) stands out as a notable example in its framework while analyzing the association between the migration policy reforms and voting behavior. The authors incorporate both issue-saliency and policy reform into their two-staged empirical model and analyze the national election surveys from the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany between 1994 and 2011. The results highlight that both liberal (permissive) and restrictive policy reforms increase the probability of issue-voting. While authors successfully address the how attitudes and issue-saliency jointly form electoral behavior, they do it at the expense of policy reforms rather than actual policy outcomes.

Furthermore, there is an assumed link that policy reforms will increase the issue-saliency. The authors argue, first, the policy reforms are part of larger public debate and attract media attention and interest group involvement. Second and relatedly, *“policy change should lead to an increase in visibility of this policy area”* (Abou-Chadi and Helbling 2018, 690). These in return increase the issue-saliency. Yet the authors code reform as binary regardless of its degree change and states: *“bigger changes are not necessarily perceived as more salient and important”* (Abou-Chadi and Helbling 2018, 701). This is rarely the case in reality, and the extent of policies mostly define the attention it drawn. As I will show in the discussion of dispersal policy in Chapter 3, small changes only spark a public-debate if there is a particular actor, mostly extreme-right populist, spread misinformation about it. A similar pattern is evident with the influx of immigrant that become a politically salient issue only when its importance and threat perception are fostered by an anti-immigrant political elite (Hopkins 2010). The assumed link between policy reforms and issue-saliency appear to provide weak evidence to satisfy, unless there is an external political actor to mobilize this issue. Thereby, issue-saliency should be an independent factor that can not only determine the attitude and preference formation but also mobilize the already existing attitudes given that these tend to be stable (Kustov, Laaker, and Reller 2021).

The final problem is about who constitutes the category of immigrants. (Cordero, Zagorski, and Rama 2023, 10) are well aware of the issue and state: *“Not every migrant from outside the EU (TCN) might be perceived as “culturally different”; nor every European immigrant as “culturally similar” to the recipient country nationals.”* However, because this notion is too subjective, the authors argue that non-EU individuals are the best proxy at the national level based on the studies of the early 2000s without giving enough importance to what has changed over the last two decades (Scheepers, Gijsberts, and Coenders 2002). The problem is not limited to where they immigrate from but also why they decide to immigrate (Alrababah et al. 2023). The categorization defines their legal status in the host country; however,

the categories also have colloquial meanings (Abdelaaty and Hamlin 2022). Using cross-national generic survey data from four European countries, De Coninck (2020) emphasizes how individuals differentiate refugees from immigrants and hold more positive attitudes toward the refugees. Similarly, with a sample from 16 countries, Abdelaaty and Steele (2022) show the attitudes toward refugees are more often related to macro-level factors while immigrants are more frequently associated with micro-level economic concerns even though the timeframe of the study is between 2002 and 2014; hence, cannot capture the 2015 migration/refugee crisis. Nonetheless, we can conclude once the citizens differentiate categories of immigrants, the attitudes they hold are also subject to change or even manipulated.

How exactly the citizens in the host countries distinguish the categories stands out as an important question. The inter-disciplinary literature emphasizes two identifiable mechanisms: media framing and elite cues. For instance, Goodman, Sirriyeh, and McMahon (2018) lay out five different depictions of immigrants during the migration crisis in 2015 by analyzing the major UK news. Social media also plays a crucial role during this process (Lee and Nerghes 2018). On the other hand, Kirkwood (2017) shows during discussions and political speeches, the elites underline certain categories. From the immigrants' perspective, nonetheless, those categories are not inclusive enough and constructed. The interviews with 215 immigrants that crossed to Greece in 2015 underline that the political, social, and economic reasons behind immigration are complex and frequently change over time and space (Crawley and Skleparis 2018). This is why in the host countries, which category they belong to can easily be manipulated. The comparative nature of immigration studies struggles to address this issue due to contextual determinants.

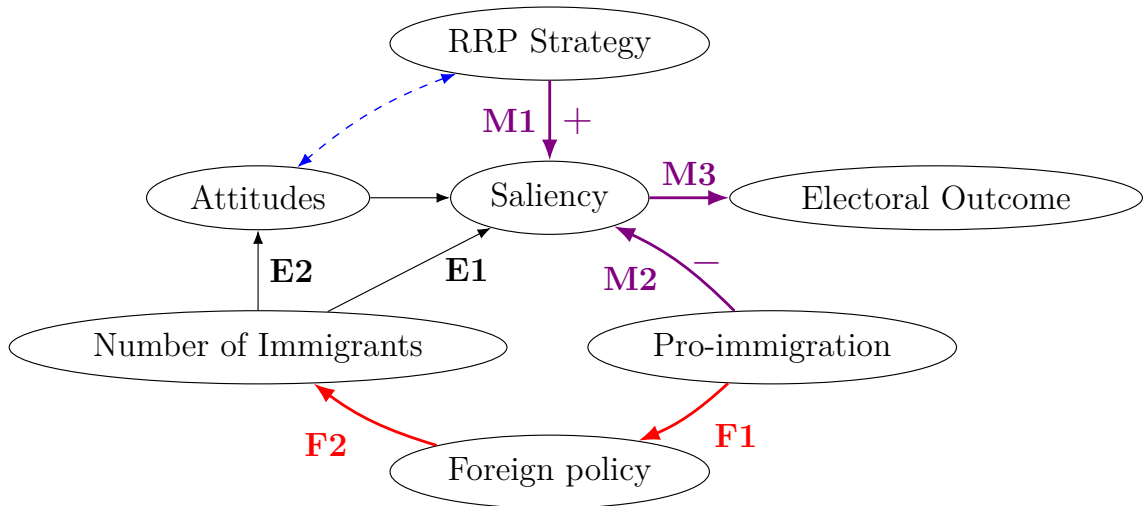
I expand these lines of thinking in the literature by arguing that domestic consequences emerge from competition over the salience of migration by offering policies targeting immigrants and manipulating categories. While radical right actors seek to elevate the issue and mobilize voters around it, actors I define as 'pro-immigration' respond strategically. This group is not necessarily more benevolent or more committed to international norms of protection; rather, their actions are also shaped by political benefits. As such, the domestic impact of migration, and its ultimate consequence for political elites in a democracy—namely, electoral outcomes—can be understood as the result of interaction and competition between anti- and pro-immigration actors.

Why, then, do decision-makers I characterize as pro-immigration accept large inflows of immigrants in the first place, effectively creating political space for their rivals? I argue that this decision is not solely driven by ideological commitments to liberal or leftist values, nor by the aim of mobilizing the domestic economy through an

expanded labor force. Rather, it is often rooted in foreign policy objectives aimed at securing long-term benefits. These may include asserting regional dominance, gaining reputational credit for adherence to international norms, or claiming moral high ground in international affairs. Each of these objectives can ultimately generate domestic political advantages in the long-run.

Finally, when domestic political competition over migration governance intensifies to a point where the incumbent can no longer outperform their radical right challengers, they begin to implement more restrictive policies and adopt an active foreign policy stance to address the sources of migratory pressure. As strategic actors, incumbents attempt to pursue these shifts without further raising the saliency of the issue, recognizing that doing so could damage their electoral prospects. For better understanding, Figure 1.2 visualizes this theoretical framework with relevant concepts and actors.

Figure 1.2 Theoretical framework of migration governance and domestic politics



Note: E = Excluded, F = Foreign Policies, M = Main Mechanism

Looking at Figure 1.2, rationally, if the number of immigrants, whether in terms of flow or stock, were not a significant issue in domestic politics as a result of foreign policy decisions, we would not expect the formation of negative attitudes or the rising saliency of the issue. This would, in turn, disrupt the entire causal chain leading to electoral outcomes. In other words, the pathways labeled E1 and E2 in Figure 1.2 would not exist.

A voluminous literature on the rise of extreme parties support this pattern and highlight the role of immigrants in shaping public attitudes and the subsequent demand for restrictive policy, which in turn supports the electoral success of extreme-

right and populist parties (e.g., Arzheimer 2009; Golder 2003; Ivarsflaten 2008). For example, Sweden was long considered a negative case for radical right populism, having not experienced such a surge in the early 2000s (Rydgren 2002). Nearly two decades later, however, the author shows how Sweden’s exceptional status eroded, pointing to rising immigration and the increasing salience of the issue in political scene (Rydgren and Van der Meiden 2019). This shift culminated in the Sweden Democrats becoming the second largest party in the Riksdag after the 2022 elections.

For this reason, the dissertation’s central objective is not only to explain citizen voting behavior with respect to immigration or the rise of radical right parties. The AKP government’s decision to host millions of Syrian refugees was not motivated by a desire to gain domestic support from citizens with humanitarian or religious priorities. Rather, elite discourse around this policy sought to address the consequences of a regional crisis, not to reflect popular preferences. If domestic approval had been the goal, the incumbent would not have missed the opportunity to welcome Palestinians.

To the contrary, in October 2023, when speculation arose about Türkiye accepting a new wave of Palestinian refugees, the Directorate of Communications swiftly denied the claims, adding that “*no preparations are being made for this by any agency.*”¹¹ Less than a month later, the same office again rejected suggestions that Erdoğan and Netanyahu had discussed Palestinian resettlement in Türkiye, calling the news fabricated.¹² This signals that the government could have capitalized on such a policy move, especially in the lead-up to the 2024 local elections, had there been a strong domestic constituency for it. The decision to host Syrians under temporary protection, whether through an open border policy or the 2016 agreement with the EU to prevent onward movement to Europe, was not the outcome of domestic political considerations. Instead, it reflected a series of foreign policy imperatives shaped by Türkiye’s assertiveness and pursuit of autonomy on the regional and global stage. While tracing the migration governance in Türkiye, therefore, I briefly discuss on multiple occasions why the AKP government and Erdogan decided to pursue foreign policy that eventually resulted in the rise of immigrant flows (red paths, labelled F1 and F2 in Figure 1.2).

In terms of increasing migration influx and saliency, however, not much has changed in the Turkish context since the last presidential elections in 2018. In fact, on

11. Directorate of Communications, “‘500 bin Filistinli’nin Türkiye’ye alınacağı’ iddialarına ilişkin açıklama.” October 16, 2023) Accessed July 10, 2025. <https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/turkce/haberler/detay/500-bin-filistinlinin-turkiyeye-alinacagi-iddialarina-iliskin-aciklama>.

12. Directorate of Communications, “‘1 milyon Filistinli’nin Türk vatandaşı olacağı’ iddiasına ilişkin açıklama.” November 7, 2023) Accessed July 10, 2025. <https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/turkce/haberler/detay/1-milyon-filistinlinin-turk-vatandasi-olacagi-iddiasina-iliskin-aciklama>.

the contrary, the number of Syrians under temporary protection and irregular immigrants apprehended by the authorities decreased since after a peak before the COVID pandemic. Therefore, neither flow nor stock of immigrants can explain the increased saliency of the issue. Therefore, line labelled E1 in Figure 1.2 also beyond the explanation of this dissertation.

For the main purpose of this dissertation, I focus the saliency of migration as a competition between populist opposition actors and the incumbent. In both empirical chapters I present how the policy decisions and competency of the opposition on solving the migration issue altered the electoral behavior. Within this context, I particularly focus the restrictive policies of the AKP government to respond public demand while simultaneously reducing the saliency of the issue by adopting strategic silence and moral high ground.

1.2 The Turkish Political Context

Since 2018, Turkish party competition and elections have taken place under the full implementation of the presidential system introduced by the 2017 constitutional reform. This reform restructured executive–legislative relations and made opposition coordination more difficult in an already competitive authoritarian setting that had consolidated in the previous decade (Esen 2021). The new institutional design concentrated agenda-setting and bureaucratic authority in the presidency, changed intra-executive bargaining, and reinforced pre-existing features of Turkey’s party system, such as leader-centred organisations and dense clientelist linkages between state resources and partisan networks. These elements, documented in earlier scholarship, became more decisive after 2018 (Sayarı 2014). Electoral competition remained meaningful and turnout high, but the field was increasingly unequal due to media imbalance, legal pressure on opponents, and administrative interventions. This was most visible in the predominantly Kurdish southeast, where elected mayors were frequently replaced by state trustees (Hintz and Ercan 2024). More recently, this practice has spread to other parts of the country, where elected CHP mayors have faced imprisonment or have been pressured to switch parties.

The June 2018 concurrent presidential and parliamentary elections marked the beginning of the new system. President Erdoğan secured re-election, while the Justice and Development Party (AKP) retained control of parliament through its alliance with the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP). This episode confirmed two points often highlighted in the literature on competitive authoritarian regimes. First, incum-

bency advantages increase when legal reforms reduce veto points and concentrate executive resources. Second, when the opposition fails to resolve candidate coordination problems, incumbents can absorb discontent by relying on party organisation, selective redistribution, and message discipline. These dynamics fit analyses that place Turkey’s trajectory within competitive authoritarianism and stress the organisational capacity of the governing camp, which combines formal welfare provision, municipal resources, and informal networks to sustain support under adverse economic conditions.

The 2019 local elections were a turning point. They showed that opposition parties could reduce disadvantages under the presidential system by forming coalitions, nominating broadly appealing candidates, and concentrating on metropolitan races. In March 2019, the Republican People’s Party (CHP) captured both Ankara and Istanbul. The annulment of the initial narrow result in Istanbul by the Supreme Election Council and the subsequent wider victory of Ekrem İmamoğlu in the rerun were interpreted as a backlash against executive overreach and as evidence that voters were willing to defend competitive norms within institutional limits (Esen and Gümüşçü 2019). The Istanbul case has since been used to illustrate how urban performance politics, Kurdish vote bargaining, and low-conflict managerial profiles can unite heterogeneous opposition groups even under centralised presidential rule. It also showed that administrative actions seen as unfair may mobilise opposition voters more effectively than standard issue appeals, a finding supported by studies of political communication in polarised contexts like Turkey (Carkoglu and Yildirim 2024).

Between 2019 and 2023, opposition parties tried to expand this coalition strategy nationally through the Nation (Millet) Alliance, centred on the CHP and the Good Party, later joined by smaller centre-right formations led by former AKP figures. Scholarship warns that alliance politics in presidential systems is costly, since it requires agreement on a single presidential nominee, joint legislative lists, and power-sharing among diverse elites. The Turkish experience confirmed these difficulties. Coordination was achieved in some metropolitan areas, but rivalries and divergent policy profiles undermined a coherent national ticket. Electoral law changes in March 2022 further complicated bargaining. Parliament lowered the national threshold from ten to seven percent and reintroduced seat allocation on party lists rather than at the alliance level, reducing benefits for small allies and pushing them toward mergers or withdrawals, which the opposition only partly achieved before 2023 (Kocapinar and Kalaycıoğlu 2024; Kutlay and Öniş 2024).

The May 2023 parliamentary and presidential elections again featured very high participation but took place on an uneven playing field. The Cumhur Alliance regained

its parliamentary majority and Erdoğan was re-elected in the second round. Analyses of the 2023 cycle highlight three mechanisms. First, partisanship remained the strongest predictor of vote choice, with parliamentary and presidential preferences closely aligned even amid economic crisis and earthquake trauma (Kocapınar and Kalaycıoğlu 2024). Second, the institutional advantages of presidentialism amplified the role of media parallelism and clientelist networks, supporting vote retention in core constituencies. The studies show that even in polarised systems, exposure to partisan media and tailored information can influence short-term preferences, while non-partisan information tools modestly reduce knowledge gaps (Andı, Çarkoğlu, and Banducci 2023). Third, nationalist actors to the right of the government shaped inter-round bargaining by pushing migration, security, and identity issues to the forefront, constraining repositioning by larger parties (Secen, Al, and Arslan 2024).

If 2019 suggested that metropolitan politics could challenge incumbency, the March 2024 local elections generalised this trend. The CHP won the nationwide vote share for the first time since the late 1970s, held Istanbul and Ankara with large margins, and captured provinces long dominated by the AKP. Analyses of the 2024 results emphasise three factors: economic fatigue and cost-of-living pressures, candidate-centred campaigns and managerial framing in urban contests, and fragmentation on the conservative right, which allowed the New Welfare Party to draw votes from religious and socially conservative segments, complicating AKP–MHP coordination (Cinar 2024).

These outcomes remain conditioned by legal oversight and centre–local relations. The removal of elected pro-Kurdish mayors and their replacement with trustees has continued since the mid-2010s. Tutkal (2022) frames this as part of authoritarian neoliberalism that links security narratives with centralisation and market governance in the southeast, while Hintz and Ercan (2024) show how anti-Kurdish prejudice enables public tolerance for such practices, undermining electoral accountability.

This is the electoral context within which this dissertation examines the consequences of migration policies at both the local and national levels. The Turkish political setting, often described as competitive authoritarianism, inevitably shapes the theoretical links developed throughout the text. Therefore, each finding and conclusion should be considered with attention to context-specific factors.

1.3 Structure of the Dissertation

To test the theoretical framework mentioned above, the chapters follow a clear analytical trajectory, beginning with the broad structure of Türkiye’s migration governance, moving to the neighborhood-level consequences of a specific restrictive policy called dispersal, and finally examining how migration policies more broadly shape individual voting behavior. Each chapter narrows the empirical focus, applies a distinct methodological approach, and builds on the findings of the preceding chapters. Taken together, they contribute to scholarship on legal transformations in migration governance, the economic and political effects of restrictive policies, and public opinion on immigration.

Chapter 2 provides the broader policy context. Against the backdrop of increased cross-border mobility and growing the EU pressure through both conditionality and externalization, it analyzes how Türkiye’s migration governance has evolved since 2010. The chapter identifies three mutually reinforcing domains: legal regulations, institutional development, and border securitization. It highlights how progress in each of these areas has gradually become more restrictive. By situating external incentives alongside domestic politicization, the chapter helps explain how and why the Turkish government has hardened its migration stance while continuing to reference humanitarian norms. This overview sets the stage for the empirical chapters that follow, particularly by tracing the emergence of neighborhood-level settlement policies with lasting effects.

Chapter 3 turns to the local level and examines the consequences of one such policy, the dispersal and neighborhood closure, introduced in 2022. The policy bars foreign nationals, regardless of legal status, from settling in neighborhoods where their population share exceeds twenty percent. Though intended to reduce tensions by limiting immigrant concentration and avoiding segregation, the policy also had measurable consequences for local housing markets and, to a lesser extent, for electoral behavior. Using a monthly panel of rental listings across Istanbul neighborhoods, the chapter applies a difference-in-differences design to exploit the staggered implementation of the policy by the Ministry of Interior. It then investigates electoral outcomes by comparing vote-share changes for the Cumhur Alliance in affected versus unaffected neighborhoods during the 2023 presidential and 2024 local elections. The analysis finds a sharp decline in asking rents and a modest increase in support for the incumbent coalition in neighborhoods targeted by the policy. These findings illustrate how even reactive and narrowly focused migration measures can reshape both economic dynamics and voting behavior.

By linking migration governance to both market outcomes and electoral shifts, Chapter 3 bridges the broader institutional framework and the individual-level responses explored in the next chapter. However, while neighborhood-level data can identify where political changes occur, they cannot fully explain why individuals update their electoral choices. This limitation motivates the micro-level analysis in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4 draws on an original post-election survey conducted after the 2023 presidential contest to assess how the salience of migration, together with voters' evaluations of candidate positions, influences electoral behavior. Building on the legal framework of Chapter 2 and the neighborhood-level findings of Chapter 3, this chapter examines whether restrictive migration policies influence vote choice when candidates converge on a shared policy space. Using conditional logit models that account for both voter and candidate attributes, the chapter finds that spatial theories of voting help explain voter behavior on migration. However, partisan identification continues to shape how voters respond to candidate positions, indicating that ideological alignment interacts with differentiated saliency strategies in structuring political preferences.

Together, the three chapters follow a coherent progression from institutional design to local consequences and individual-level attitudes. Chapter 2 outlines the legal and bureaucratic foundations that make restrictive migration policies possible. Chapter 3 demonstrates their effects on rental housing markets and electoral outcomes. Chapter 4 shows how these policies are interpreted and acted upon by voters, depending on their partisan affiliations and perceived candidate positions. This structure allows the dissertation to trace how Türkiye's evolving migration regime has been shaped not only by policy but also by the interplay of economic conditions, political competition, and public opinion.

2. EVOLUTION OF MIGRATION GOVERNANCE AND RESTRICTIVE SHIFTS

Global migration patterns have been shifting drastically. States now confront unprecedented levels of cross-border mobility. Although Western Europe and North America have long attracted migrants, tightened border controls and increasingly restrictive legal regimes have curtailed the liberal character once associated with these destinations (de Haas, Natter, and Vezzoli 2016; Helbling and Kalkum 2018). In parallel, the EU's efforts to externalize migration control have elevated the strategic relevance of transit countries, with Türkiye widely regarded as a pivotal partner (Müftüler-Baç 2022). Bordering Greece and Bulgaria to the West and politically unstable states such as Syria, Iran, and Iraq to the East, Türkiye serves as both a geographical and political bridge between Europe and the Middle East. As a result, migration governance decisions made in Ankara have direct implications for the broader European context.

This chapter surveys the contemporary legal, institutional, and security frameworks that structure migration governance in Türkiye. The mass displacement resulting from the Syrian civil war, the consequences of the Arab Spring, and the withdrawal of United States forces from Afghanistan have intersected with longstanding domestic economic and security challenges, compelling Turkish policymakers to elevate migration to the top of the national agenda. Within this context, the main aim of this chapter is to present an overall picture of migration governance, with particular emphasis on developments since 2010. It makes two additional contributions to the literature. First, it foregrounds domestic political constraints, especially the growing politicization of migration and the rise of populist messaging targeting immigrants, as an explanatory variable alongside external pressures and foreign-policy initiatives. Second, it tracks recent shifts within the restrictive-permissive policy nexus during the post-2010 period, an area that remains relatively understudied. Amid changing global migration trends, the EU pressure, and domestic dynamics; a trio of policy priorities has emerged since 2010 to address irregular migration: legal reforms, institutionalisation, and securitisation of the borders.

Key legislative milestones include the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP, 2013, effective 2014) and the Law on International Labor Force (LILF, 2016). The LFIP lays out fundamental principles governing entry, stay, and exit of foreigners, while the LILF regulates the employment of foreign workers. Although the LFIP has undergone several amendments, its core provisions on visa requirements, hierarchical international protection status, and removal procedures remain intact. Together with the Turkish Penal Code, subordinate regulations, and presidential decrees, LFIP and LILF constitute the backbone of Türkiye’s migration governance architecture.

Institutionally, the LFIP established the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) under the Ministry of Interior, which was upgraded to the Presidency of Migration Management (PMM) in 2021. Centralizing administrative authority in a single body has reduced the fragmentation that historically hindered effective migration policy implementation, though coordination gaps among ministries and bureaucratic bodies persist.

Border management constitutes the third pillar of Türkiye’s migration governance framework. Rising irregular flows have exposed weaknesses along eastern frontiers, prompting Ankara to construct concrete barriers on portions of its borders with Syria, Iran, and Iraq. Simultaneously, the 2016 EU–Türkiye Statement (in)formalized cooperation on external border control, resulting in a sharp decline in unauthorized crossings into Greece and a situation in which many migrants became effectively stranded in Türkiye, as onward movement to the EU was curtailed and prospects for return to their countries of origin remained limited. This dynamic, in turn, has provided Ankara with significant bargaining leverage in its foreign-policy negotiations with the EU and other partners.

Against this backdrop, this chapter provides a comprehensive overview of migration governance in Türkiye, focusing on developments since 2010. It evaluates three mutually reinforcing domains: (1) legal regulation, (2) institutional development, and (3) border security, drawing on the best available quantitative and qualitative evidence. Although treated in separate sections, these areas overlap: legislation supplies the legal foundations that authorize and delimit central agency, while institutional capacity shapes the implementation of laws and the management of borders. The analysis therefore examines each domain in turn, highlights their points of intersection, and identifies the distinct policy outcomes associated with each.

Migration governance encompasses a wide spectrum of issues, including international protection, irregular migration, foreign-policy strategies, and local implementation. This chapter does not cover each of these areas in detail but focuses instead on

selected aspects most relevant to the analysis, addressing more peripheral topics only briefly, if at all. Several important areas of research fall outside the scope of this chapter but are vital to understanding Türkiye's broader migration landscape. To name just a few areas that fall outside this chapter's remit, scholars have also examined the following topics; first, at the local level, scholars highlight how municipalities shape immigrant experiences through service delivery, urban planning, and social-cohesion initiatives, showing clear variation across provinces in terms of resources, administrative capacity, and political commitment (e.g., Genç 2018; Kale and Erdoğan 2019). Second, in the education area, research on Syrian children finds progress in enrolment and bilingual classroom support but also points to ongoing challenges such as overcrowded schools, inconsistent teacher training, and difficulties with secondary-level placement (e.g., Bircan and Sunata 2015; Sunata and Abdulla 2020). Third, a growing body of research on diaspora engagement examines how states construct and mobilize emigrant identities through dedicated institutions and diplomatic channels, casting diasporas as sources of soft power while also exposing internal debates over community representation (e.g., Adamson 2019; Akçapar and Aksel 2017). Fourth, research on human smuggling and trafficking examines how transit networks function, how enforcement efforts are implemented, how states navigate the balance between border control and the protection of vulnerable individuals, and how intensified crackdowns often displace routes by pushing smugglers inland or toward more dangerous paths, which in turn heightens migrants' risk of exploitation (e.g., Icduygu 2021; Yıldız 2021). While each of these areas contributes essential insights, this chapter concentrates on the intersecting pillars of national legislation, institutional development, and border security. Finally, although legal frameworks on migration governance are central, the chapter does not take a purely legal approach: it discusses foundational statutes such as the LFIP but examines detailed provisions only when they shape the three core dimensions under analysis.

Where relevant, the chapter cites examples from other countries solely to illustrate alternative approaches; it is not a systematic comparative study. For instance, in considering the 2016 EU–Türkiye Statement, the text contrasts European externalization practices in Türkiye with analogous arrangements in Egypt and Jordan. Empirical outcomes of Turkish policies are reported whenever reliable statistics are available. Because these data are fragmented across multiple agencies' repositories and parliamentary records, the chapter also notes significant gaps in data availability and publicly available information.

Given the embedded effects of migration in Türkiye, as well as its role in both global and regional governance, the literature on migration in Türkiye has attracted considerable scholarly attention. Key studies examine specific aspects of migration

governance, particularly in relation to the international protection regime and the arrival of Syrians. Icduygu (2015) outlines early developments in the mid-2010s, emphasizing both progress in the legal framework and ongoing shortcomings within the global asylum system. Others explore the differentiated international protection regimes in Türkiye and the resulting creation of distinct legal categories (Almasri 2023; Ustübeci 2019) and integration prospects (Akar and Erdoğan 2019; Icduygu and Şimşek 2016; Simsek 2020). Alternatively, some studies address irregular migration, emphasizing the role of Europeanization as a driving force (Dimitriadi et al. 2018; Icduygu and Aksel 2012), while others incorporate Türkiye’s foreign policy assertiveness as a complement to the Europeanization process (Gökalp Aras and Mencütek-Şahin 2018). More recent contributions present broader overviews of Turkish migration governance, addressing themes such as migration diplomacy (Adamson 2021), the evolution from nation-building to neoliberal migration policies (Kirişçi and Yıldız 2023), and the transformation into a state-controlled, marketized migration regime (Yıldız and Sert 2023). By integrating domestic political dynamics and mapping the evolution of restrictive versus permissive instruments since 2010, this chapter extends and deepens these lines of inquiry.

The chapter unfolds in five parts. Section 2 presents the post-2010 legal architecture, detailing the LFIP and showing how the LILF complements it. Section 3 traces institutional consolidation through the rise of the Presidency of Migration Management and its coordinating role. Section 4 reviews border securitization, with attention to wall building and the EU–Türkiye Statement. Section 5 examines the recent restrictive turn and the domestic politicization of migration, and Section 6 concludes.

2.1 The New Legal Framework: Law on Foreigners and International Protection

Migration governance in Türkiye can be traced back to the foundation of the Republic, where the primary aim was to build a nation-state based on ethnic and cultural homogeneity (Kirişçi 2000). For example, the 1934 Settlement Law (Law no. 2733, dated 21/06/1934) defines persons of Turkish descent and those attached to Turkish culture as ‘muhacir’ and can be settled in the country with privileged rights (Article 3) whereas those who are non-Turk descents must live only where assigned to them and face sanctions (up to loss of citizenship) for unauthorized movement (Article 7). This early selective logic has shaped every later migration statute and

still echoes in today’s LFIP through such devices as the geographical limitation and broad ‘public-order’ clauses.

Before the atrocities of the Second World War and before the emergence of a global refugee regime, the newly established republic responded pragmatically to several notable movements, including the arrival of White Russians after 1920, the 1923 population exchange with Greece, and the flight of individuals escaping Nazi persecution across Europe. In each case, the state tailored admission rules to its immediate political goals, granting only temporary status to most Russians and using the population exchange to consolidate demographic homogeneity in Western Turkey.

This pragmatic legacy persists. Türkiye’s selective approach is most evident in the geographical limitation it placed on the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. The government ratified the Convention in 1961 and the 1967 Protocol in January 1968 while restricting refugee status to persons displaced by events in Europe. Applicants from other regions may obtain only “conditional refugee” status, which permits them to remain until resettled in a third country. Although the EU pressed Ankara to remove the limitation during accession talks (Kirişçi 2003), the restriction was reaffirmed and further codified in the LFIP. Currently, Türkiye and the Republic of Congo are the only two countries that have retained the geographical limitation to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. By contrast, countries such as Italy abolished the limitation in 1990 to comply with EU regulations, including those related to the Schengen Area and mobilizations clauses (Salvatici 2023).

Despite decades of dialogue with the EU and mounting regional pressure, Türkiye formally enacted the LFIP only in 2013. Many scholars argue that its eventual passage owed more to domestic imperatives, particularly the mass arrival of Syrian refugees and the growing securitization of migration, than to Europeanization. In fact, prior to the LFIP, large-scale inflows were governed by the 1994 Asylum Regulation, issued in response to the 1991 influx of Iraqi asylum seekers. That regulation prioritized state security over refugee-law obligations such as the principle of non-refoulement. Although the Syrian civil war accelerated adoption, drafting of the LFIP had begun in the early 2000s and gained momentum in 2008, reflecting a broader effort to modernize migration governance (Ustübici 2018). On the other hand, despite being Türkiye’s first comprehensive asylum framework (Dardağan Kibar 2013), and although these legal developments were undoubtedly influenced by Europeanization, the state’s continued use of the “guest” label reveals enduring domestic political considerations (Abdelaaty 2021).

Nevertheless, since 2013, the LFIP has been providing the legal foundation for all

categories of foreigners. Article 1 states that the law aims “*to regulate the principles and procedures with regard to foreigners’ entry into, stay in, and exit from Türkiye ...and the establishment, duties, mandate, and responsibilities of the Directorate General of Migration Management [DGMM] under the Ministry of Interior.*” The DGMM was elevated to the Presidency of Migration Management (PMM) in 2021; its role in migration governance is examined in the next sections.

2.1.1 Core Regulations of the LFIP

2.1.1.1 Visas and entries

After defining the purpose and scope of the law, including the principle of non-refoulement, the LFIP turns to entry, exit, and visa regulations. As in every sovereign state, any foreigner who enters Türkiye in violation of these procedures is deemed an irregular migrant (Article 5). Until the LFIP, these matters were governed by the Passport Law (Law no. 5682, dated 15 July 1950). The Passport Law remains in force, but the LFIP repealed twenty of its articles and introduced provisions that earlier legislation lacked. Article 15 of the LFIP denies visas to foreigners “*who are considered undesirable for reasons of public order or public security*” (15(c)) and to those “*who are suspects or convicts of crimes that are subject to extradition pursuant to agreements to which the Republic of Türkiye is a party*” (15(d)). Compared with Article 8 of the Passport Law, which referred to “*beggars*” and “*white-woman trading*”, the LFIP embodies a more contemporary approach (Dardağan Kibar 2013, 113).

What is more striking is that Article 16 permits officials to cancel a visa when they have “*strong doubt*” that the foreigner will commit a crime, a standard that remains highly discretionary. These broad powers are also granted in countries like the UK and France on ‘public-good’ grounds, and in Austria, where officials may act if they reasonably suspect that the visa-holder fails the character test. Yet the suspicion that an individual may commit a crime in the future, even without affiliation to an organization (which constitutes a separate offense requiring evidence), allows Turkish authorities to act with a wide margin of subjective interpretation. In sum, the current framework offers a clearer statutory arrangement for visas than earlier rules but still includes several ambiguous clauses that permit broad administrative discretion, reflecting the pragmatic legacy. The court decisions discussed below with respect to deportations illustrate how this discretion operates in practice.

In addition to updating existing laws, the LFIP also introduced key articles that

explicitly define the boundaries of migration, notably an entry ban. According to Article 9, the PMM may impose an entry ban on foreigners deemed a threat to public order, security, or health and shall impose one on those deported from Türkiye. However, the ambiguous wording once more grants the PMM broad discretionary power, allowing for subjective interpretation in enforcement. Historically, Türkiye avoided imposing such entry bans on overstayers, preferring instead to facilitate their regularization. Under the original LFIP, overstayers who voluntarily reported to authorities faced bans of no more than one year. An amendment in 2019 further relaxed this by allowing the PMM to waive the ban entirely if the overstayer paid an administrative fine. This arrangement allowed an overstayer to regularize their status by re-entering, thereby converting an entry ban and a potentially irregular attempt to enter into a lawful one. However, in June 2020, the policy was tightened: only those who overstayed for less than three months could still benefit from an exemption.¹ Beyond this period, the PMM imposes entry bans proportional to the length of the violation, ranging from a minimum of one month to a maximum of five years. Longer bans, however, incentivize migrants to remain in irregular status rather than reporting to the authorities.

2.1.1.2 Residence permits

The second broad concept that the LFIP regulates is residence permits. Before 2013, the Law on Residence and the Travel of Foreign Nationals (no. 5683, dated 15/7/1950) regulated residence permits; however, the outdated nature of the law caused its abrogation with the LFIP. Under the new legislation, any foreigner whose visa has expired must apply for a residence permit, and in any case may not remain in Türkiye for more than ninety days without one (Article 19), subject to limited exemptions such as members of diplomatic and consular missions (Article 20). The ninety-day limit, replacing the one- or two-month periods stipulated in the earlier law (Articles 3 and 4 of Law no. 5683), was first adopted by Council of Ministers decisions in 2003 and 2011 and was retained in the LFIP.

The LFIP obliges foreigners to make the renewal of residence permit to the authorities prior to the expiration (Article 24 Paragraph 2). In the abrogated law, on the other hand, the regulation on renewal compelled foreigners to make an application within fifteen days after it expires whereas applications earlier than expiration were optional (Article 10 in Law no.5683). This requirement shortens the administrative

1. PMM, “Statement Regarding the Prohibition of Entry.” 2020) Accessed July 10, 2025 en.goc.gov.tr/statement-regarding-the-prohibition-of-entry-that-shall-be-applied-to-the-foreigners-who-violate-the-right-to-legal-stay.

window for renewal and may increase the number of irregularity cases; it is therefore a more restrictive approach similar to entry-ban regulations targeting overstayers.

The novelty of the LFIP on residence permits is the introduction of the different types of permits:

- a. short-term residence permit (*Article 31*)
- b. family residence permit (*Article 34*)
- c. student residence permit (*Article 38*)
- d. long-term residence permit (*Article 42*)
- e. humanitarian residence permit (*Article 46*)
- f. victim of human-trafficking residence permit (*Article 48*)

For each permit type, the LFIP provides separate articles detailing application, renewal, and cancellation procedures. The pre-LFIP framework lacked such regulations, which caused serious problems during applications and processing. Because the cancellation or expiry of a permit results in irregularity, clear application procedures, articulated appeal rights, and an online tracking system represent concrete progress by reducing discretionary refusals and shortening processing times.

In fact, since the entry into force of the LFIP, Türkiye has witnessed a gradual increase in the number of permits issued. In 2014, the total number of foreigners with permits was less than half a million, while in 2022, the number reached a record high of almost 1.5 million. These figures not only support the government's assertion that Türkiye has transformed into a destination country for migrants (Icduygu 2004), but also reflect the increased availability of different types of residence permits. Entries to Türkiye also increased by approximately twenty-five percent between 2014 and 2022, reaching around forty-five million. The parallel growth in residence permits points to expanded opportunities for regularization. Citizens of Russia, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan are prominent among family-permit holders. At the same time, Uzbeks and Turkmen were among the most apprehended irregular migrants in the 2024 statistics, highlighting the continued persistence of irregularity despite the availability of broader legal pathways.

The functionality of certain permits, particular humanitarian residence permit, however, is questionable based on available records. According to estimates by Ekşi (2018), approximately 56,000 humanitarian residence permits were issued by 2018. This raises concerns about whether the permit has been used as a pretext to regularize immigrants who fall outside the scope of the specified conditions, given that its use is intended to be exceptional. For example, the author cites the case of an

Egyptian citizen who was granted a humanitarian residence permit despite a removal decision issued by the PMM (Ekşi 2018, 261). The individual had been a prominent figure in the opposition movement during the Arab Spring and could not be deported to his country of origin due to the principle of non-refoulement. The decision was also justified on procedural grounds, such as the failure to notify the individual of the removal order. Ekşi further notes that the permit has also been used to regularize Iraqi Turkmen migrants (Ekşi 2018, 281). A similar permit is also granted in Denmark and Norway in cases involving serious health conditions or insufficient care for children, though under very strict conditions because unlike in Türkiye, these permits are permanent (Vitus and Lidén 2010). Official records indicate that only 9,215 humanitarian residence permits were issued between 2016 and 2021 in Türkiye, suggesting either a sharp decline in its use after the 2016 period or a discrepancy with academic estimates.

Nevertheless, taken together with other residence permits, the LFIP suggests a shift toward more permissive policies that offer legal opportunities for immigrants who want to live in Türkiye.

2.1.1.3 Removal (Deportation)

The last important issue that the LFIP regulates is removal (deportation). The PMM has the primary authority to issue removal decisions to send foreigners to their country of origin, a transit country or a third country (Articles 52 and 53). Since such decisions result in immediate irregularity this part requires a closer look. Article 54(1) outlines categories subject to removal, primarily including foreigners who overstay visas or permits. It also references the Turkish Penal Code, under which foreigner sentenced to imprisonment are removed after conditional release or, in any case, upon completing their sentence. Moreover, any threat to public security or order leads to a removal decision by the authorities. Due to the lack of official data on removal reasons, alternative sources are needed. Interviews with 15 returnees, for instance, revealed that three were deported for public security concerns, despite minor incidents such as disagreements with a bus driver over the ticket prices (Mencütek-Şahin 2023, 1089).

Under Article 9, foreigners who are removed receive an entry ban of up to five years (extendable to ten years in serious cases). In many instances, the security forces apprehend individuals who already have entry bans. To give a few examples, in 2018, while attempting to leave the country in a hidden compartment of a bus, three

Georgians were intercepted and two of them already had entry bans.² Similarly, a Syrian woman with an entry ban due to a contagious disease was apprehended during routine ID controls.³ These examples support the claim that even after returning to their origin or safe third-country, many removed immigrants choose to irregularly (re)enter Türkiye. The PMM also highlights the repeat apprehension of around 40,000 immigrants in 2024, which may imply the multiple irregular entries of the same individuals although the data are not detailed.⁴

The LFIP provides two layers of protection that prevent the removal of certain foreigners. First, the non-refoulement provisions (Articles 4 and 6) prohibit deporting international protection beneficiaries. If a protection holder later commits a serious crime, the authorities must decide whether to withdraw their status in light of current conditions in the home country. Only after such withdrawal would the person lose lawful residence and fall under the ordinary rules governing irregular stay and removal. Over the last few years, however, there have been several occasions where Türkiye has been criticized for breaching the non-refoulement principle based on mistrials.⁵ Second, Article 55 extends the same safeguard to specific humanitarian cases, such as victims of human trafficking or those receiving treatment for life-threatening conditions. In all instances, however, the PMM must carry out an individual risk assessment and no categorical exemption applies.

Beyond public-order grounds, Türkiye also removes foreigners for suspected ties to terrorist organizations. According to the MoI, nine thousand foreign fighters from 102 nationalities were deported between 2011 and 2022, more than one thousands of whom were EU citizens. Since 2016 some beneficiaries of international protection have been deported on these grounds, raising additional non-refoulement concerns. Therefore, while statutory regulations in Türkiye appear to uphold the principle of non-refoulement and aim to provide protection for those seeking international refuge, in practice, violations of this principle are increasingly observed.

Article 56 states that once a deportation order is issued, the individual may be granted 15 to 30 days to leave Türkiye voluntarily, but this extension is available only to the specific categories. The voluntary departure does not apply to foreigners who pose a risk of absconding; breached the rules of entry into and exit; have not left Türkiye after the expiry of the period granted to them to leave, without

2. Editorial, “They were caught while escaping” *TRTHaber* (February 14, 2018) Accessed July 10, 2025 www.trthaber.com/haber/turkiye/otobusun-gizli-bolmesinde-yurt-disina-kacarken-yakalandilar-350747.html.

3. Emül, İbrahim, “Syrian woman who was banned from entering Türkiye” *Hürriyet* (February 25, 2021) Accessed July 10, 2025 www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/bulasici-hastalik-tasima-tehdit-koduyla-turkiyeye-giris-yasagi-bulunan-suriyeli-kadin-yakalandi-41749419.

4. PMM, “Irregular Migration.”) Accessed July 10, 2025 en.goc.gov.tr/irregular-migration.

5. See *Akkad v. Turkey* A no 1557/19 (2022) ECtHR.

an acceptable excuse; or pose a threat to public order, security or health (Article 57). Such individuals are subject to administrative detention in the removal centers (GGMs). Until their removals are completed, the foreigners are detained in the removal centers up to a maximum of a year during which the administrative detention decision is reviewed monthly by the authorities, and if the detention is no longer required, they are released immediately.

Foreigners can apply to the courts against administrative detention decisions; however, the outcomes generally favor the PMM. For instance, in 2017, there were 144 lawsuits filed for the annulment of administrative detention decisions in İzmir, and only in 17 of them did the court rule in favor of the migrants (TBMM 2017). The rate was even lower in Aydın, with only 3 cases out of 125 resulting in favor of the migrants (TBMM 2017). As of 2024, 32 GGMs with a capacity of 17,780 held a total of 350,000 persons throughout the year.⁶ As the most recent publicly available figure, in December 2022, the PMM announced that 18,766 irregular migrants from 107 nationalities were held in GGMs, whereas only 5,675 migrants were given a period to leave the country.⁷ In other words, the GGMs operate at nearly full occupancy, and they are the primary means of removal compared to voluntary departure.

Articles 58 and 59 invite other actors into GGM management. The PMM may delegate center operations to public agencies, the Turkish Red Crescent, or nonprofit organizations, and must facilitate access for consular officials, UNHCR, and qualified NGOs. These provisions formally integrate outside stakeholders while retaining overall control with the PMM.

Overall, Türkiye’s removal framework closely mirrors the EU Return Directive in several respects: both grant a finite period for voluntary departure, impose entry bans of up to five years following non-compliance and allow administrative detention pending removal, and enshrine non-refoulement protections for refugees and other vulnerable groups (Majcher and Strik 2021). However, Türkiye differs in key ways: the minimum voluntary departure term appears to be fixed at fifteen days rather than the Directive’s seven-to-thirty-day range; detention can last up to twelve months with monthly reviews but lacks the EU’s “diligent-removal” criteria, a “reasonable prospect of removal,” and safeguards to ensure successful return (Majcher and Strik 2021, 121).

6. PMM. “Annual Report.” Accessed July 10, 2025 www.goc.gov.tr/faaliyet-raporlari p.81.

7. PMM. “The Increase in the Number of Deportations Continues.” December 25, 2022. www.goc.gov.tr/sinir-disi-119817. Accessed July 10, 2025.

2.1.2 Temporary Protection

Two additional instruments in the legal framework directly regulate migration governance: the Temporary Protection Regulation (TPR, 2014) and the Law on the International Labor Force (LILF, 2016). Amid the parliamentary deliberations on the LIFP, the Syrian civil war erupted, prompting Türkiye's open-door policy and necessitating swift action to address irregular migration. On 30 March 2012, the MoI issued a directive on the admission and accommodation of Syrian nationals seeking asylum as an emergency policy, though the content of the directive has never been published despite repeated requests from parliamentarians and NGOs. As border crossings increased in October 2014, the Temporary Protection Regulation (TPR) was introduced under LIFP Article 91, defining temporary protection for those fleeing mass influxes and unable to return. Unlike refugee status determination temporary protection allows for the collective registration if international protection requests cannot be taken under individual assessment (TPR Articles 1 and 3). In other words, temporary protection under the TPR is not defined as a form of international protection but a complementary measure used in situations where individual international protection processing is deemed impractical by the authorities. Prior to the TPR, Syrians were referred to as 'guests' which put them in legal limbo. Consequently, the TPR allowed Syrians to acquire their legal but temporary status.

In terms of its direct impact on irregular migration, a survey conducted with around 2,500 Syrian households during the summer of 2013, reveals that while 52.4% (in-camp) and 25.5% (out-camp) of respondents entered Türkiye without passports through the official border gates; 42.7% (in-camp) and 47.8% (out-camp) respondents entered Türkiye from non-official border crossing points. With the open-door policy, the number of Syrians under temporary protection reached 3.5 million in 2017 from just 224,655 in 2013.

Afghans, on the other hand, have not been provided with the same rights enjoyed by Syrians and must apply individually for international protection. This multi-layered migration regime started to be nationality-based (Syrians vs. other) resulting in the creation of a 'hierarchy of protection', where the Afghan migrants have been falling into irregularity in increasing numbers. The situation deteriorated for Afghan immigrants after UNHCR retreated from the refugee status determination process after the request from the PMM in 2018. Afghan citizens have been the most frequently apprehended nationality in Türkiye since 2018, and they also represent the largest group applying for asylum. In 2023, 19,017 asylum applications were made to the PMM and majority of them was from Afghanistan (13,068). On the other hand, a

court decision stating that the authorities failed to conduct an adequate and legally acceptable investigation into the risks to an asylum seeker’s life upon return to Afghanistan, along with interviews with Afghan single males who reported not being given the opportunity to lodge an application, highlight the de facto suspension of the asylum procedure. This divergence illustrates how a single legal framework can generate markedly different irregularity risks depending on nationality.

2.1.3 Law on International Labor Force

Work-permit rules in the LFIP and LILF also shape irregularity. As of 2023 the Ministry of Labor and Social Security lists twenty-eight occupations—among them lawyers, judges, tour guides, and pharmacists—closed to foreigners, making unauthorized employment in these sectors an immediate ground for removal. LFIP Article 89 requires asylum seekers and conditional refugees to obtain a work permit, whereas recognized refugees and subsidiary-protection holders may work freely because their identity cards serve as permits. Conditional refugees and temporary-protection beneficiaries may apply for permits only after six months’ residence.

LILF Article 10 limits initial work permits to one year; extensions to two and three years are contingent on staying with the same employer, a departure from the previous practice that allowed movement within the same profession. This rule increases irregularity risks when workers change jobs. Repeated applications are required, and delays encourage unauthorized employment. Field estimates suggest that up to one million Syrians work informally, far exceeding the number of permits issued, underscoring how labor-market restrictions continue to feed irregularity even after registration under the TPR.

In conclusion, the three legal documents discussed above form the foundation of Türkiye’s contemporary legal framework for migration governance. Legislative efforts have accelerated since 2010, with all three documents finalized in the years that followed. As such, legal reform emerges as a central theme shaping the governance of migration. Developments in the legal framework have had a broad and lasting impact on how migration is managed in Türkiye. Notably, the LFIP transformed the institutional landscape by establishing a central authority responsible for overseeing migration governance.

2.2 Institutionalization: The (Directorate General) Presidency of Migration Management

The lack of an established civil authority in migration governance was resolved with the introduction of the LFIP. Beyond modernizing a fragmented legal framework, an entire chapter of the law dedicated to establishing a central authority under the Ministry of Interior. The Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) was established in 2013 and became fully operational in 2014. After the 2017 constitutional referendum, which converted Türkiye from a parliamentary to a presidential system, the relevant LFIP articles were abrogated by Decree-Law No. 703 (Article 71) and re-enacted the same year in Presidential Decree No. 4 (Section 13).

The agency's name and status were upgraded to the Presidency of Migration Management (PMM) in 2021 to enhance its institutional authority (Presidential Decree No. 85, Articles 18 to 31). The government has not officially disclosed the reasons behind this elevation, aside from news reports citing the need for “rapid and effective action on migration policies.” Some scholars, however, argue that the decision was largely driven by the government's effort to respond to public backlash following clashes between immigrants and local residents in Ankara's Altındağ district, as well as mounting pressure from the opposition to establish a dedicated Ministry of Migration (Uzun 2023).

Presidential Decree No. 4, Article 158(2), defines the PMM's purpose as “*implementing migration policies and strategies, ensuring coordination among relevant agencies, and carrying out functions related to foreigners' entry, stay, exit, removal, international protection, temporary protection, and the protection of victims of human trafficking.*” Article 159 obliges all public bodies to supply data requested by the PMM without delay. Among its many tasks, the PMM must “*ensure coordination among law-enforcement units and public institutions, develop measures, and monitor implementation*” in order to manage migration flows and integrate migrants into social and economic life. Although security forces remain key actors, the PMM sits at the center of policy design, information gathering, and strategic coordination.

Organizationally, the PMM consists of central, provincial, and overseas units, along with ten departments. While a detailed mapping of these departments lies beyond this chapter's scope, it is notable that provincial offices now operate in all eighty-one provinces, establishing a nationwide bureaucratic footprint that did not exist prior to 2014. The LFIP further expands migration governance abroad by authorizing the appointment of dedicated migration and consular attachés. Migration attachés, posted to embassies, are tasked with building operational contacts to facilitate re-

movements and voluntary returns, gathering country-of-origin information, coordinating anti-trafficking efforts, and overseeing migration-related projects. Consular attachés, stationed in consulates, support return logistics and submit annual reports on local migration trends. A total of 100 individuals were to be appointed to these positions; however, a major institutional challenge for the PMM has been its limited progress in establishing overseas offices since 2018.⁸ To date, there is no publicly available information on how many of these appointments have actually been made. Therefore, despite policy commitments to extend migration governance beyond national borders through the deployment of permanent overseas civil servants, constraints in technical capacity and resources have hindered these efforts.

The law also introduced several consultative bodies. The Migration Advisory Board, which included IOM representatives, academics, and NGOs, was designed to meet twice yearly but never became operational and was eventually abolished in 2018. The Coordination Board on Combating Irregular Migration was similarly short-lived. By contrast, the Migration Board (renamed in 2021) remains active; its fifteenth meeting in January 2025 convened senior officials from all ministries to review current policy and approve a new five-year national migration strategy. In a similar vein to include non-governmental actors, in 2021 the PMM founded a Migration Research Centre to accelerate evidence-based policymaking. The Centre produces a quarterly Turkish-language journal and offers internships but has not yet released major datasets or comparative studies, limiting its contribution to policy evaluation.

Inter-agency coordination functions effectively in certain domains. In 2016, the PMM and the Turkish Red Crescent signed a protocol to monitor humanitarian standards in reception, accommodation, and removal centers. Between 2017 and 2022, the Red Crescent conducted 338 inspections, submitting detailed recommendations on nutrition, medical care, and recreational facilities; however, publicly available documents do not clarify how many of these recommendations were implemented. AFAD's early prominence in camp management has faded as responsibilities shifted to the PMM by 2018, although AFAD still leads disaster-response planning for refugee-hosting provinces.

Outside the state apparatus, stakeholder involvement is limited. The Association for Solidarity with Asylum-Seekers and Migrants (SGDD-ASAM) remains UNHCR's principal implementing partner, operating multi-service centers and conducting outreach in twenty-nine provinces. UNHCR and IOM assist the PMM with border-management projects, reception-center upgrades, and capacity-building for provin-

8. PMM. "Activity Report." www.goc.gov.tr/faaliyet-raporlari p.88. Accessed July 10, 2025.

cial staff, but their influence is ultimately advisory.

Critiques have shifted from legal design toward questions of institutional capacity. Türkiye has long been both a host and destination country, yet the PMM is not a cabinet-level Ministry of Migration. Opposition parties have proposed creating such a ministry,⁹ while scholars question whether a separate body would improve coordination without its own law-enforcement arm (Sağiroğlu 2021). Proponents argue that granting ministry status would give integration and labor market policy the same level of importance as border control. Skeptics, however, contend that creating an additional layer of bureaucracy could lead to overlapping responsibilities and slower decision-making. For now, the PMM’s professionalization and expanding mandate mark clear progress, even if debates over its elevation, and over a more systematic integration agenda, continue.

2.3 Relying on Old Approaches: The Securitization of the Border

Türkiye shares 2949 km of land borders with eight countries with most of the eastern and south-eastern borders located in mountainous regions. Between 1956 and 1988, gendarmeries under the MoI were responsible for border protection. However, due to growing security concerns amidst conflicts along the Eastern border and insurgent terrorist attacks, with the Law on The Protection and Security of Land Borders (No:3497) in 1988, Turkish Land Forces Command of the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) took over the control of the borders. The gendarmeries, on the other hand, have continued to exercise their authority only in limited areas, which created duality in border protection and security for decades (Sert 2013). The remaining area, 127 km of border between Türkiye and Iran, was transferred to TAF as of 2013 and the duality over the protection and security of land borders has finally ended.

The coastal and airport borders, on the other hand, are still controlled by the MoI. The scattered authority over border controls still poses a certain coordination problem for Türkiye. For instance, although it is responsible for the protection and security of the coasts, the Turkish Coast Guard Command has no authority over ports and the Ministry of Agriculture controls the food and feed safety at border crossings (Sert 2013). According to Gökalp Aras and Mencütek-Şahin (2019, 48), the legal framework authorizes over 20 different actors responsible for the protection

9. Editorial, ‘CHP demands establishment of a ‘Ministry of Immigration and Integration’ *BirGün*. August 1, 2021. www.birgun.net/haber/chp-den-goc-ve-entegrasyon-bakanligi-kurulmasi-talebi-353670. accessed 05 June 2025.

and security of the Turkish borders that prevent a uniform and institutional border management structure. TAF and the Gendarmerie perform the main responsibilities in the Eastern borders, whereas TCG is the primary institution responsible for the Aegean maritime borders. Yet the reports based on stakeholder interviews note significant in inter-agency cooperation, clearer division of labor, and more standardized procedures (Gökalp Aras and Mencütek-Şahin 2019).

Despite notable progress in aligning with the European Integrated Border Management (IBM) framework, Türkiye’s border governance remains institutionally fragmented due to the absence of a unified, professional, and civilian border agency. Although Erdoğan announced the establishment of a Coordination Board for IBM in 2010 to harmonize relevant authorities and legislation with the EU *acquis*, tangible progress has been limited. As Turhan and Yıldız (2022) observe, the feasibility of such a centralized structure remains questionable in contexts like Türkiye, where border control is closely tied to national security concerns, particularly counterterrorism.

This institutional fragmentation is especially evident in data collection, where researchers must consult multiple agencies, including the PMM, TAF, and Coast Guard Command. In practice, the Ministry of Interior manages legal entry at official checkpoints through police units, while TAF and the Coast Guard are tasked with preventing unauthorized crossings. As a result, border governance is divided among three main actors whose overlapping mandates produce a layered and securitized approach to irregular migration. Policy changes within their respective domains, particularly those driven by security considerations, directly shape the implementation and effectiveness of migration control efforts.

2.3.1 Border-walls

Apart from this fragmentation, Türkiye’s move from routine patrols and light fencing to the construction of concrete walls along its eastern and southeastern borders marked a decisive shift. With the widespread rise of populism, heightened border security emphasis is unique to Türkiye, and differentiating border policies vis-à-vis security concerns and migration governance is challenging everywhere. Yet in Türkiye these domains are especially intertwined, driven by decades of cross-border terrorism, a long-running civil war in Syria, and political upheavals in neighboring countries. The liberal ‘open-door’ policy of the early 2010s illustrates how migration and security are fused, as it eventually paved the way for wall-building.

The open-door policy targeting Syrians coincided with the rise of extremist groups

in the region, and the security concerns heightened by the weakening and blurring of border control measures (Okyay 2017). The intensification of border wall construction along the southern border began after the 2015 terrorist attack in Suruç, Şanlıurfa that resulted in the death of 34 citizens. Officials framed the wall as a defense against ISIL militants yet also labelled smugglers and refugees as ‘risk factors’ (Koca 2015). Clearly, border policies in the early 2010s were not primarily aimed at irregular migration; security imperatives dominated. The Emergency Physical Security Project launched in 2015, sought to build a concrete wall along the Syrian border, later extended to encompass the Iranian and Iraqi borders. The concrete walls are supported by watchtowers, advanced electronic monitoring systems, and barbed wires. According to the latest reports, 1,168 km of security wall and patrol road are complete, enclosing over 85% of the borders with Syria and Iran, while an additional 46 km remain under construction as of 2025.¹⁰

The government policies are unlikely to undergo significant change in the near future. In fact, recent news revealed that Türkiye will also construct a wall along its western border with Greece.¹¹ Securitization of the border significantly impacts irregular migration in Türkiye. TAF apprehension data since 2010 suggests that intensified border control measures have increased detections of irregular entry. However, Türkiye’s eastern and southeastern mountainous terrain remains a challenge for wall policies. Harsh conditions hinder wall construction, limit roadway feasibility for security coordination, and, in winter, deep snow can allow crossings over barriers (Orhan 2022). These factors reduce the effectiveness of border-wall policies, requiring alternative strategies to manage irregular migration such as cooperating with Iran. Furthermore, ethnographic studies highlight how border walls have jeopardized the lives of both border residents and migrants, pushing migrants into more vulnerable positions as they increasingly rely on smugglers to cross (Arslan, Can, and Wilson 2021). In fact, the securitization of borders tends to lead to the creation of “fake illegals,” even in cases of forced migration (Savatic et al. 2024). Therefore, the construction of border walls aimed at increasing security for Türkiye has, in practice, created insecurity for the majority of the migrants.

10. Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye. “Presidential Annual Report 2025.” www.sbb.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/2025-Yili-Cumhurbaskanligi-Yillik-Programi-05112024.pdf p.392. Accessed July 10, 2025.

11. Yavuz, Tamer, "Türkiye begins building 8.5-km wall on Greek border" *duvaR Egnlish*. March 4, 2025. www.duvarenglish.com/turkey-begins-building-85-km-wall-on-greek-border-news-65754. accessed 05 June 2025.

2.3.2 EU Externalization

The securitization of Türkiye’s borders has not been driven solely by domestic security concerns. As a key transit country, irregular entries into Türkiye often have broader implications, particularly for the European Union, since many individuals aim to continue their journey toward EU member states. The growing securitization discourse around Türkiye’s borders coincided with the rising number of irregular border crossings to the Greek islands. This trend culminated in what later became known as the 2015 “migration crisis,” during which EU member states struggled to develop a coordinated and effective response. Against this backdrop, Ankara’s dialogue with Brussels over migration governance deepened.

The history of EU–Türkiye relations is deeply complex and long-standing, and a full account lies beyond the scope of this chapter. Türkiye’s status has shifted over time, from that of an aspirant for full EU membership to a strategic partner, with the prospect of accession now widely regarded as unlikely in the foreseeable future. Dialogue between Türkiye and the EU on irregular border crossings dates back to 2013, and initial efforts to curb these flows were formalized in the 2015 Joint Action Plan. This was followed by the March 2016 EU–Turkey Statement, which stipulated that *“all new irregular migrants crossing from Türkiye into Greek islands as from 20 March 2016 will be returned to Türkiye.”*

Efforts by the EU to shift responsibility for migration management beyond its borders have steadily intensified since the early 1990s (Lavenex and Schimmelfennig 2009). Commonly referred to as “externalization,” this strategy includes a wide range of instruments: readmission agreements (Stutz 2024), visa policy tools (Laube 2019), development assistance (Cassarino 2025; Spijkerboer 2022), and capacity-building programs (Robinson 2024). These tools are designed to incentivize third countries to control migration flows in exchange for financial or political benefits. Whereas early scholarship often portrayed externalization as a top-down imposition of EU conditionality, more recent work emphasizes the negotiated nature of these arrangements. Scholars point to the ways in which such partnerships involve bargaining, accommodation, and resistance on the part of third countries (Karadağ 2019; Tittel-Mosser 2018).

Few cases illustrate this transactional logic more clearly than the EU–Turkey relationship (Müftüler-Baç 2022). The 2016 EU–Turkey Statement, often called the “Deal,” obligated Türkiye to accept the return of irregular migrants from the Greek islands and to enhance its border controls. In return, the EU promised several billion euros in financial support, revived discussions on visa liberalization, and committed to advancing negotiations on upgrading the customs union. The effects of the agree-

ment were immediate. The Eastern Mediterranean route, which had seen a record 885,386 irregular crossings in 2015, experienced a dramatic drop in crossings following the implementation of the Statement.¹² The cooperation, on the other hand, has increasingly taken the form of a transactional outsourcing of border control to Ankara, often at the expense of the security and rights of forced migrants (Adamson and Greenhill 2023).

At the same time, the agreement expanded Türkiye’s leverage over the EU. Turkish officials have, on several occasions, threatened to allow onward movement of migrants unless additional financial support or concessions were secured. These episodes demonstrate how Türkiye has used its central role in migration control to pursue its own strategic goals (Léonard and Kauner 2022). This aligns with a broader body of scholarship on “partner states,” which emphasizes that countries like Türkiye are not passive implementers of EU migration policy, but instead act as political agents who instrumentalize externalization processes to gain geopolitical recognition or reinforce domestic legitimacy. To gauge how typical Ankara’s tactics are, Türkiye’s use of migration leverage is hardly unique. Along the western Mediterranean, Morocco has repeatedly tightened or relaxed its policing of the Strait of Gibraltar to extract EU funding and diplomatic gains, most visibly in May 2021 incident where 8000 people irregularly cross from Morocco into Ceuta Spain (Ferrer-Gallardo and Gabrielli 2022). A more coercive variant appears in the Central Mediterranean: Italy’s cooperation with Libya outsourced search-and-rescue to a Libyan coast guard, enabling Rome to declare a dramatic drop in arrivals while giving Tripoli leverage to demand concessions, despite well-documented abuses in Libyan detention centers and creating migration industry under smuggling (Pacchiardi and Berndtsson 2022). Beyond the Mediterranean, similar patterns are also evident across the West Africa in Ghana and Senegal (Adam et al 2020).

These comparisons underline two patterns. First, partner states differ in regime type and capacity, yet all convert enforcement commitments into multifaceted rewards. Second, externalization rarely produces linear control: each case shows “migration interdependence” (Tsourapas 2019) in which the EU’s need for containment empowers neighbors to recalibrate cooperation by threatening policy back-sliding. Türkiye’s periodic warnings that it will “open the gates” thus resemble many other examples; but Ankara’s enhanced partnership with the EU, membership accession, and most importantly its geopolitical location give it broader leverage than either Morocco or Libya (Tsourapas 2019; Vaagland 2023).

While the EU–Turkey Statement primarily targeted westward flows, since its adop-

12. FRONTEX. “Migratory Routes.” Accessed July 10, 2025 www.frontex.europa.eu/what-we-do/monitoring-and-risk-analysis/migratory-routes/migratory-routes.

tion Türkiye has tightened its controls not only on outward migration toward Europe but also on entries through other key routes. The agreement has had a broader impact on migration governance, influencing border enforcement at Türkiye’s western border as well as along the eastern border with Iran, a major transit corridor for migrants. However, enhanced security measures along the Iranian border have not ended irregular migration. Instead, they have pushed smugglers to adapt their routes and methods, increasing the risks of exploitation and abuse for migrants in transit (Orhan and Nargül 2025).

2.4 Restrictive Policy Shift and Politicization

The politicization of the issue and public debates on the issue did not appear suddenly in 2021 with the formation of ZP, rather it has been a gradual process. The AKP government has always employed a pro-migration stance on the basis of religious and cultural similarities, simultaneously criticizing the European countries’ restrictive policies. The anti-Western populist discourse of President Erdoğan, including but not limited to migration governance, has allowed him to consolidate its constituency by creating an image (Aydın-Düzgit, Rumelili, and Topal 2022). The opposition parties, on the other hand, utilized a discourse by highlighting the government policies resulting in millions of migrants across Türkiye. The main opposition party, the CHP, criticized the government for transforming Türkiye into an EU refugee camp and altering the country’s demographic and secular composition by allowing millions of Muslim migrants (Apaydın and Müftüler-Baç 2022). The opposition parties’ criticism of the government’s migration policies escalated during the 2019 local elections resulting in the loss of control over major metropolitan areas, including İstanbul and the capital city, Ankara, which had been governed by the AKP for the past twenty-five years. For instance, the decision to remove non-registered Syrians from İstanbul was announced by the governorship soon after the loss of the election. Therefore, starting with 2018 and further deepened with the 2019 local elections, the government has shifted toward a more restrictive approach.

Last but not least, the escalating number and visibility of immigrants in Türkiye culminated in the establishment of an extreme-radical party, ZP in 2021. Despite the limited electoral success of the party in the election, a single-issue populist party formed around anti-immigrant policies and views reveals the accumulated public sentiments on the issue. The heightening politicization of the migration issue will likely prevent any permissive policy shift in the upcoming years given that there

is a strong opposition formed around the issue. Even more concerningly, as the economic conditions are deteriorating in Türkiye, if the scapegoating of immigrants results in the government's loss of support, it would not be surprising to see more radical policies on the issue.

The long-silenced party, AKP's ruling alliance partner Nationalist Movement Party's (MHP, which is one of the oldest nationalist rights parties in the country) leader stated that "Irregular migration is turning into an invasion" and continued, "Syrians, who can go to their country on the upcoming holidays, do not need to return again." These statements coincide with another restrictive policy of the AKP government: Eid permits. The MoI had long allowed temporary visits to Syria during religious holidays (up to six months) by issuing mass Eid permits, which let Syrians return to their homes without losing their status. This practice ended in April 2022; since then only exceptional cases such as attending a funeral, have qualified for exemption. Officials framed the change as part of a broader push for voluntary returns. Similarly, President Erdoğan addressed the issue: "As soon as illegal migrants are apprehended, they are sent to repatriation centers and necessary actions are initiated there. They are sent to their countries, and through this, we eliminate anxiety and fear of our people." Here again, one can observe the direct reference to the politicization of migration and how the public's concerns enhance stricter policies. This does not represent a complete turn to radical position on the migration position. The president, simultaneously, addressed the irregular migration: "We will settle this matter in accordance with our culture, religious belief, law and equity." The politicization of the issue has not occurred without push factors and is certainly not endemic to the Turkish case given that there are similar patterns across Europe.

Against this backdrop, a series of restrictive measures began to take shape following the 2019 local elections. Shortly after the annulled mayoral election in Istanbul (initially won by opposition candidate Ekrem İmamoğlu and re-held in June 2019, yet the results did not change) the MoI issued a directive intensifying forensic identity checks across the city. Within two weeks, authorities had apprehended 6,122 individuals in Istanbul, including approximately 2,600 Afghans and nearly 1,000 Syrians. At the time, official figures indicated that just over half a million Syrians were registered in Istanbul, while an additional half a million were either residing in the city without authorization or held legal status but had relocated to the metropolis without the required approval from provincial authorities.

This crackdown triggered a ripple effect across the country. Apprehended individuals were transferred to removal centers and temporary accommodation facilities in various provinces, accompanied by a marked rise in deportations and the revocation of temporary protection status. As of 2019, Istanbul remains formally closed to all

new registrations of Syrians under temporary protection, reflecting an ongoing policy shift toward containment and redistribution within Türkiye’s broader migration governance framework. Shortly after, the PMM announced that any individual who has held a tourist permit for a total of one year may no longer renew that permit and must depart the country unless they qualify for an alternative form of authorization.

The AKP government’s focus on irregular migration at the local level has gradually intensified. As the first initiative of its kind, “Mobile Migration Points” were introduced in Istanbul in July 2023 and subsequently expanded to other parts of the country. These mobile units, operating from specially equipped vehicles, were tasked exclusively with conducting identity checks on foreign nationals. Between July and November, these checks resulted in the deportation of 44,542 individuals identified as irregular migrants. According to the most recent announcement in February 2024, a total of 162 mobile units were active across 30 metropolitan areas, and within just six months, they had apprehended nearly 200,000 irregular migrants.

These policies should be understood within the broader policy context outlined earlier. The intensification of border controls, construction of physical barriers, implementation of a hierarchical protection regime, rising rejection rates, growing deportation figures, and the increasing use of so-called voluntary returns all reflect a broader shift in the AKP government’s approach to migration governance. This is the context within which this dissertation examines the consequences of these policies and explores the extent to which they resonated with local citizens, regardless of their support for the incumbent.

2.5 Conclusion

Since 2010, Türkiye’s migration regime has undergone a significant transformation shaped by intersecting developments in law, institutions, and border control. The Law on Foreigners and International Protection, along with the Law on International Labor Force, has established a modern legal foundation. These laws expanded residence permit categories and codified removal procedures, while still leaving substantial discretionary authority in the hands of the state. The establishment and later elevation of the Presidency of Migration Management consolidated responsibilities that were once dispersed across multiple agencies. Although this shift marked a clear break from earlier bureaucratic fragmentation, coordination gaps between ministries and security services remain. At the borders, physical infrastructure, enhanced surveillance, and the 2016 EU–Türkiye Statement reflect a clear move toward

enforcement-driven containment, with Türkiye using its gatekeeping role to secure diplomatic and financial concessions.

A broader pattern emerges across these domains. Initial efforts focused on legalizing migrant status through varied residence options and temporary protection mechanisms. Over time, however, these measures gave way to a more restrictive orientation, shaped by rising public anxiety, the politicization of migration, and Türkiye's negotiations with the European Union. What has taken shape is a layered system that formally maintains legal pathways but applies increasingly selective and punitive controls through policing, entry bans, and administrative detention. Despite these overarching trends, much of migration governance is still mediated through local actors. Municipal governments, educational institutions, employers, and diaspora agencies continue to shape how migrants experience everyday life, often producing disparities that national policies alone do not fully explain. The opacity of the system is further reinforced by limited public data and inconsistencies in the deployment of overseas migration officials.

These developments carry two broader implications. First, Türkiye has selectively aligned with European norms, adapting external models to fit its own priorities rather than adopting them wholesale. This reflects how a strategically positioned state can shape policy outcomes from within unequal partnerships. Second, migration politics in Türkiye are now tightly bound up with broader debates over national security, social cohesion, and electoral competition. As a result, future policy changes are likely to be evaluated not only for their administrative effectiveness but also for their symbolic weight in the domestic political arena.

Among the more restrictive tools that have gained prominence, the dispersal policy is particularly noteworthy. By relocating migrants away from major metropolitan areas, it has the potential to reshape local markets and influence public attitudes. The next chapter explores this policy in depth by analyzing changes in Istanbul's rental market, comparing trends before and after the policy's implementation. In doing so, it links national shifts in migration governance to the tangible effects of a single intervention, providing a more grounded view of Türkiye's evolving migration landscape.

3. HOW (NOT) TO INTEGRATE IMMIGRANTS: THE IMPACT OF DISPERSAL POLICIES ON HOUSING MARKET AND ELECTORAL OUTCOMES

The Turkish government has implemented a series of policies to address the gradual influx of immigrants. Situated at the intersection of Europe and the Middle East, Türkiye has been facing long-standing challenges that have become more visible since the early 2010s. These challenges have placed growing pressure on the country, leading to a transformation in migration governance across three main pillars, as outlined in Chapter 2: legal framework, institutionalization, and securitization. While each policy's alignment with a specific pillar may vary, certain policies have been directly shaped by the interplay of all three pillars. One such example is the settlement and accommodation of immigrants within and across the country.

The right to housing is a widely recognized human right, as stated in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: “**Everyone** has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, **housing** and medical care and necessary social services. . . .”¹ As in many other human rights, however, it has been repeatedly breached and undermined by a range of factors especially in the 21st century with the rise of housing unaffordability. Globalization has contributed to a steady rise in housing prices, driven by various factors. Over an eight-year period, for instance, average housing prices in the European Union increased by nearly 50 percent,² with a similar trend observed in the United States.³

Although part of this increase can be attributed to supply-side constraints such as land use regulations, legal restrictions, and rising construction costs (Been, Ellen, and O'Regan 2019), another primary driver has been the increased demand. Urban transformation policies have played a significant role in accelerating housing

1. “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” *The United Nations*. Emphasis added.

2. “Rising housing costs in the EU: the facts” *The European Parliament*, September 17, 2024.

3. “Median Sales Price of Houses Sold for the United States” *Federal Reserve Economic Data*, April 23, 2025.

prices (Pichler-Milanovich 2001) and have contributed to inefficiencies in the housing market (Jaffe, Turner, and Victorin 1995). Internal migration, the underlying mechanism of urbanization, was assessed by natives on the ground of labor market competition though it failed to empirically account mass attitudes toward immigration and eventually deemed as “*zombie theory*” (Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014). The economic status of native residents, however, may shape the underlying drivers of their attitudes by emphasizing either market competition or perceived fiscal burdens (Gaikwad and Nellis 2017). The arrival of out-groups -immigrants from other countries, however, has led to a rise in anti-immigrant sentiments. Even in the case of individuals in need of humanitarian protection, characteristics such as higher employability (Bansak, Hainmueller, and Hangartner 2016), country of origin, and language skills (Hainmueller and Hopkins 2015) have played an important role in shaping natives’ attitudes.

It is hardly surprising that scapegoating immigrants for the housing crisis has become a prevailing discourse. While different categories of immigrants benefit to varying degrees from the right to housing, certain groups such as international protection beneficiaries and asylum seekers, who are already in precarious situations, often face additional layers of discrimination (Auspurg, Schneck, and Hinz 2019). The growing unaffordability of housing, often associated with the arrival of immigrants, has been popularized by both extreme-right and populist leaders. During his campaign, J.D. Vance completely attributed the crisis to immigrants by saying “[Y]ou have got housing that is totally unaffordable because we brought in millions of illegal immigrants to compete with Americans for scarce homes.”⁴ A similar narrative was promoted by Geert Wilders, who emphasized how the limited housing supply in the Netherlands “*simply cannot match the open-border policy.*”⁵ These discourses were both a response to popular demand and a source of heightened anxiety and concern among native populations. Against this backdrop, the affordability crisis triggered large-scale protests in capital cities such as Amsterdam and Lisbon.⁶

While most of the literature focuses on the arrival of immigrants and its impact on housing affordability (e.g., Gonzalez and Ortega 2013; Saiz 2003, 2007; Saiz and Wachter 2011; Sá 2015), this chapter goes a step further to examine what happens when immigrants are restricted or blocked from accessing the housing market. Türkiye has implemented a policy that limits immigrant access in specific neighborhoods, a policy that reflects the ambitions of many populist leaders. But does this

4. “JD Vance says immigration is to blame for high housing costs” *CBS News*, October 4, 2023.

5. “For Geert Wilders, ‘housing’ is code for ‘immigration”’ *POLITICO*, June 20, 2024.

6. “Fix Europe’s housing crisis or risk fuelling the far-right, UN expert warns” *The Guardian*, May 6, 2024.

policy actually improve housing affordability now that demand has been abruptly reduced? Do native residents move into the places vacated by immigrants, or do the changing characteristics of these neighborhoods influence their decisions? Finally, to what extent do local citizens evaluate the policy at the ballot box—do they reward the incumbent government, or do they punish it for delayed action?

Utilizing a quasi-natural experiment design based on the initiation of a neighborhood-level dispersal policy in 2021, this chapter analyzes the rental housing market in Istanbul in relation to immigrant settlement. Monthly average rental prices at the neighborhood level, covering periods before and after the policy’s implementation, provide a basis for causal inference. The results indicate a sudden and substantial decline in rental prices beginning in the first month of the policy. This decline was primarily driven by reduced demand following the restriction of immigrant access to the market. However, halting further waves of immigrant arrivals was not sufficient to attract native residents, pointing to a pattern of native avoidance (Alden, Hammarstedt, and Neuman 2015; Andersson, Berg, and Dahlberg 2021). At the same time, natives already living in these neighborhoods largely remained in place, offering little evidence for native flight (Card, Mas, and Rothstein 2008). The absence of granular population data, however, limits the ability to draw definitive conclusions on this point.

Second, immigrant settlement was not only concentrated in areas with low local amenities, but also appears to have contributed to a further decline in those amenities, which may help to explain the drop in rental prices along with the demand-side explanations. In the absence of comprehensive policies, restrictive measures alone are insufficient to address broader changes in neighborhood characteristics. Finally, natives who had long shared these neighborhoods with immigrants appear to have rewarded the government for responding to the pressures of ghettoization. In both elections following the implementation of the policy, the incumbent alliance, Cumhur (AKP and MHP), gained additional votes.

These results not only contribute to the literature on the relationship between immigration and the housing market but also go a step further by showing how restrictive policies can lead to broader societal changes. The delayed implementation of such policies diminished their potential effectiveness. The findings also underscore that even when restrictive measures are deemed necessary by central authorities, a comprehensive response requires the development of complementary policies in other areas. This, in turn, highlights the inherently complex and dynamic nature of migration governance. Last but not least, in the context of Turkish migration policy, the dispersal policy illustrates how the government has largely responded to migration dynamics only after they have become a public contestation. The lack of

pre-planning and the absence of a fully developed migration governance framework are also evident in the managing to immigrant accommodation.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

The dynamics of housing affordability and price drivers have been widely studied. A key question in this literature is whether, and to what extent, immigration influences housing prices. In a seminal study, Saiz (2003) analyzes the exogenous shock to Miami’s housing market following the Mariel boatlift, during which more than 100,000 Cubans and Haitians arrived. This influx significantly increased rental demand, leading to a 10% rise in rents compared to other U.S. cities. Several subsequent studies support this finding, showing that higher demand from immigration contributes to rising housing costs in the U.S. (Saiz 2007), Spain (Gonzalez and Ortega 2013), Sweden (Degen and Fischer 2017), and more recently in Poland, following the arrival of Ukrainians (Trojanek and Gluszak 2022).

In the Turkish context, Akgündüz, Hacıhasanoğlu, and Yılmaz (2023) and Balkan et al. (2018) treat the arrival of Syrian refugees as an exogenous shock to local housing markets. Balkan et al. (2018) document price growth concentrated at the high end, whereas Akgündüz, Hacıhasanoğlu, and Yılmaz (2023), drawing on detailed mortgage records, identify the strongest increases in the low-priced segment. Despite these divergent drivers stemming from data qualities, both analyses converge on the conclusion that the refugee influx has been associated with an overall rise in housing prices.

However, immigrant settlement in metropolitan areas can also contribute to slower housing price growth over time, especially in contexts where certain native groups prefer residential separation. This may also reflect a selection effect, where migrants disproportionately move into neighborhoods that are already experiencing relative price declines (Saiz and Wachter 2011).

By contrast, other research has found negative effects. Sá (2015), for instance, argues that immigration led to a drop in housing prices in the UK. Similar findings are reported by other studies (Accetturo et al. 2014; Braakmann 2019), particularly in relation to properties at the lower end of the market. This is often explained by native residents choosing to relocate from areas with high immigrant populations, thereby reducing demand.

This behavioral response is commonly referred to as “native flight.” Even when

immigrants settle in ethnically similar communities, natives tend to leave those areas, contributing to residential segregation (Andersson, Berg, and Dahlberg 2021). Alden, Hammarstedt, and Neuman (2015) identify a tipping point: once the immigrant share in a neighborhood surpasses a certain threshold, not only do existing residents move out, but potential newcomers also avoid relocating to those areas. In the U.S. context, this pattern is often described as “white flight,” denoting the movement of white populations from cities to suburbs in response to the Great Migration of Black Americans from the rural South to urban centers (Boustian 2010).

Fluctuations in housing prices, however, also have broader political implications. Rising costs can increase support for populist movements, as seen with Le Pen in France, Brexit in the UK (Adler and Ansell 2020), and more generally, the rise of populist parties (Ansell et al. 2022). Housing pressures may also fuel public resentment toward marginalized groups, including refugees (Held and Patana 2023).

All in all, the rich literature highlights the country and context specific impact of immigrants on the housing markets as well as its consequences. Yet these studies highlight the arrival of immigrants and the natural dynamics of the market and natives. This chapter, however, shows the changes in the market after the intervention of the central authority to such dynamics. The next section explains the events leading to the dispersal policy and how it has evolved gradually to cover evolution of the dispersal policy.

3.2 Dispersal Policy

Amid ongoing regional conflicts and shifting economic conditions, Türkiye has become home to millions of immigrants from various categories. Despite this, the legal framework does not regulate the accommodation of immigrants, regardless of their status. Article 95 of LFIP explicitly states: “*Applicants and international protection beneficiaries shall provide their own accommodation.*” Consequently, beyond the refugee camps established for Syrians in the early 2010s, the state offers only limited shelter options for international protection applicants. As of 2023, there was only one such accommodation center in Yozgat with a capacity of 100 people. Similarly, by the end of 2023, fewer than 2 percent of Syrians were living in camps, most of which are located near the Syrian border (AIDA 2023, 167).

Housing is a more urgent issue for immigrants due to regulatory obligations. Since 2008, Türkiye has been operating a population registry system, which was extended to include immigrants in 2021. Although citizens are also required to declare their

residence, Article 68 of the Law on Civil Registration Services (Law no. 5490 dated 25/04/2006) imposes a fine of 649[₺] for failure to comply. For immigrants, however, the consequences are more severe: failing to report their address can result in the loss of health insurance, cancellation of identification documents, and ultimately, deportation (AIDA 2023). As such, residential decisions, especially for international protection beneficiaries, carry significant implications for the individuals themselves but also for the communities in which they settle.

The settlement of foreigners, particularly Syrians, became a publicly salient issue in August 2021, when tensions reached a tipping point following a widely publicized incident in the capital, Ankara. A fight between two Turkish and two Syrian youths resulted in the death of an 18-year-old local citizen who was stabbed. The news spread quickly through local and social media channels and angry mobs gathered to attack shops and houses owned by Syrians. The protests lasted for two days, resulting in economic damage but no further casualties. This incident was not the first mob protest against immigrants, but it had the greatest policy impact. Following the events in Ankara, in addition to the existing satellite city policy for the dispersal of asylum seekers and Syrians under temporary protection, the MoI introduced a policy known as “*Combating Spatial Concentration*,” or better known as the dispersal policy.⁷ According to this policy, the immigrants are no longer be allowed to live in groups in neighborhoods or districts in a way that would create lead to establishment of ghettos. To enforce this, the share of foreigners, not only refugees or asylum seekers, but encompassing all categories of foreigners, is not allowed to exceed 25 percent of a neighborhood’s population. According to the news, policy was first implemented in Altındağ, Ankara, where Syrians were targeted by local residents. Syrians were offered incentives to leave the neighborhood for ‘suitable’ areas suggested by the MoI. Later on, the neighborhood was closed for the further settlements of Syrians.

What is striking is that the dispersal policy was not published as an official regulation, despite the legal framework stipulating this given its significant impact on the movements and settlements of foreigners in the country. The details of the policy were first announced by a journalist close to the government in February 2022.⁸ Later on, the PMM announced two separate lists (in May and July 2022) adjusting the allowed share of foreigners from 25 to 20 percent. In the final list of July 2022, the number of neighborhoods closed to further settlement of foreigners increased from 781 to 1,169 across 63 cities in Türkiye. The dispersal and prevention of ghet-

7. Throughout the dissertation, the term “dispersal policy” is used to describe this approach; however, the policy is also referred to as “dilution” or “deconcentration” in other contexts.

8. “Dispersal Plan for Syrians” *Hürriyet*, February 22, 2022.

toization policies were implemented with minimal detail provided by the government until the summer of 2023. A news report speculating that all 39 districts in Istanbul were included in the dispersal policy sparked a heated debate on social media.⁹ The PMM immediately refuted the claims and provided details on the policies.¹⁰ As of June 2023, in addition to the already announced list from the previous summer, 10 out of 39 districts were closed to settlement, along with 20 other neighborhoods from 8 districts. Table 3.1 provides the overall picture of targeted neighborhoods in Istanbul.

Table 3.1 Closed neighborhoods by districts (announced by the MoI)

District	Neighborhood	Closed	Date	District	Neighborhood	Closed	Date
Adalar	5	0	July 2022	Gaziosmanpaşa	16	0	Never
Arnavutköy	37	0	Never	Güngören	11	0	Never
Ataşehir	17	0	Never	Kadıköy	21	0	Never
Avclar	13	13	October 2022	Kağıthane	19	0	July 2022
Bağcılar	22	22	October 2022	Kartal	20	0	Never
Bahçelievler	11	11	October 2022	Küçükçekmece	22	22	October 2022
Bakırköy	15	0	July 2022	Maltepe	18	0	Never
Başakşehir	10	10	October 2022	Pendik	36	0	Never
Bayrampaşa	11	0	July 2022	Sancaktepe	19	0	Never
Beşiktaş	23	1	May 2022	Sarıyer	38	1	May 2022
Beykoz	45	0	Never	Silivri	35	0	Never
Beylikdüzü	11	0	Never	Sultanbeyli	15	0	Never
Beyoğlu	45	10	July 2022	Sultangazi	15	15	October 2022
Büyüçekmece	25	0	Never	Şile	62	1	July 2022
Çatalca	39	0	Never	Şişli	25	4	July 2022
Çekmeköy	21	0	Never	Tuzla	17	1	May 2022
Esenler	17	17	October 2022	Ümraniye	35	0	Never
Esenyurt	43	43	January 2021	Üsküdar	33	0	July 2022
Eyüpsultan	28	0	Never	Zeytinburnu	13	13	October 2022
Fatih	57	57	January 2021				

◊ “Neighborhood” refers to the total number, while “closed” indicates the number of neighborhoods affected by the dispersal policy within that district.

◊ “Date” reflects the most recent round in which neighborhoods were targeted by the policy.

There are several benefits of using the dispersal policy and its consequences at the neighborhood level. First, the policy directly impacts the settlement of all foreigners in the country, as residence permits are required for all immigrants regardless of their legal status. Unlike many other aspects of migrants’ daily lives in host countries, residential decisions affect all migrants. However, integration policies related to where immigrants settle have received relatively less scholarly attention compared to areas like the labor market, access to education, and healthcare services. Second, relying on an administrative decision in a country with sufficient enforcement capacity mitigates the lack of data availability. Ideally, one would utilize immigrant numbers at the neighborhood level to study variations in particular variables of interest. Although Turkish authorities do not publicly disclose such data, the policy formulation based on a 20 percent share serves as a demarcation point across neighborhoods in terms of the migrant population. By referring to well-documented literature on the housing market and migration, this chapter establishes a connection with inte-

9. “Istanbul is Closed to Irregular Immigrants” *Milliyet*, July 14, 2023.

10. “Press Release Regarding the Allegations that Residence Permits for Foreigners have been Closed in 39 Districts of Istanbul” *Presidency of Migration Management*, July 16, 2023.

gration policies. Third, neither local municipalities nor the central government is responsible for providing public housing to refugees and asylum seekers in Türkiye. Like other immigrants and citizens, they must compete in the housing market for rental properties, albeit on highly unequal terms as discussed below. Finally, in addition to being one of the few studies examining the housing market in relation to immigrants in Türkiye, this research highlights how governments can and cannot address current housing crises in Europe. Therefore, although the empirical evidence is drawn from Türkiye, the findings offer clear policy implications that extend beyond the Turkish context, enhancing the study’s external validity.

3.3 Research Design

The central government’s decision to restrict foreign access to the rental market at the neighborhood level creates a quasi-experimental setting. In this framework, neighborhoods targeted by the policy are considered the treatment group following the MoI’s announcement, while neighborhoods that were never subject to closure serve as the control group.¹¹ Against this backdrop, this chapter investigates the effects of the policy in two key areas: (a) the rental housing market and (b) electoral outcomes.

First, I examine how rental prices evolved in treatment and control neighborhoods. Holding other neighborhood characteristics constant, any systematic difference in rental trends can be attributed to the dispersal policy. Monthly rental listings from an online housing platform provide the data necessary for this comparison. Given the staggered rollout of the policy across different neighborhoods, I estimate staggered difference-in-differences models with neighborhood and month fixed effects to identify the average treatment effect on treated (ATT) rents over time. The results and further discussion of the model are presented in Section 3.4.

Second, to assess the electoral implications of the dispersal policy and how residents responded to it, I analyze changes in the Cumhur Alliance vote share between pre-policy baseline elections and each of the two post-policy elections (the 2023 presidential and the 2024 local elections). Since voting data are available only at specific point of time, I use Mahalanobis distance matching rather than a DiD design to compare treated and control neighborhoods. Matching is based on a series of pre-treatment neighborhood-level covariates to ensure comparability between groups. The results of this analysis are presented in Section 3.6. The next section

11. See Section 3.5 for different specifications of control group.

introduces the data and provides descriptive statistics.

3.3.1 Data and Empirical Model

The primary data to analyze the impact of the dispersal policy come from the online advertising platform, Sahibinden. Established in 2000, the online platform serves in multiple markets such as housing and cars in Türkiye. Unfortunately, better fine-grained individual housing transaction data are not publicly available. Although municipalities across Türkiye announce annual housing market values that are presumably more reliable, these figures generally represent inflation-adjusted values rather than actual average market prices. Alternatively, the Central Bank of the Republic of Türkiye (CBRT) regularly announces the Residential Property Price Index (RPPI), based on all appraised dwellings in Türkiye. Although the methodology changed in July 2024 to report the index monthly rather than as a three-month rolling average, the RPPI is still calculated at the NUTS-2 level. The scale of the index, therefore, does not permit analysis of neighborhood-level closure policies. Similarly, the Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT) regularly publishes statistics on house sales. However, these data are also not available at the neighborhood level, and district-level statistics are not published monthly. Ansell et al. (2022), for instance, utilize similar data from Denmark obtained from the Danish Mortgage Banks' Federation, which publishes quarterly data on the average price per square meter of all noncommercial property sales at the zip code level. The authors then match these prices with polling locations to calculate support for the Danish People's Party. Without a doubt, these examples of official data are both more comprehensive and reliable.

By contrast, online marketplaces provide information on listing prices in the market. Advantageously, Sahibinden covers a significant share of the housing market; in fact, on multiple occasions, the Turkish Competition Authority has ruled that the website holds a market share large enough to constitute a monopoly (TCA 2018). Sahibinden's control of the market alleviates some concerns about the comprehensiveness of the data. Furthermore, the online marketplace publishes a neighborhood-level index called the "*Sahibinden Property Index*" (hereafter sahibindex). In cooperation with Bahçeşehir University's Center for Economic and Social Research (BE-TAM), the index reports changes in the rental market by analyzing monthly listings and prices, taking into account the number of transactions. Overall, Sahibinden and its index gauge the real housing market in Türkiye, providing a unique opportunity to identify the impact of the dispersal policy.

The index is calculated monthly for all available neighborhoods in Türkiye. However, the main obstacle is data access. Neither Sahibinden nor BETAM publicly release the raw data. Moreover, the website does not provide API access to users and explicitly prohibits automated data collection, especially for commercial purposes, in its terms of use. In addition to these restrictions, sahibindex queries can only be made by authenticated users and are subject to a daily limit of 10 neighborhoods. Given that the scientific purpose of data use does not violate the terms of service, the data were retrieved through semi-automated web scraping. Due to these limitations in data access, the analysis necessarily focuses on Istanbul.

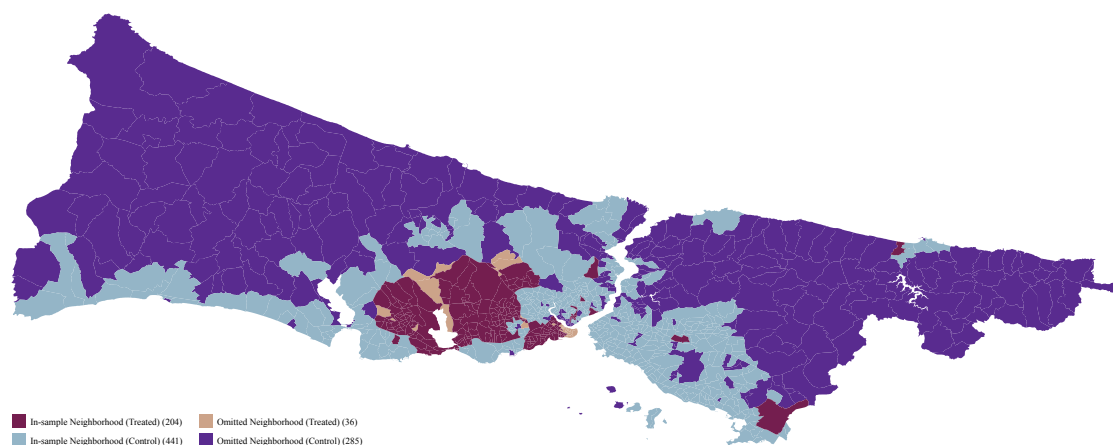
Focusing solely on Istanbul, a metropolitan city, is not a significant limitation and can still yield credible and generalizable inferences. To substantiate the city’s importance, according to 2023 statistics from TURKSTAT, one-fifth of the population resides in Istanbul—almost equal to the combined population of the next four largest cities (Ankara, Izmir, Bursa, and Antalya). From another perspective, Istanbul alone has a larger population than 20 of the 27 EU member states. More than 17% of all Syrians under temporary protection and over half of the foreigners with residency permits (in total more than a million foreigners) live in Istanbul. Economically, more than 30% of the national GDP is generated in Istanbul. The city leads across all sectors except agriculture, forestry, and fisheries.

In terms of scholarly attention, Istanbul has been the subject of various case studies, ranging from multi-level governance in addressing refugee needs (Polat and Lowndes 2021) and migration aspirations of Syrian refugees (Rottmann and Kaya 2021) to the electoral strategies of political parties under competitive authoritarianism (Esen and Gümüşçü 2019) and the electoral consequences of access to public services (Adiguzel, Cansunar, and Corekcioglu 2023). All in all, despite data limitations that constrain the analysis to a single city, the significance of Istanbul as a microcosm of the country allows the findings to shed light on important dynamics that may ultimately be generalizable.

The oldest observation in sahibindex dates back to late 2019, allowing for comparisons of at least one year before the dispersal policy began. Figure 3.1 visualizes the sample coverage of the neighborhoods. A significant challenge arises, however, as the data cover only 645 out of 966 neighborhoods.¹² Moreover, these neighborhoods

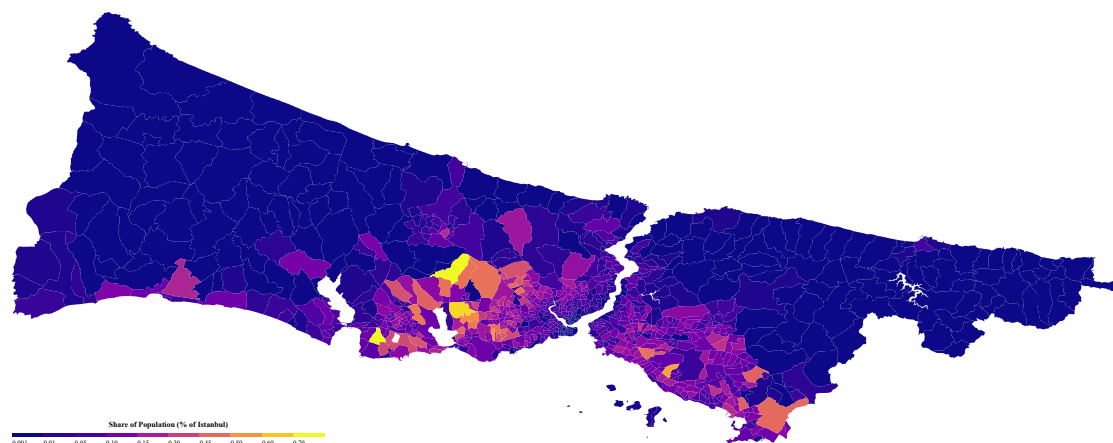
12. There have been several changes in the number of neighborhoods in Istanbul. Currently, there are 961* neighborhoods. The authority to merge or split neighborhoods is vested in the district councils, which may take such decisions based on the needs of the district. For instance, in September 2023, the Ümraniye District Council decided to merge Saray neighborhood into Finanskent and Yenışehir into the borders of Yamanevler and İnkılap. Both neighborhoods had been created in 2018 by splitting the Site neighborhood due to population growth. Although limited in number, such council decisions on boundary changes can affect average rental prices. Throughout the chapter, these changes are coded accordingly when possible; otherwise, the affected

Figure 3.1 The sample coverage – Sahibindex



do not appear consistently in the data, as gaps occur when there are insufficient listings in a given month. The extent of the omitted neighborhoods (shown in purple in Figure 3.1) might initially seem concerning. However, their spatial clustering reflects an important underlying pattern.

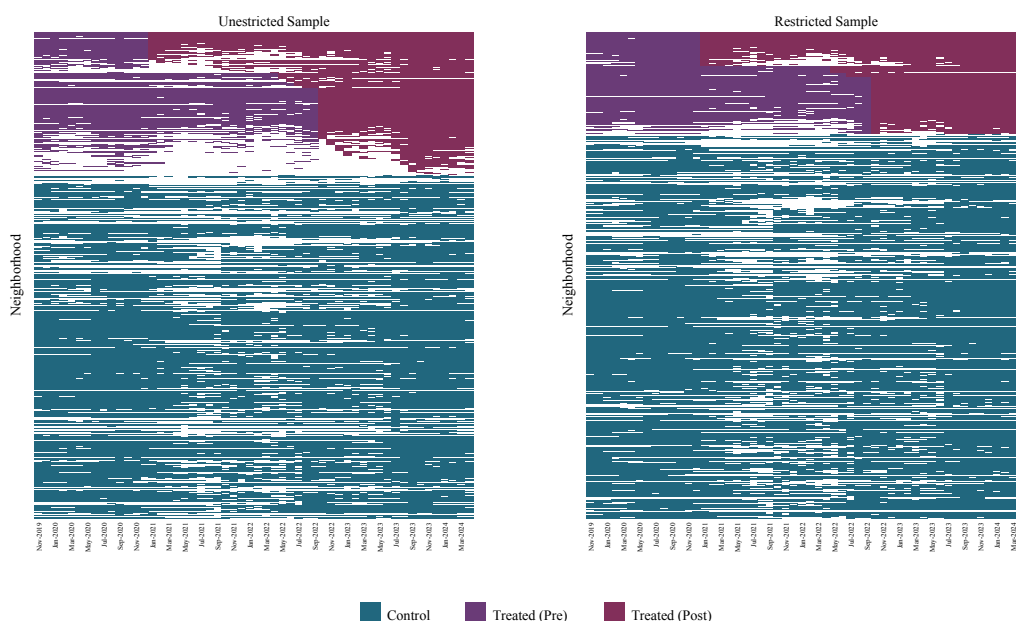
Figure 3.2 Population distribution in Istanbul



The coverage of the sample does not pose a major concern, as the omitted neighborhoods have proportionally smaller populations. Figure 3.2 plots the distribution of population in Istanbul. The 321 excluded neighborhoods shown in Figure 3.1 account for less than 8% of the city’s population. Despite its relatively small geographical size, Istanbul harbors millions of people. According to the latest estimates from TURKSTAT, the population density in Türkiye was 111 people per square kilometer, whereas in Istanbul it was 2,934. However, the population within the city is far from evenly distributed. Although the districts of Çatalca, Silivri, and Şile account for more than half of the city’s geographical area, they are home to less than 2% of the total population. In contrast, Esenyurt, Küçükçekmece, and Pendik neighborhoods are dropped from the sample following the merge or split.

together comprise less than 5% of the total area but accommodate around 15% of the city’s population. In districts such as Gaziosmanpaşa, more than 40,000 people live per square kilometer, compared to barely 70 in Çatalca.¹³ Such disparities are even more pronounced at the neighborhood level. For instance, in the 2024 elections, Sarıdemir neighborhood in the Fatih district - a popular touristic area, did not elect a mukhtar, as it had only 10 registered residents. Therefore, the relatively high number of omitted neighborhoods does not indicate a lack of representativeness in the data. A comparison of the sample and population distributions in Figures 3.1 and 3.2 clearly shows that the omitted neighborhoods are sparsely populated.

Figure 3.3 Panel view: unrestricted and restricted samples

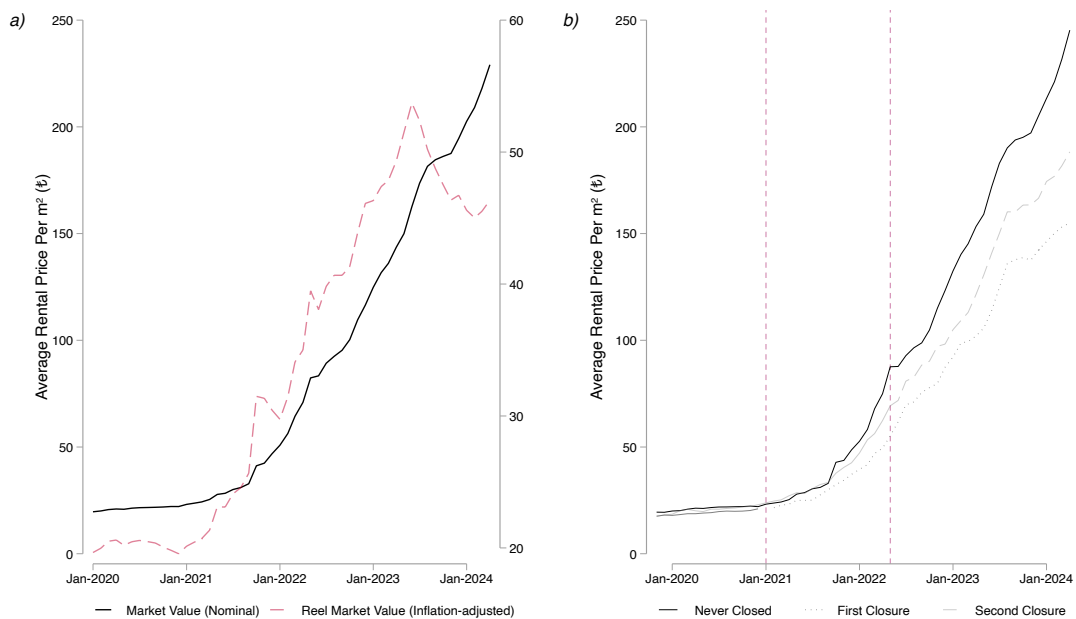


Unlike the first issue, the gaps in the data may pose more serious challenges to the robustness of the results. The first plot in Figure 3.3 illustrates the distribution of neighborhood-level observations over time in the original panel. The high density of white cells indicates a highly unbalanced dataset due to high number of missing month-neighborhood observations. Most recent DiD estimators perform relatively well with unbalanced panels and even under repeated cross-sectional settings (Callaway and Sant’Anna 2021; Sant’Anna and Zhao 2020), as they rely on 2×2 group-time-specific building blocks. In other words, group-time average treatment effects ($ATT(g,t)$) are computed only for the combinations that are observed. Recently, however, Baker et al. (2025) have emphasized that the assumption of an invariant joint distribution of covariates and treatment groups may introduce bias, particularly when covariates are used for the unconditionality assumption. Although

13. The statistics can be found in Appendix Table A.2

rental price data in this case are not conditioned on covariates, I imposed a sample restriction to include only neighborhoods that received treatment and had sufficient observations in both pre- and post-treatment periods (i.e., within the relevant 2×2 blocks). The second plot in Figure 3.3 displays a relatively more balanced panel, which enhances the precision of the estimates. The main model in the following section uses this restricted sample. As an alternative, I also constructed a sub-sample based on a strongly balanced panel that applies further restrictions (Figure A.5). The results from both restricted samples are robust and yield nearly identical estimates, with only minor differences in effect size (Figure A.6).

Figure 3.4 Change in average rental prices



The ubiquitous soaring of rental housing prices across Europe is well-documented, and Türkiye is no exception to this trend. The extent of the crisis in Türkiye, on the other hand, is worth emphasizing, as demonstrated in Figure 3.4(a). The average rental housing prices did not experience substantive growth between January 2020 and 2022, when the prices barely doubled. During the subsequent period from 2022 to 2024, however, the prices almost quadrupled. These nominal prices cannot capture the full picture in a high inflation era. To provide better context, the red line in Figure 3.4(a) illustrates the inflation-adjusted prices using January 2020 as the baseline. The increase in real prices for the period of 2022-2024 was, in fact, slightly lower compared to the earlier two-year period (49.45% compared to 51.48%). Regardless of the period or operationalization of the prices, Figure 3.4(a) clearly reveals how housing prices in Istanbul have shown a notable increase.

For the main focus of this study, Figure 3.4(b) depicts the average prices across three

main cohorts. The dispersal policies were initiated at three stages in 2022.¹⁴ The figure shows that before the first treatment in January 2021, the average rent prices across the three cohorts were almost identical. Between the treatments, the increase in rents in the two closed districts partially moderated, as the dotted line in Figure 3.4(b) suggests. After the second set of dispersal policies, the three cohorts exhibit differentiated changes in the average prices. Altogether, Figure 3.4(b) underscores the possible effects of dispersal policies but, more importantly, shows to a certain extent whether or not the PTA holds. The violation of the assumption has recently gained prominence and thus requires a further discussion.

As a semi-parametric estimator, DiD relies on fewer assumptions compared to parametric TWFE models. The PTA is the key identifying assumption, ensuring that without the treatment, the mean outcome variable exhibits a parallel trend for both control and treatment groups. While burgeoning literature extends the canonical DiD design’s settings, the PTA remains the fundamental assumption. A recent survey of observational studies in the political science field, however, reveals that although recent heterogeneous treatment effects are generally consistent with TWFE estimates, violations of the PTA are far more prevalent than one might think (Chiu et al. 2023). In light of the severity of PTA violations and how this might lead to spurious findings, I particularly focus on whether the assumption holds. Unfortunately, there is no silver bullet for testing the PTA, but following the suggestions in prior studies, I ran equivalence and placebo tests (Liu, Wang, and Xu 2024). The results of these tests and further discussions can be found in the Appendix (Figures A.1 and A.2). Overall, the results of the tests suggest that the PTA holds, which in turn indicates that the estimates from the staggered DiD design are less likely to be spurious.

Within this context, utilizing this sahibindex data and following the growing literature on heterogenous DiD settings, I estimate a staggered DiD model (Callaway and Sant’Anna 2021; De Chaisemartin and d’Haultfoeuille 2020). Unlike the earlier applications of TWFE that suffers from “bad comparisons” by comparing already treating already treated units as control group, the newer estimates only allow “clean comparisons” (Goodman-Bacon 2021; Liyang and Abraham 2021). The estimated model incorporates an event-study and can be written as:

$$(3.1) \quad Y_{it} = \alpha_i + \lambda_t + \sum_{\psi \neq -1} \beta_{\psi} \mathbf{1}\{t - g_i = \psi\} + \varepsilon_{it},$$

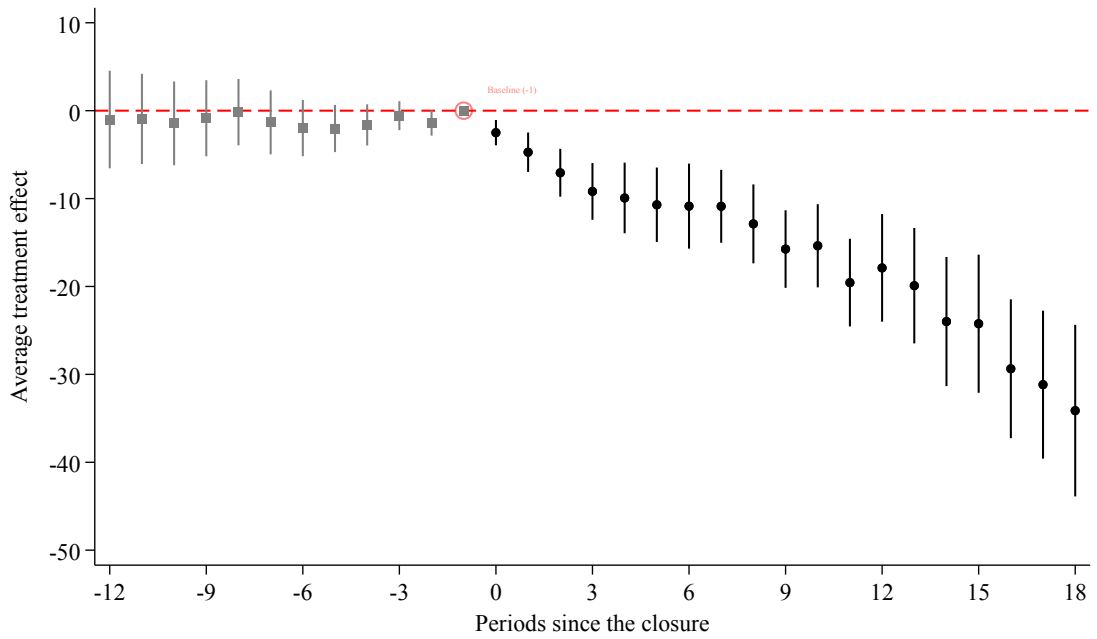
where Y_{it} is the outcome for neighbourhood i in month t , α_i and λ_t denote neighbour-

14. May, June, and October are grouped as the second cohort for better visualization.

hood and month fixed effects respectively, $\mathbf{1}\{t - g_i = \psi\}$ equals one if neighbourhood i is ψ months away from the dispersal policy (with $\psi = -1$ omitted as baseline to represent reference period), β_ψ captures the effect at relative time ψ and it is the main interest. Finally, ε_{it} is the idiosyncratic error term.

3.4 The Dispersal Policy and Rental Market

Figure 3.5 Event-study



Presenting the corrected dynamic coefficients relative to a specific baseline has become a rule of thumb in recent studies utilizing staggered DiD designs (Roth 2022). By setting the control group as never-closed neighborhoods, Figure 3.5 plots the impact of the policy over the lengths of exposure. Several points worth emphasizing. First, starting with the first month of policy initiation, we observe a substantial decrease in the average rental prices. This downward trend persists throughout the subsequent months, indicating a lasting effect of immigrant presence in these neighborhoods. The decline in average rental prices begins at 5¢ in the first month and exceeds 30¢ over time. On average, treated neighborhoods had an average rental price of around 60¢ one month before the closure decision, compared to 150¢ after 18 months. In other words, the effect is also substantial, corresponding to an approximate 8% decrease in prices initially, reaching up to 20% after one and a half years.

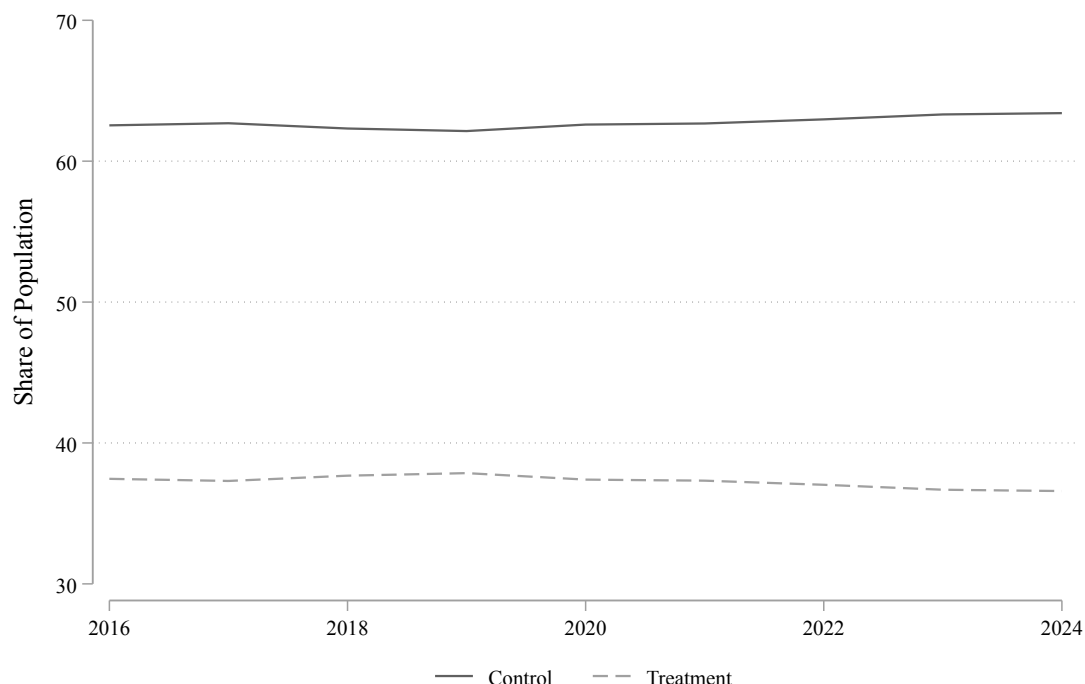
Second, the pre-trends do not exhibit any anticipation effects, which is consistent with expectations from a policy perspective, as citizens were unlikely to foresee such a move by the central government. Nearly all rounds of the neighborhood closure policy were implemented without prior announcement. Only the third round was publicly disclosed in advance, when the Minister of Interior announced in a press conference that the quota would be reduced from 25% to 20%. In the effective sample, this cohort represents only 5% of the treated units. Therefore, the absence of observable anticipation effects is not unexpected.

Overall, the analysis reveals a negative and persistent impact of the dispersal policy on the rental market. However, several important questions remain unanswered. What accounts for the sudden drop in prices? Was it a deliberate attempt by the central government to relieve pressure on the tight housing market in closed neighborhoods, where locals and immigrants had been competing for limited housing? While these questions are difficult to answer directly, alternative indicators can help shed light on the factors driving this policy outcome.

The rental housing market in Istanbul faces enormous demand. In certain neighborhoods, the supply of rental housing fails to keep pace with demand, as highlighted by the aforementioned population statistics. Multiple factors contribute to this limited supply, even when construction costs remain stable over time (Gyourko and Mollow 2015). In the short run, the supply curve is nearly inelastic, leading to increased competition among local citizens for a limited stock of rental units (Harter-Dreiman 2004). This competition is particularly more profound among low-income residents. According to the latest TURKSTAT data, homeownership is below 50% among citizens earning less than 60% of the median income. This share is even lower in Istanbul due to its population density, and it is precisely this group that competes with immigrants in the rental market.

There are possibly two explanations for the drop in housing prices, given the near-flat supply curve in the market. First, the decisions of native citizens to stay or leave may influence housing prices. If the decline in prices is attributed to decreased demand, it is not solely due to restricted immigrant access but also reflects how local residents have responded to changes in their environment. Unfortunately, population statistics at the neighborhood level are only available annually, which limits the ability to conduct a comparable DiD analysis. Nonetheless, Figure 3.6 displays the population share for migrant-populated and non-populated neighborhoods. It appears there has been no significant difference in population trends between treatment and control groups. These macro-level population statistics, therefore, provide little support for large-scale segregation or native flight. However, it is important to note that a lack of change at the macro level does not rule out the possibility of segregation. It may

Figure 3.6 Population by treatment



be that certain segments of the native population gradually leave migrant-populated neighborhoods, but their departure is offset by other natives who do not object to living in communities where migrants are more visibly present. The lack of granular data on internal migration at the neighborhood level prevents a definitive answer to this question.

While we do not find evidence supporting native flight, there is stronger support for native avoidance. The decreased demand in the market has not been compensated by Turkish citizens, suggesting that, contrary to the objective of the government, local residents are reluctant to move into areas previously populated by migrants. In any case, avoidance appears to be a stronger mechanism than native flight, as reflected in the stable population levels despite substantial drops in rental prices. As noted earlier, it is primarily low-income citizens who compete with immigrants in the rental market, and this group appears particularly hesitant to minimize housing costs by relocating to these neighborhoods. In other words, although they spend around 30% of their annual budget on housing and rent, compared to less than 10% among citizens in the highest income quintile, the decision to relocate to migrant-populated neighborhoods remains weak. The decisions of natives highlight an alternative phenomenon at play.

A substantial body of research on housing and immigration has shown that the arrival of immigrants is often associated with a perceived decline in local amenities

among native residents (Accetturo et al. 2014; Balkan et al. 2018; Saiz and Wachter 2011). While previously indifferent to minority groups living nearby, natives may respond to an increasing out-group presence by perceiving changes in local culture and social institutions, which can prompt them to relocate in search of higher amenities (Alden, Hammarstedt, and Neuman 2015). A decline in perceived amenities can help explain both the observed drop in housing prices and the native mobility decisions. To evaluate local amenities, I use socio-economic status data instead of relying solely on immigrant share, which is often used as a proxy for amenities.

The socio-economic status of neighborhoods was measured by a project called “*Ma-hallem Istanbul*,” supported by the Istanbul Development Agency in 2016. Although the project is no longer active, its aim at the time was to develop an alternative indicator using various variables provided by state agencies to identify root problems at the neighborhood level. The calculated indicator, called “Socio-Economic Status (SES),” took into account, among other factors, demographic characteristics, health indicators, economic capacity, and transportation opportunities. The SES score is a standardized discrete measure across eight categories, ranging from 0 to 100 in increments of 12.5 points. Although it is not the most ideal dataset, the availability of two rounds collected using the same methodology in 2016 and 2023 allows for a comparison between migrant-populated and non-populated neighborhoods to assess whether there has been any discernible change in socio-economic status.

Figure 3.7 SES scores by treatment

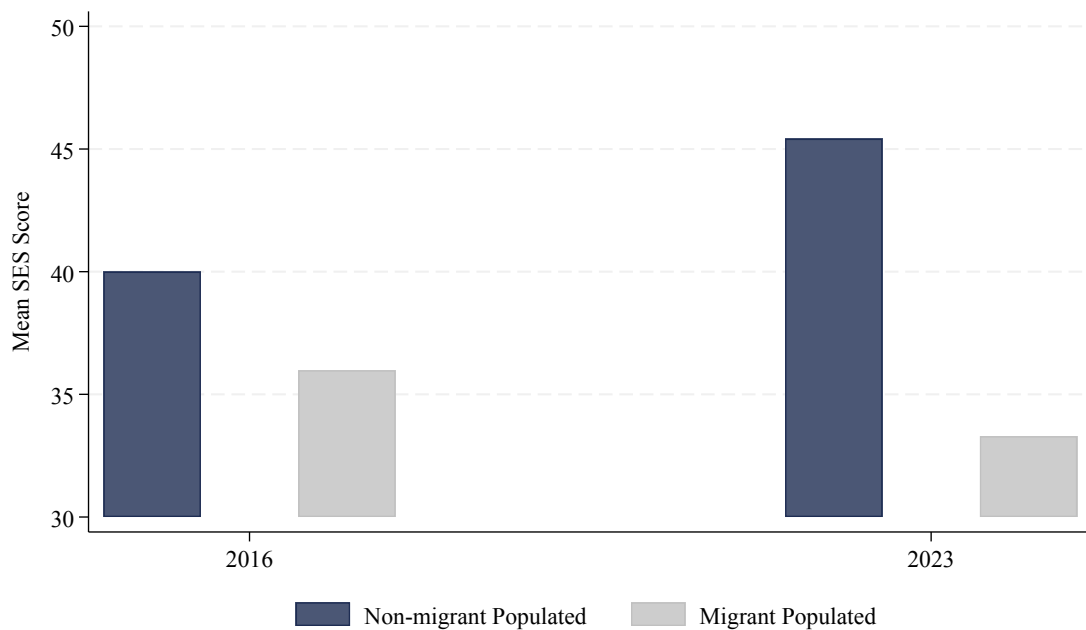


Figure 3.7 presents the mean SES scores of treated and control neighborhoods for 2016 and 2023. As expected, the 214 migrant-populated neighborhoods were less

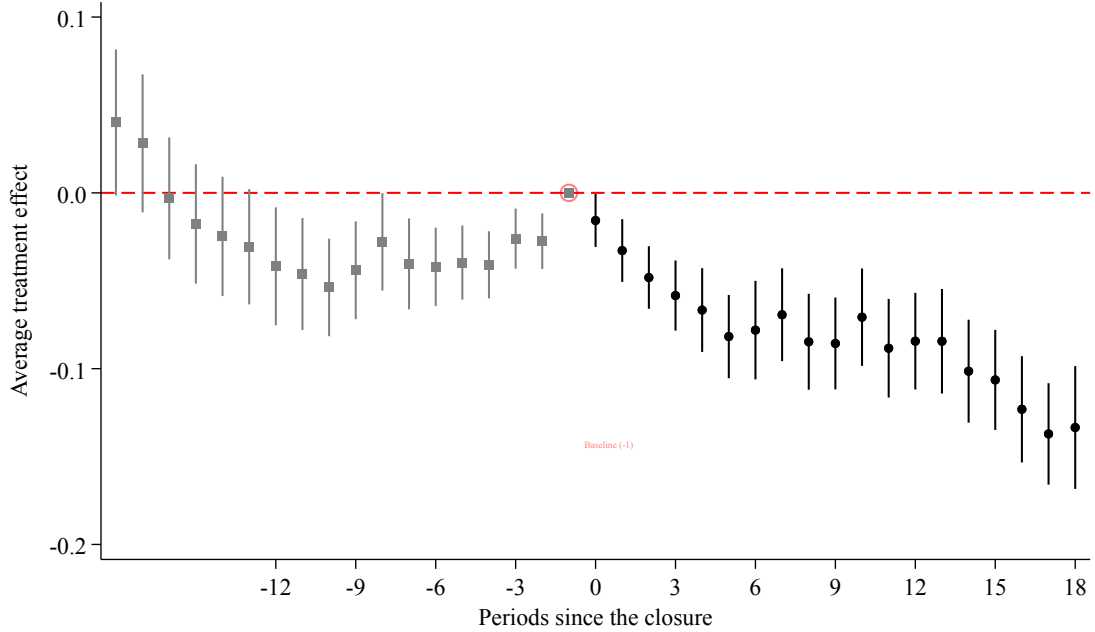
developed than other neighborhoods. This aligns with the well-documented pattern that immigrants tend to settle in economically disadvantaged areas due to limited income (Francis and Hiebert 2014). More importantly, over the seven-year period, the socio-economic status of migrant-populated neighborhoods declined by 5 points, while non-migrant-populated neighborhoods experienced a comparable increase. A basic 2×2 difference-in-differences estimation using the same data reveals a similar pattern, as shown in Table A.1 in the Appendix. The neighborhoods that were designated for closure beginning in 2021 saw a decrease of 8.1 points in their socio-economic scores between 2016 and 2023. Naturally, this decrease cannot be attributed to the dispersal policy but rather reflects the fundamental differences between these two types of neighborhoods. Therefore, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the arrival of immigrants in large numbers to specific neighborhoods contributes to decline in local amenities, even though these areas are already characterized by low socio-economic conditions.

Overall, the results suggest that, instead of competing with immigrants in the housing market, which would typically drive prices upward, natives refrain to move into these neighborhoods. This is mostly driven by the decreased local amenities in the areas which decrease the utility of leaving with immigrants for local citizens. The policy provides a framework to identify this trend, which has been largely overlooked in the existing literature. Without granular data on individual settlement choices over the years, the results of natives' decisions cannot be taken granted. Yet the same individuals may express their preferences at the ballot box by rewarding or punishing the central government. As explained earlier, both rental prices and contact with the out-group can influence citizens' voting behavior. In the following section, the outcome of the dispersal policy is analyzed through an electoral lens.

Before turning to that, however, one may question the robustness of the findings presented in this section, particularly given that the main heterogeneous difference-in-differences model does not include any covariates. The validity of the results relies on the parallel trends assumption—that in the absence of the dispersal policy, rental markets in treated and control neighborhoods would have followed similar trajectories. Concerns may arise if immigrants' decisions to settle in specific neighborhoods are not entirely exogenous, potentially rendering the treatment assignment non-random. Similarly, if underlying market dynamics drive both rental prices and the selection of neighborhoods for the dispersal policy, the observed effects may not reflect a robust causal impact. To address these concerns, the next section presents a series of robustness tests.

3.5 Sensitivity Checks

Figure 3.8 Event-study (log transformed dependent variable)



The set of concerns regarding the robustness of the findings mostly stems from the model-specification. The first issue relates to how the dependent variable is measured. The average rental price per square meter is a continuous variable that is not normally distributed but instead highly right-skewed. As explained earlier, modern approaches to DiD rely on semiparametric estimation techniques that make fewer assumptions about the distribution of the outcome variable. Unlike methods such as ordinary least squares (OLS) regression, which assumes normally distributed errors for valid inference, the semiparametric DiD estimators do not require the outcome variable itself to be normally distributed. Furthermore, recent advances in the literature raise concerns about the choice of functional form, as it may lead to sign reversals since the estimator approximates relative differences in changes across cohorts rather than estimating a true difference-in-differences effect (McConnell 2024). Keeping these concerns in mind, I replicate the model using a log-transformed dependent variable. Figure A.3 shows the resulting change in the distribution of the dependent variable. As shown in Figure 3.8, the dispersal policy has a negative impact, decreasing prices by approximately 2% in the first month and reaching 13% by the 18th month. On the other hand, some of the pre-treatment coefficients are statistically significant, raising concerns about potential violations of the parallel trends assumption. However, as previously noted, pre-treatment ATTs do not provide definitive evidence regarding the validity of the parallel trends assumption.

Similar to the main model, following Liu, Wang, and Xu (2024), I conduct both placebo (Figure A.4b) and equivalence (Figure A.4a) tests, which show that the differences are close to zero. Therefore, even with the log-transformed functional form of the dependent variable, the treatment effect remains robust and has a substantially negative impact on housing prices.

A potential problem also might arise due to the specification of the control group. The baseline model in the earlier section uses neighborhoods with less than 20% immigrant population, which were never targeted by the dispersal policy, as the control group. This imposes a restriction on the parallel trends assumption, as it requires the treated and control groups to follow similar trends, without imposing the same condition across different cohorts within the treatment group. This is a notable limitation, particularly if there are concerns that different cohorts may follow distinct trends due to unobserved factors, or if anticipation effects are present. For example, if rental prices in the eight districts closed in the final round of the policy began to decline prior to the policy’s implementation (or showed slower increases relative to other districts due to inflation), including them in the control group would violate the parallel trends assumption. Although earlier analysis showed no evidence of anticipation (prices remained unaffected as market actors could not foresee the impending restriction on access) declining local amenities, as discussed previously, may reflect an unobserved trend affecting price dynamics that is not captured by the model.

To assess this concern, the baseline model was replicated using the not-yet-treated group as the control group. As shown in Figure A.7, this alternative specification does not alter the results. Although the graph does not display it due to scale changes, there is a slightly larger but statistically insignificant anticipation effect in the pre-treatment period (less than 0.5¢), and the estimated impact is consistently larger across all post-treatment periods (around 1¢). These results raise the question of why, despite the increasing presence of immigrants and the associated decline in local amenities, neighborhoods that were eventually targeted by the dispersal policy did not experience significant changes in rental prices prior to the policy’s implementation.

This is largely driven by the behavior of sellers in the market. Landlords have little incentive to lower prices despite the gradual decline in amenities, so long as demand remains stable. Furthermore, as explained by Desmond and Wilmers (2019, 1116): *“Because landlords operating in poor communities cannot know with certainty whether a new tenant will cost them money, they may attempt to mitigate that risk by raising the rents of all their tenants, carrying the weight of social structure into price.”* The resulting decline in utility, due to low amenities and rising prices, is

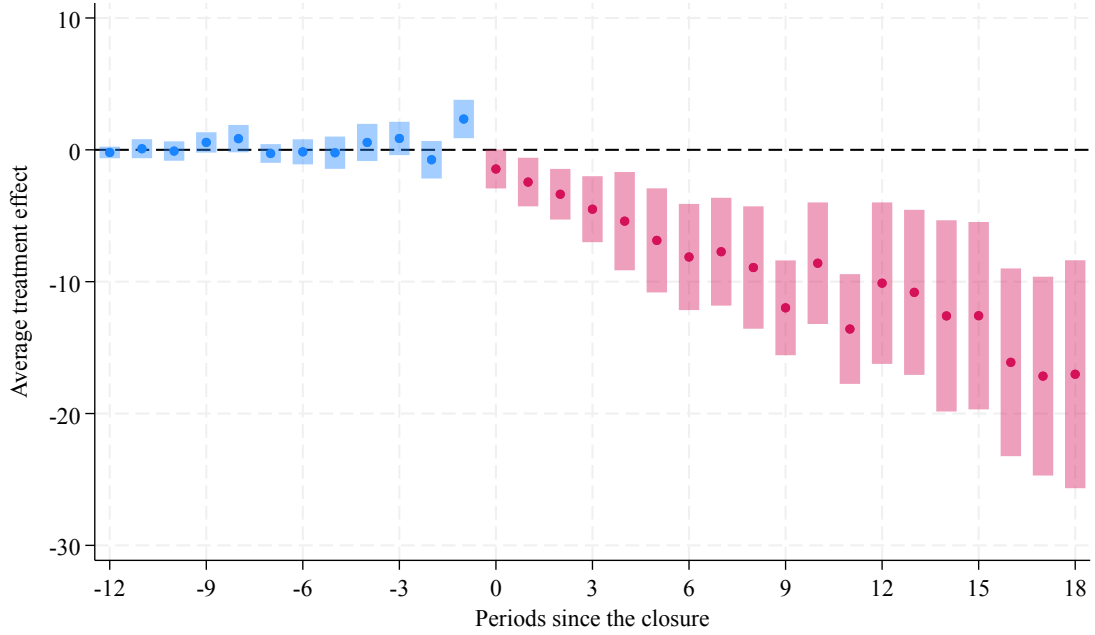
absorbed by immigrants, who have limited alternatives (Bosch, Carnero, and Farré 2015).

A related consideration concerns the duration of the treatment effect. The results from the baseline analysis are plotted only for the period up to 18 months. However, the first round of the dispersal policy began in January 2021, and the data allow for the calculation of ATTs beyond this period. Figure A.8 presents the same event-study design extended to cover a longer post-treatment period. After the 18th month of treatment, a sudden drop in the ATT is observed. This is explained by the distribution of treatment across the sample. As shown in Table 3.1, only two districts (Fatih and Esenyurt) were targeted by the first round of dispersal policy in January 2021. In the effective sample, this corresponds to just 36 neighborhoods. Consequently, ATTs after the 18th month reflect cohort-specific effects, and due to the small number of observations, the associated confidence intervals are wider. Nevertheless, even following this sharp decline, the negative impact of the policy continues and nearly triples over the subsequent 18 months. These findings further underscore the persisting effect of immigrant presence in these two districts, suggesting that other closed neighborhoods are likely to experience similar outcomes in the future.

The final, and perhaps most pressing, concern relates to the assumption of exogeneity in treatment assignment. If the assignment of treatment is not ‘as good as’ random and is instead driven by unobserved factors that also affect the outcome, this may lead to biased estimates of the causal effect in a staggered DiD framework. To address this potential issue, I included three variables that may influence the selection of neighborhoods into treatment. First, as shown in an earlier section, the closed neighborhoods exhibit lower socio-economic status based on measures provided by the central agency. Their inclusion in the policy further deepens the divide between migrant- and non-migrant-populated neighborhoods, although these areas already displayed weaker socio-economic characteristics prior to the treatment. Second, the majority of immigrants in Türkiye originate from Muslim-majority countries and tend to settle in areas where cultural and religious adaptation is easier. To capture this dimension, I used the number of religious institutions as a proxy for neighborhood-level religiosity. Finally, immigrants are more likely to settle in areas where they are likely to be welcomed. While there is no observational data on neighborhood-level attitudes toward immigrants, previous findings suggest that incumbent voters tend to be more welcoming, at least at the elite level. Therefore, as a third variable, I included the vote share of the incumbent party

To estimate the causal effect of the treatment on neighborhood-level market values while addressing potential selection bias, I used the doubly robust inverse proba-

Figure 3.9 Event-study (with inversed probability-weighting)



bility weighting (DRIPW) estimator following Callaway and Sant’Anna (2021) that account treatment selection. In practice, DRIPW begins by estimating a propensity-score model in which the likelihood of a neighborhood being closed is modeled as a function of socio-economic status, the density of religious institutions, and the incumbent vote share. These estimated probabilities are then used to generate inverse-probability weights that re-balance the treated and control groups on those three characteristics. The same covariates also appear in the outcome regression and as a result, the estimator remains consistent. The results, shown in Figure 3.9, align with the earlier findings. The assignment and impact of the dispersal policy are not driven by the same unobserved factors, or at least not by the three factors explained earlier. This approach strengthens the robustness of the causal estimates by taking into account for treatment selection based on observed covariates and limiting the influence of potential misspecification in either the treatment or outcome model.

The final robustness test focuses on market dynamics rather than model specification. Although the demand for rental dwellings has increased with the arrival of immigrants, the supply side also plays a role. As explained earlier, there is no social housing specifically allocated to immigrant groups in Türkiye, and no refugee camps have ever been established in Istanbul; instead, such facilities were opened in border cities. A key factor on the supply side is public housing policy implemented by central and local authorities. In Istanbul, both TOKİ and KIPTAŞ have the authority and budget to construct social and collective housing and to carry out urban transformation projects. TOKİ operates under the central government, while KIPTAŞ

is managed by the metropolitan municipality. While these initiatives are limited in scale, both entities have carried out projects in various parts of Istanbul—though never targeting the same neighborhoods—to renovate or construct new dwellings. Because the introduction of new dwellings, transformation of existing ones, or infrastructure renovation can increase the valuation of rental properties, I excluded neighborhoods that were the site of any such project between 2018 and 2023. After omitting the identified 22 neighborhoods from the sample, the results presented in Figure A.9 show no significant change, apart from a slight decrease in the estimated effect size.

Overall, the series of sensitivity checks supports the robustness of the results presented in the earlier section. The increasing presence of immigrants in a neighborhood led to its closure by the central authority once a 20 percent threshold was reached. The dispersal policy aimed to prevent ghettoization and potential tensions between natives and immigrants. However, it had a negative effect on rental housing prices, resulting in a substantial decline. In parallel, immigrant-populated neighborhoods also experienced a gradual decline in local amenities, which influenced native residents' decisions to avoid or leave these areas, despite falling rental prices. Although population data does not support widespread native flight, avoidance remains a significant pattern. Yet one important dimension of local citizens' response remains to be examined: how did they react to the policy at the ballot box?

3.6 Reward or Punish: Dispersal Policy and Electoral Outcomes

Up to this point, the chapter has explored how restricting further settlement of foreigners alters market dynamics. These changes are driven not only by reduced demand of immigrants but also by a decline in local amenities, which in turn further decreases demand by discouraging local residents to relocate to areas previously populated by immigrants. Moreover, these effects have lasting implications for the neighborhoods affected. Yet how do citizens react to this policy and changing environment surrounding them?

As competition intensifies and amenities decline in certain neighborhoods, citizens may seek to reward or punish policymakers for their failure to adequately address these challenges. Indeed, several studies point to a link between housing unaffordability and growing dissatisfaction not only with incumbents but also with political elites more broadly (e.g., Adler and Ansell 2020; Halla, Wagner, and Zweimüller

2017). But what happens when decision-makers implement measures that alleviate the daily burdens of local citizens? The dispersal policy settings allow us to address this question with different models. To do this, this section employs the same quasi-experimental settings, while using matching estimations.

Since the introduction of the policy, Türkiye has held two national elections. The first took place in May 2023, during which voters elected both members of parliament and the president. The presidential race proceeded to a second round, where President Erdoğan secured re-election, continuing his long tenure in office. However, the results also underscored the weakening position of the AKP, which relied on the support of smaller parties, such as YRP and HÜDAPAR, to maintain power. Although Erdoğan received nearly the same vote share as in 2018, it was only with this broader coalition that he achieved victory in the runoff.

One year later, in March 2024, local elections were held. For the first time since 2002, the AKP and Erdoğan lost their electoral majority to the main opposition party, which won 37.5% of the vote compared to the AKP's 35.5%. The ruling party not only failed to reclaim key metropolitan areas such as Istanbul and Ankara but also lost additional strongholds, including Bursa, Balıkesir, and Denizli, along with many other municipalities.

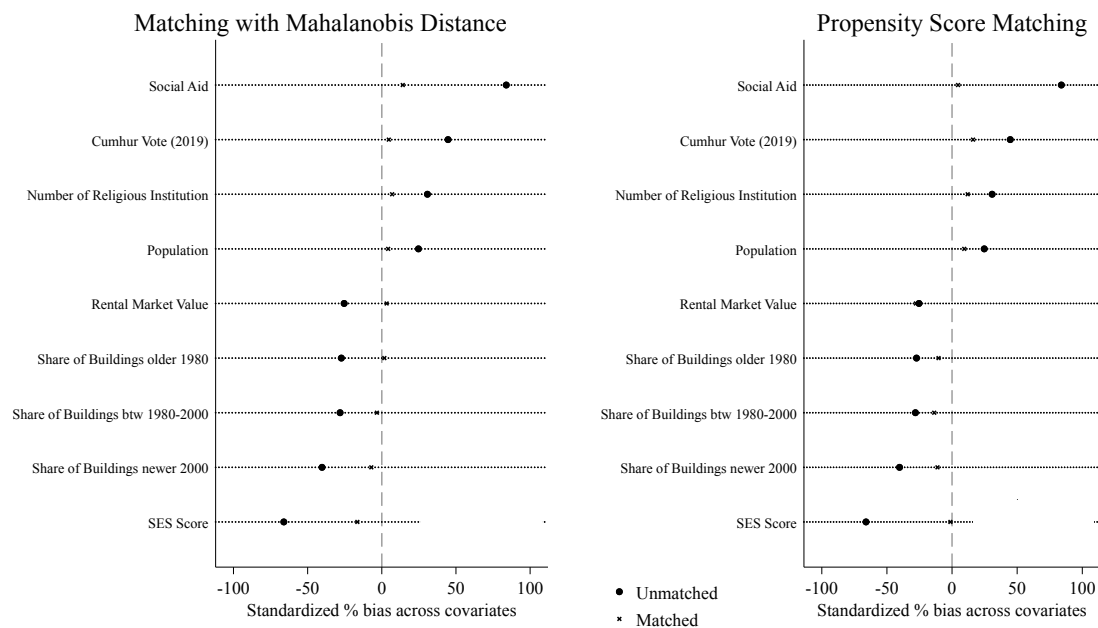
As explained in Chapter 2, the politicization of immigration and the AKP's reluctance to address the issue have gradually intensified since the Arab Spring. This period also saw the radicalization of the main opposition parties in their discourse, as well as the establishment of an extreme-right party led by Ümit Özdağ. To assess the impact of the dispersal policy on these elections, I employed matching estimations to compare neighborhoods with high immigrant populations to those without.

In order to obtain robust matching estimates, two assumptions must be satisfied. First, there must be a clear control group (counterfactual) to compare with the treated group. In the dispersal policy context, this assumption is easily met given that the policy clearly targets certain neighborhoods. Second, being targeted by the treatment (dispersal policy) should be independent of changes in the Cumhur Alliance's vote share in the upcoming elections, conditional on observed pre-treatment covariates. Although this is somewhat more complex, the assumption should still hold in this context, given that the assignment of the policy was based on the number of immigrants rather than on changes in support for the Cumhur Alliance. This claim by the central authority, however, cannot be tested independently because immigrant shares are not publicly reported at the neighborhood level.

Moreover, I have shown that immigrants are likely to settle in neighborhoods where

they would be welcomed, which are likely to be those populated by AKP voters. One could argue that the vote share and the loss in vote share are correlated. In fact, Kriner and Reeves (2015, 167) argue: *“Presidents do not simply pursue policies that benefit all Americans equally; rather, they champion budgetary policies that channel federal dollars disproportionately to states and communities that are critical to their and their party’s electoral fortunes, as well as to those that are dominated by their co-partisans in the mass public.”* In the distributive politics literature, however, there are also arguments suggesting that the optimal allocation of resources by incumbents should target opposition strongholds rather than safe or swing districts, as funding voters who already intend to support the incumbent carries little strategic benefit (Casas 2018). Such models also find empirical support in the Turkish context, at least in the transportation investments (Luca and Rodriguez-Pose 2019). Therefore, to address this issue, I also included the Cumhur Alliance’s vote share from the pre-treatment period to account for such biases. However, the robustness of the model should still be interpreted with caution.

Figure 3.10 Balance tests (Mahalanobis distance vs. propensity score)



The model includes a series of pre-treatment covariates to match migrant-populated and non-populated neighborhoods. The first set of covariates comprises the average rental price as of September 2020, the socio-economic status score described earlier, and the number of aid packages distributed by mukhtars in 2019. The second set aims to capture characteristics of the rental housing stock using earthquake risk data published by the municipality, which provides the share of buildings based on age. Although the sahibindex rental data already accounts for such characteristics

and building age naturally influences rent prices, these variables are included to account for the possibility that amenities surrounding older buildings may increase their valuation. Given that the number of religious institutions is a strong predictor of treatment assignment, it is also included in the matching procedure. Finally, I include the neighborhood population, even though treatment is assigned based on the 20 percent immigrant share. In sparsely populated neighborhoods, even a small number of arrivals can significantly increase the immigrant share and their visibility, particularly in geographically small areas. Figure 3.10 shows the covariates balances before and after matching.

As suggested, the Mahalanobis distance matching method performs better and reduces the bias for all covariates (King and Nielsen 2019) I also replicate the model using the Coarsened Exact Matching method (Iacus, King, and Porro 2012). However, due to the number of covariates, matching covers only a limited number of observations. Nevertheless, the results remain robust.

Table 3.2 Matching estimates on Δ Cumhur Alliance vote share

	2023	2024	Pooled
Dispersal Policy	1.12***	1.53 **	1.45***
Treatment vs. Control	(0.29)	(0.59)	(0.29)
Observations	510	510	1020

◇ Bootstrapped standard errors are in parentheses

◇ Two-tailed tests. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Matching methods using Mahalanobis distance estimate the average treatment effect on the incumbent alliance vote share. Table 3.2 presents the matching results for the 2023 general and 2024 local elections in Türkiye. In the 2023 general elections, the difference between closed and non-closed neighborhoods is 1.12%, while for the 2024 local elections it is 1.53%. It is important to emphasize that the Cumhur Alliance experienced significant losses in both elections. Therefore, the treatment effect is substantial, as the alliance managed to increase its vote share despite the broader electoral decline. But why do local citizens living in migrant-populated neighborhoods targeted by the dispersal policy support the incumbent? Similar to the rental market dynamics, there are two possible explanations for this trend.

First, although earlier analyses indicate that population shares remained stable, it also highlights a mechanism that residents dissatisfied with the arrival of immigrants and the associated decline in local amenities may have chosen to leave these neighborhoods. Their departure could be offset by newcomers more willing to live alongside immigrants and drawn by lower rents for comparable housing. This shift may reflect an economic-voting mechanism: by reducing housing costs, the policy

might have led cost-conscious movers to reward the incumbent for perceived economic benefits. While economic concerns did not dominate voter behavior in the 2023 Turkish elections (Aytaç 2024), they may have been decisive for a subset of citizens who relocated to neighborhoods affected by the dispersal policy.

A second mechanism is political. Restricting further immigrant inflows may have been received positively by residents with strong anti-immigrant attitudes. Although the incumbent created the underlying issue in the first place, some voters may have credited it for responding effectively, especially if they viewed the opposition's promises as less credible. This is precisely what I argued in the theoretical framework of Chapter 1: policy outcomes can reshape domestic consequences, even for an initially pro-immigrant incumbent party. Thus, although restrictive measures such as dispersal policies may produce persistent macroeconomic challenges, their electoral consequences and the rise of ERP can still be mitigated. While neighborhood-level observational data cannot directly confirm these interpretations, electoral patterns highlight a one pattern, the dispersal policy is associated with increased vote shares for the Cumhur Alliance in both the 2023 presidential and 2024 local elections.

3.7 Conclusion

Migration governance and the arrival of immigrants directly shape the contextual environment in which local citizens live. One of the most immediate and visible consequences of increased out-group presence is its effect on the housing market and settlement patterns. While a substantial literature explores how immigrant arrivals affect housing dynamics, this chapter takes a step further by examining what happens when the central government intervenes to restrict immigrant settlement in already migrant-populated neighborhoods in an effort to curb segregation.

Drawing on monthly neighborhood-level rental data in Istanbul, this chapter investigates the impact of Türkiye's dispersal policy, which bars foreigners, regardless of legal status, from settling in neighborhoods where their population share exceeds 20 percent. The analysis proceeds in two parts. First, a staggered difference in differences approach leverages the timing of four closure rounds to compare neighborhoods targeted by the dispersal policy (treatment group) with those that were never targeted (control group). Second, a matching design is used to assess changes in vote shares for the Cumhur Alliance in closed versus never-closed neighborhoods in the 2023 presidential and 2024 local elections. Together, the findings show that a policy introduced as a reactive measure to local tensions, rather than as part of

a well-planned migration strategy, has significantly reshaped housing markets and influenced voting behavior.

From the macro-economic perspective, the closures led to a notable and persistent drop in rental prices. Average monthly asking rents in affected neighborhoods declined by approximately 10 to 20 percent within a year of policy implementation, and this trend remained evident even after 18 months. These effects reflect a dual decline in demand: immigrants could no longer move into these areas, and native residents were either unable or unwilling to compensate for the drop in occupancy. More importantly, the divergent price trends between treatment and control neighborhoods are not explained solely by perceptions of local amenities but also by variation in socio-economic status, as assessed by Istanbul's municipal authorities. Furthermore, because policy concentrated in lower-income neighborhoods, the resulting price relief helped mainly to poorer renters, while wealthier areas continued to experience increasing rental costs. Rather than mitigating segregation, therefore, the dispersal policy appears to have deepened spatial inequalities by widening the gap between migrant and non-migrant neighborhoods.

From an election perspective, although the Cumhur Alliance experienced national-level losses in both the 2023 and 2024 elections, it managed to secure a modest yet statistically significant increase in vote share, ranging from one to two percentage points, in neighborhoods affected by the policy. Two mechanisms may explain this outcome. First, the policy may have attracted cost-sensitive local citizens from elsewhere, who, less concerned with neighborhood amenities or immigrant presence, benefited from lower rents and rewarded the incumbent for economic relief. Second, some residents may have viewed the policy as a credible response to immigration-related concerns and credited the government for addressing these issues at the local level, even if broader dissatisfaction with migration policy remained.

In sum, Türkiye's neighborhood closure policy functions as a natural experiment that reveals both the intended and unintended consequences of spatially targeted immigration controls. By linking rental market trends with electoral outcomes, the chapter demonstrates how economic and political consequences of local interventions evolve at different speeds and influence public support for migration governance.

There are several limitations to this analysis. First, despite robustness checks that include additional covariates potentially influencing rental price trends, these covariates are available only at the annual level and may fail to capture monthly fluctuations not attributable to the dispersal policy. Although further tests in Section 3.5 and Appendix A confirm that the policy effect remains robust across different specifications, they cannot definitively rule out alternative explanations. Second, the

sahibindex data used throughout the chapter do not encompass the full rental market, as certain transactions occur outside the online platform. Despite its dominant market share, the estimates could vary with more granular data, such as individual-level listings like those employed by Akgündüz, Hacıhasanoğlu, and Yılmaz (2023). However, such data would likely affect the magnitude, not the direction, of the estimated effect.

Finally, the absence of detailed observational data limits the ability to identify the mechanisms driving public support for the incumbent. To address this gap, the next chapter turns to individual-level survey data collected after the 2023 presidential election. While not specifically designed to evaluate the dispersal policy, the survey provides insight into broader public attitudes toward migration governance, helping to uncover how Turkish citizens make decisions after assessing the policy positions of competing political actors.

4. WHEN MIGRATION MATTERS: SPATIAL VOTING IN THE 2023 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

Since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011, Türkiye has hosted one of the largest refugee populations in the world, along with a growing number of immigrants who have chosen the country as a place to settle. The government has pursued a wide spectrum of both permissive and restrictive policies, shaped either by efforts to align with global migration governance norms and standards or by the need to address domestic demands from certain segments of society and, at times, the broader public (Müftüler-Baç 2022; Norman 2020*a*; Ustübcü 2019). Over time, there has been a noticeable shift toward more restrictive measures at the local level, while permissive standards remain in place through legal pathways for immigration and continued adherence to international norms on voluntary return and non-refoulement, albeit with some exceptions (Mencütek-Şahin 2022).

One major policy that exemplifies the restrictive side of migration governance is the dispersal policy, which regulates settlement rights for all foreigners, without differentiating legal status. By analyzing the consequences of this policy at the neighborhood level in Istanbul, Chapter 3 reveals its unintended consequences. Because it lacks long-term strategic planning and is driven by socio-cultural tensions, the policy has not mitigated segregation but rather reinforced ghettoization in specific neighborhoods. Rental prices in these areas experienced a sharp decline following the policy's implementation, a trend that has continued for months. Arguably, the trend is largely driven by a forced reduction in demand from immigrants, which has not been offset by Turkish citizens due to factors such as declining local amenities.

Beyond its macroeconomic and societal impacts, Chapter 3 also explores electoral consequences through two mechanisms. First, locals may support the reduced number and visibility of foreigners and reward the incumbent for initiating such a policy, despite deteriorating amenities. Alternatively, local residents may leave these neighborhoods in response to the growing foreign population and declining conditions (native flight). Their departure is subsequently followed by the arrival of citizens

from other areas who are more accepting of immigrants and willing to live alongside them. The individual, cultural, or contextual factors that shape these more favorable attitudes toward immigrants also correlate with greater support for the incumbent among this group. A third mechanism, unrelated to the dispersal policy, is that voters may simply not prioritize this issue and cast their votes based on considerations in other issue areas or simply following their partisan attachments.

Without granular observational data such as time series cross sectional ballot box level data, addressing these mechanisms and estimating their impact is nearly impossible. As such data are not available, at least in the case of Türkiye, alternative sources must be used. As an attempt to overcome this limitation, drawing on newly collected survey data, this chapter examines how Turkish citizens responded to the policy positions of electoral candidates in the 2023 presidential elections. Rather than focusing narrowly on the dispersal policy, it adopts a broader perspective by considering the full range of candidates' policy positions and voters' own preferences. In doing so, the chapter emphasizes the influence of all migration-related policies and broader migration governance, at least those policies of which citizens are aware.

As explained in Chapter 2, the question of how immigrant and refugee inflows influence electoral outcomes has attracted growing attention; however, existing research on the Turkish case remains limited and inconclusive. Early works find no empirical evidence that the arrival of refugees affects the vote share of the incumbent party, reflecting the broader pattern of null results in the literature (Altındağ and Kaushal 2021; Fisunoğlu and Sert 2019). These studies largely focus on the early phases of refugee inflows, when the issue had not yet become a central topic of both political and public discussion.

The 2023 general elections in Türkiye, however, offers a unique opportunity to revisit this question under markedly different conditions. First, the elections took place in the context of mounting economic hardship, which heightened public concern about competition for resources, employment, and public services. Second, the public debate on migration had become significantly more salient, with increased media coverage, political polarization, and visible mobilization around the issue. Third, for the first time in the Turkish political history, an explicitly anti-immigrant party entered the electoral arena and captured public interest among distinct segments of the electorate. These shifts suggest that the political consequences of refugee and immigrant inflows may be more pronounced in this context compared to earlier elections. The altered political environment, the evolving nature of party competition, and the growing politicization of migration together create the conditions in which the electoral impact of immigration can be more clearly observed and systematically

analyzed.

Against this backdrop, this chapter addresses two interrelated questions concerning immigration policies and electoral outcomes. First, does policy proximity on the migration issue between voters and candidates predict vote choice in the 2023 Turkish presidential election, and if so, to what extent? Second, how does party identification moderate the effect of spatial distance on voting behavior? To answer these questions, I draw on the extensive literature on voting behavior, particularly spatial and issue-salience theories. The hypotheses are tested using data from a face-to-face survey conducted with a sample of 2,075 respondents immediately following the May 28, 2023 elections (Tsourapas and Apaydin 2025).

The findings provide strong support for spatial voting theories. Across all measures of proximity on migration policies, as the distance between a voter and a candidate decreases, the propensity for supporting that candidate increase significantly. Part of this effect stems from perception bias: some voters project their preferred candidate onto their own policy position, while others adopt the candidate's stance altogether. Even when relying on expert evaluated candidate positions, the analysis still reveals a significant relationship between policy proximity and vote choice. However, this spatial logic does not operate uniformly across all voters in Türkiye.

Specifically, those who identify with a political party largely disregard proximity, suggesting that party loyalty weakens the influence of policy alignment. Among non-partisan voters, proximity plays a substantial role, with predicted probabilities of support shifting significantly between extreme distance and perfect congruence. Importantly, this effect is primarily driven by opposition voters: incumbent supporters remain largely unmoved by President Erdoğan's perceived policy position distance, while Kılıçdaroğlu's supporters become increasingly likely to vote for him as he is perceived as closer to their own. Among incumbent voters, such issues appear secondary to other policy areas such as stability or loyalty. These patterns highlight how migration governance and related policies have uneven electoral consequences in a polarized society, mirroring findings in other fields such as environmental politics (Hazlett and Mildemberger 2020; Merkley and Stecula 2021).

Together, these findings contribute to two key areas. First, they confirm that even in a non-Western context like Türkiye, the electoral effects of immigration emerge under conditions of high salience and economic stress, contributing to the literature on the Global South (Arababah et al. 2021). Second, it demonstrates that partisan attachments moderate the influence of policy proximity even on migration issues, where anti-immigrant sentiments are more vocal than pro-immigrant positions (Kustov 2023). By integrating elite framing, economic context, and party dynamics, the

study deepens our understanding of when and how migration shapes electoral behavior in Türkiye and beyond. Each of these mechanisms influences the salience of migration, as outlined in the theoretical framework of Chapter 1.

Within this framework, the next sections explain why the electoral impact of immigration is likely to be more profound by elaborating on each of the mechanisms described above. The chapter then formally states the hypotheses derived from this theoretical framework, followed by a discussion of the appropriate research design to test them. Finally, it presents the empirical results and concludes by considering their implications for potential external validity in other contexts, outlining why these findings may nevertheless generalise beyond the Turkish case.

4.1 Theoretical Framework

Only a handful of studies analyze how immigrant inflows affect elections in Türkiye. One of the earliest contributions is Fisunoğlu and Sert (2019), who use the quasi-experimental variation from refugee arrivals to study the June 2015 elections at the province level. The authors find negative but weak statistical evidence for the impact of refugees on the incumbent vote share. In a similar vein, Altındağ and Kaushal (2021) examine the impact of refugee arrivals using monthly survey data from 2012 to 2016. The findings at the individual-level align with the province-level findings, showing no statistically significant effect of refugee arrivals on electoral behavior. Beyond these two studies, the electoral impact of refugees has received limited scholarly attention in the Turkish context, possibly due to the consistency of null findings. To a certain extent, these null findings reflect the field’s reliance on contact theory without a complementary framework that connects attitudes to electoral behavior.

Most studies draw on contact theories originating in the field of social psychology. Scholars argue that increased interaction with out-groups either reduces or increases prejudice depending on the quality and context of the contact, following Allport’s influential work (Allport 1954). This theoretical framework of contact and prejudice continues to be widely employed in studies focusing on Türkiye (e.g., Irgil 2024; Kayaoglu 2025; Yaylacı and Bakiner 2025). Despite their individual limitations, each study makes a distinctive contribution to our understanding of attitude formation and thus occupies a valuable place in the literature. The canonical contact theory in social psychology offers a helpful starting point because it posits a clear causal chain: exposure to, or interaction with, an out-group (the treatment) shapes levels of

prejudice toward that group (the outcome). Crucially, the magnitude and direction of this effect are conditioned by individual-level traits such as generalized social trust, political sophistication, and related psychological dispositions (Paluck, Green, and Green 2019; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). Yet studying political behavior compels us to push the analysis one step further, beyond attitudes alone to the electoral outcomes they may produce as discussed in the theoretical framework of Chapter 1. What, then, warrants the expectation that recent elections might yield a different outcome?

4.1.1 Contextual Shifts ahead of the 2023 Elections

To explain why the 2023 elections may differ from earlier null findings of other studies, I propose a three-part framework: (1) elite mobilization and framing, (2) the domestic economic context, and (3) the strategic emergence of an anti-immigrant niche party. To varying degrees, all three paths are evident in the Turkish case, and their prominence has gradually shifted over time. Furthermore, each of these mechanisms affects either voters' perceived policy distances, the salience they assign to migration, or a party's valence advantage, thereby reshaping the conditions under which spatial voting models apply. This perspective closely follows the classification of Nathan and Sands (2023), who classify the downstream political consequences of contact into three paths: elite mobilization, economic conditions, and distributive politics. The latter is also evident in the Turkish context, as the earlier empirical chapter on housing policies exemplifies. This chapter incorporates distributive politics under the broader heading of domestic economic context in order to keep the framework parsimonious.

First of all, elite threat framing can turn latent anti-immigrant sentiment into votes. The empirical studies show that the sudden arrival of an out-group does not automatically lead to changes in voting behavior. As a pioneering study, Hopkins (2010) argues that the influx of an ethnically distinct group does not inherently trigger hostile political reactions. Such discriminatory responses are more likely to be mobilized by salient national rhetoric that repeatedly frames immigration as a threat. In his theory of politicized places, Hopkins (2010, 56) states: *"If anti-immigrant forces take years to mobilize and respond to immigration nationally, then immigration might become salient only decades after the arrival of the initial immigrants."* Further survey experiments confirm the causal effect of violent elite rhetoric in increasing support among natives for policies that harm the out-group (Gubler and Kalmoe 2015). Building on cross-sectional analysis in six Western European countries, Grande,

Schwarzbözl, and Fatke (2019) find no correlation between socioeconomic factors, such as the share of immigrants or the level of unemployment, and the politicization of migration as a national issue. They further highlight the role of right-wing parties as issue entrepreneurs and how they intensify the politicization of the issue. Indeed, the stability of attitudes toward immigrants despite major economic and political shocks underscores the complex interplay between sentiments, saliency, and political behavior (Kustov, Laaker, and Reller 2021).

While threat framing increases salience, an alternative humanitarian and cultural frames can initially dampen the impact of such narratives. The countries in the Global South have widely employed strategic indifference that mixes liberal integration and exclusionary strategies to garner international support by highlighting their role during the migration crises governance (Norman 2020*b*). Consequently, in much of the Global South the presumed link between refugee inflows and anti-immigrant attitudes has been weak, at least during the early years of the Syrian displacement crisis. In Jordan, for example, cultural and humanitarian considerations remained salient even amid economic hardship (Alrababah et al. 2021). Similarly, by avoiding a crisis narrative the incumbent AKP in Türkiye adopted a humanitarian frame; party elites invoked shared religious and historical ties to present refugees as ‘guests’ (Apaydın and Müftüler-Baç 2022; Sert and Danış 2020). Such framing can deflect international criticism, attract donor aid, and reduce domestic backlash by appealing to widely held norms. Yet, survey experiments and field studies show that religious or civilizational discourses resonate with only a limited share of the electorate (Alakoc, Gokse, and Zarychta 2022; Morgul and Savaskan 2021). While these narratives initially softened threat perceptions among pro-government constituencies, mounting economic strain and intensified electoral competition gradually eroded their appeal, enabling opposition and niche parties to recast migration as a security and fiscal burden. This shift from humanitarian to threat framing helps explain why elite mobilization around migration became far more electorally potent in the run-up to the 2023 elections.

Despite a comparable number of people on the move during the 2018 elections, the 2023 general elections witnessed a markedly higher level of politicization of migration. In the lead-up to the 2018 elections, the AKP devoted only a few pages to migration governance in its nearly 400-page electoral manifesto, which largely praised Türkiye’s role in managing the regional refugee crisis (AKP 2018). The CHP, by contrast, referred to migration even more briefly and refrained from strong criticism (CHP 2018). Similarly, migration governance did not feature prominently in the campaigns of any presidential candidates. The opposition candidate, Muharrem İnce, addressed the issue only in passing, focusing primarily on restoring peace in

Syria and facilitating the voluntary return of refugees.¹ By contrast, the 2023 elections presented a markedly different pattern. In both parties' manifestos, migration was addressed with varying policies and rhetoric. Undoubtedly, the emergence of the far-right ZP contributed to this shift. These changes in party programs confirm that elite rhetoric on migration intensified between 2018 and 2023.

In addition to the increased saliency and politicization of the issue, the mainstream opposition party, CHP, has also begun to adopt a more restrictive stance on migration, presumably influenced by the rising popularity of the ZP. The CHP had already shifted its position on immigration between 2014 and 2019 in response to growing public demand for more restrictive policies (Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2019). This shift accelerated further following the formation of the ZP. Meguid (2005) describes this as an 'accommodation' strategy in which mainstream parties shift toward a niche party's stance to co-opt its agenda and raise the salience of the issue the niche actor owns. In the case of radical right-wing parties, this pattern is indeed observed in most other multi-party systems (Abou-Chadi and Krause 2020; Han 2015). However, it often results in increased support for the original extreme party rather than diminishing its influence (Krause, Cohen, and Abou-Chadi 2023); largely because it legitimized the extreme-party and its position (Dahlström and Sundell 2012). Meguid (2005), however, highlights two other strategies: dismissive and adversarial. While in the earlier scenario, the mainstream party dismisses the issue by not taking position on it, in the adversarial tactic, the established party positions itself away from the niche party to compete with it.

In the Turkish context, the main opposition party not only accommodated the position of the extreme-right party but also cooperated with it in the two-weeks period between presidential elections. The long-term consequences of this strategy and its impact on the electoral success of the ZP remain to be examined in future research and fall beyond the scope of this dissertation. Nevertheless, it is sufficient to note that this strategy positioned the main opposition party as a viable alternative in channeling public backlash against immigration which lacked in the previous elections. The strategy of the AKP, on the other hand, was a mixed strategy between dismissive and adversarial. I will turn to the consequences of this strategy later, vis-à-vis how these tactics affect the saliency of the migration issue during the electoral campaigns.

Last but not least, the economic crisis has certainly contributed to the mobilization of anti-immigrant attitudes in the ballot-box. Macro-economic indicators such as inflation were also elevated during the 2018 election period (roughly 15 percent

1. "‘Territorial integrity of Syria will be preserved’ [‘Suriye’nin toprak bütünlüğü korunacak’]" *Anadolu Ajansı*, May 20, 2018.

annually), and the Turkish Lira depreciated sharply. Nevertheless, these pressures were mild compared with the run-up to the 2023 elections, when official CPI inflation reached to 85 percent in late 2022, approaching triple-digit inflation and eroding real incomes and purchasing powers.

As touched upon in Chapter 3, theories such as the labor market competition have been deemed as a ‘zombie-theory’ due to lack of consistent empirical support (Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014). The overall economic conditions, on the other hand, have further impact on anti-immigrant attitudes beyond the one caused by direct competition. For instance, recent findings by Hopkins, Margalit, and Solodoch (2024) show that economic shocks, especially job losses, can still lead to anti-immigrant attitudes, particularly among local populations that are less directly affected, as individuals channel these economic concerns into salient socio-political issues. In a similar vein, Laaker (2024) highlights how experiencing economic shocks at a young age leads to sociotropic responses by prompting anti-immigrant narratives that frame immigration as part of a wider cultural threat. Regardless of whether the economic downturn is caused by an outgroup, scapegoating immigrants becomes a common rhetorical strategy during such periods (Vogt Isaksen 2019). As an example of this rhetoric, the day after the 2024 local elections, in which the ZP performed below expectations, the party leader Ümit Özdağ stated: *“Apparently, a bit more time needs to pass for the Turkish people to see the deep connection between uncontrolled migration and the worsening of the economic crisis. And it seems we need to pay an even higher price.”* Accordingly, I expect anti-immigrant backlash linked to the economic crisis to be more pronounced in the 2023 general elections than in earlier elections.

Taken together, these three mechanisms, elite mobilization, the rise of an anti-immigrant party, and the economic hardship changed where voters locate parties on the migration dimension and sharpened the differences in those perceptions across the electorate. These dynamics make the 2023 election an ideal context in which to apply spatial voting models, which posit that changes in perceived party–voter distance and issue salience translate directly into electoral choice. With these mechanisms in mind, I turn to spatial voting theory.

4.1.2 Proximity and Migration Policy Preferences

Traditional spatial voting theories rest on the assumption that, as rational decision-makers, voters seek to maximize their utility by supporting candidates whose positions are spatially closer to their own ideal points. These theories differ in how

they define the utility function. Downsian spatial theory holds that voters prefer the candidate whose policy position is closest to their ideal point in the issue space (Downs 1957; Enelow and Hinich 1984). Rabinowitz and Macdonald (1989), however, criticize proximity models, arguing that voters care not only about how close a candidate is to their ideal position but also about the direction of policies and the extent to which parties are committed to those positions. Directional models build on this critique by modifying the utility function: voters tend to support candidates on the same ideological side of an issue but penalize those perceived as too extreme, falling outside the region of acceptability. The extensive literature has tested the explanatory power of both spatial voting models, and present mixed results (e.g., Fazekas and Méder 2013; Pardos-Prado and Dinas 2010; Tiemann 2022).

The assumptions underlying both approaches have been subject to scrutiny (Lewis and King 2000). Apart from the common assumptions, the concepts such as region of acceptability is an individual concept and varies across respondents in the survey sample that makes it challenging to account for (Gallati and Giger 2020). Later attempts by scholars have sought to merge both directional and proximity models, recognizing that rational voters may simultaneously employ both frameworks in a given election. For instance, by incorporating discounting into the models, Merrill and Grofman (1999) examine how various demographic factors and levels of political sophistication influence the extent to which voters rely on discounting versus proximity models, although the evidence remains weak.

One of the major criticisms of spatial models is their assumption that political preferences can be represented on a unidimensional, single policy space, typically along a left–right scale. In reality, the political landscape consists of multiple dimensions that are often not unified. Stokes (1963, 371) highlights this limitation and further argues: *“Just as the parties may be perceived and evaluated on several dimensions, so the dimensions that are salient to the electorate may change widely over time.”* In later studies of spatial voting, salience has been widely examined at the individual level. Thurner (2000), in fact, shows that partisan loyalties and issue salience jointly shape vote choice.

It is important to note that migration-related issues, indeed, may not be the sole determinants of voters’ decision-making process. Estimating models without accounting for alternative issue dimensions may yield spurious results, as this would assume that all voters uniformly incorporate migration into their decision-making processes. Nonetheless, there are compelling reasons to focus on a single issue-dimension, as it can shed light on critical aspects of the voting process. First, the issue of immigration has been central to most spatial voting studies as it is among the central questions in comprehensive surveys such as Norwegian Election

Study. Consequently, the voters self-position of themselves and parties on the issue of migration has been examined in previous literature (Macdonald, Listhaug, and Rabinowitz 1991; Merrill and Grofman 1999). Second, other scholars of spatial voting theory have explored alternative policy areas by considering their salience. For example, Tomz and van Houweling (2008) conducted a survey experiment using positional placement of the respondents on healthcare policy in the United States, based on the finding that it was the second-most salient issue after the Iraq War across multiple surveys. In the Turkish case, similarly, migration has emerged as a central topic in political debates, second only to the economy, as will be shown below.

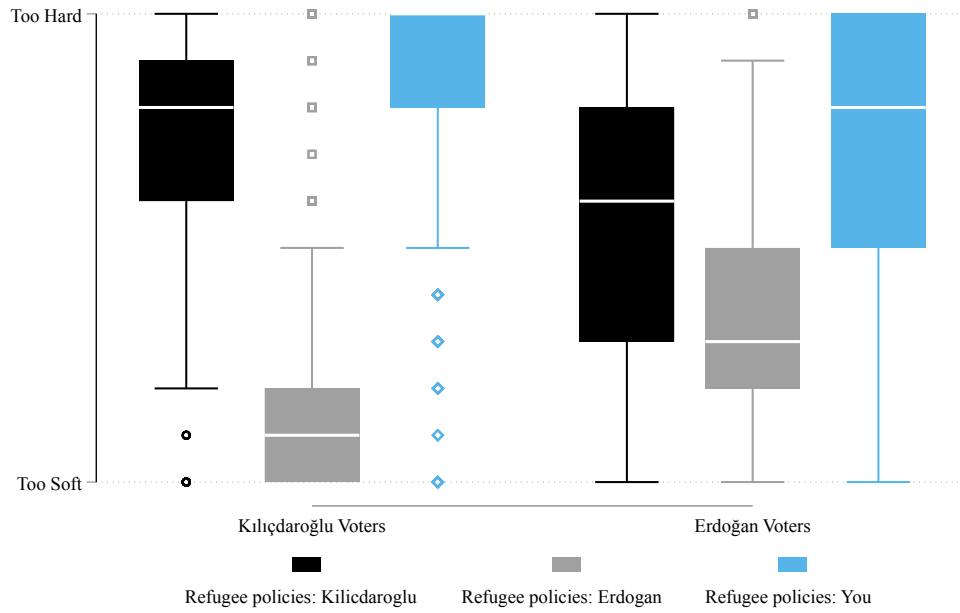
Based on these theoretical considerations, the first hypothesis is stated as follows:

Hypothesis 1 (Spatial Voting): *The probability of voter's support for a candidate increases as the candidate's perceived position on migration policy becomes closer to the voter's preferred position.*

Although useful for explaining voting behavior to some extent, spatial voting theories suffer from an endogeneity problem arising either from candidate positioning or from voters' perceptions of candidate positions. In the former case, candidates are assumed to be as rational as voters and therefore strategically position themselves, under strict conditions converging on the median voter to minimize the distance between their manifested policies and the preferences of the electorate. More pressingly, however, voters' placement of candidates is subjective rather than objectively assessed. Survey respondents often locate the candidate they support closer to their own ideal position (known as projection bias), or they may adopt the position of the candidate they already feel close to (known as persuasion bias). These perception biases are inherent in all observational survey data, and researchers cannot fully manipulate and account for them without experimental settings.

Figure 4.1 presents a box plot of responses for both individual and candidate placements on immigration policies, disaggregated by respondents' vote choice in the first round of the presidential elections. As expected, more than 75% of Kılıçdaroğlu voters favor restrictive refugee policies, although some respondents prefer the softest policies possible, as indicated by the blue-dot outliers. Given that Kılıçdaroğlu was the joint candidate of the opposition parties, including leftist parties but excluding the third major candidate Sinan Oğan who represented minor right-wing nationalist parties, this distribution is neither surprising nor unexpected. President Erdoğan voters, by contrast, exhibit more dispersed preferences, though the majority still support restrictive policies over a lenient stance on refugee issues. Notably, the president's voters believe the president has adopted relatively soft policies, which,

Figure 4.1 Box plot of perceived and self-placed policy position on refugees

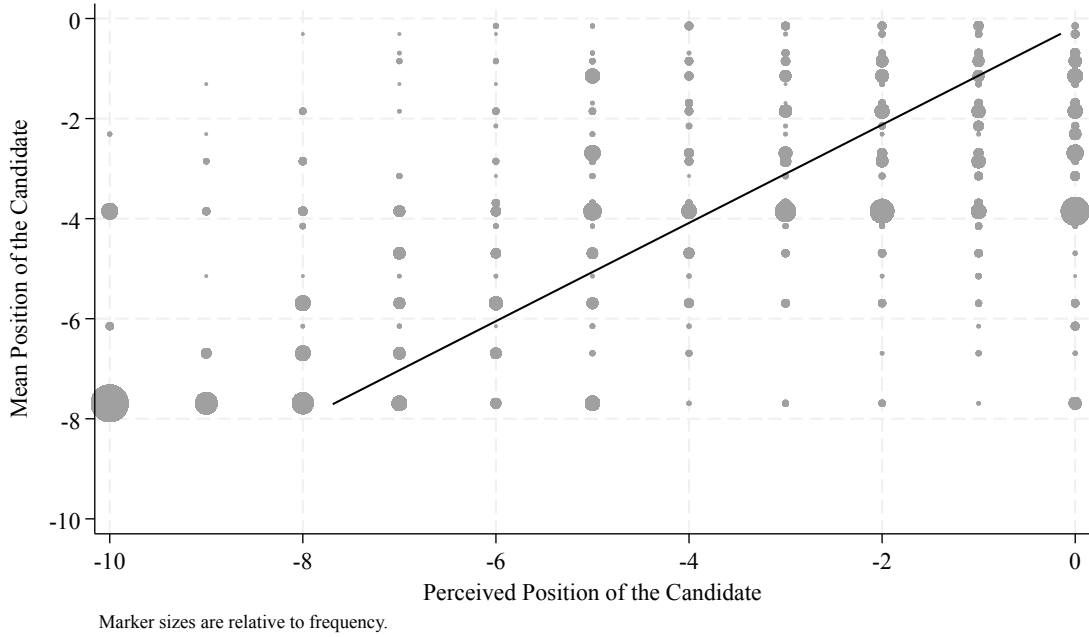


on average, fall well below their own preferred policy stance. For Kılıçdaroğlu voters, their perceptions of President Erdoğan’s policies show a distribution nearly inverse to their own preferences, placing him to softest policies, an opposite side their own respective policy position. Therefore, the descriptive evidence suggests that there is, in fact, a perception bias among the electorate in positioning their preferred and non-preferred candidate on migration policies.

In an effort to address this, Dinas, Hartman, and van Spanje (2016) exploit the shock following the assassination of the leader of the Dutch anti-immigrant party, Pim Fortuyn, to examine how voters perceive the party’s position. The results show that respondents placed the party closer to their own ideal point without updating their views on its actual policy stance, a pattern largely driven by the positive feelings caused by the incident. Similarly, using a survey experiment, Tomz and van Houweling (2008) ask respondents to choose between two hypothetical candidates, which helps to avoid the two sorts of endogeneity biases described above. After addressing the potential issues identified in spatial voting theories, the authors conclude that proximity voting is the most prevalent model, while directional logic is the least used by respondents.

To address the inherent projection bias in survey data, I also use the mean candidate placement in the sample across all respondents as an aggregate benchmark. Unfortunately, party position measures derived from election manifestos, such as the Comparative Manifesto Project (Lehmann et al. 2024), are not available for the

Figure 4.2 Proximity measurement | Perceived vs. objective (mean) candidate positions



latest round of Turkish elections. Although expert surveys like the Chapel Hill Expert Survey are available, they measure the policy positions of parties rather than individual presidential candidates (Rovny et al. 2025). However, rank-and-file voters' perceptions of party or candidate positions are widely used in the literature as an alternative, and different measures of party policy positions tend to correlate strongly within the same electoral cycle, while they are largely uncorrelated when tracking parties' shifts over time (Adams et al. 2019). In fact, the public perceives parties' policy shifts more in line with experts' assessments than with changes reflected in manifestos (Adams, Ezrow, and Somer-Topcu 2014). For these reasons, the mean placement of candidates is a preferred measure in many recent studies. Figure 4.2 displays the distribution of linear distance calculated with respondents' perceived candidate position and the sample mean position, together with the fitted regression line. Extreme distances (greater than eight units) do not appear when the mean position is used. The two measures are positively and strongly correlated ($r = 0.67$), but they still suggest that the utility-loss function differs across the two operationalizations. Accordingly, the second hypothesis is stated as follows:

Hypothesis 2 (Perception Bias Hypothesis): *The probability of voter's support for a candidate increases as the candidate's objective (mean) position on migration policy becomes closer to the voter's preferred position.*

Another major criticism of spatial voting theories is the assumption that voters evaluate each party's position on all issues uniformly. Under this assumption, a two-party system with vote-maximizing parties should converge on the median voter's position. In practice, however, parties seldom converge on the median voter (Adams, Merrill, and Grofman 2005), as real-world elections rarely meet the strict assumptions of the classical Downsian model. When those assumptions are met, convergence is both the predicted and observed outcome (Grofman 2004). In the Turkish migration context, where preferences are heavily skewed toward one extreme, the pure spatial model would predict that both incumbent and opposition candidates converge on harsher policy positions, although this is not the case.

One might argue that the incumbent party's position has not shifted significantly, despite facing widespread backlash from the public and consequently the policies targeting immigrants have been relatively stable. However, this would be a superficial reading of the broader policy changes. As outlined in earlier chapters, measures such as rescinding Eid travel permissions, expanding the scope of the dispersal policy, and the de facto suspension of international protection for Afghan nationals all reflect, to varying degrees, a more restrictive approach adopted by the incumbent party. In fact, prior to the 2023 elections, the discourse of AKP political elites also began to shift. The earlier emphasis on shared religious identity, framed through narratives of the ummah and brotherhood, gradually gave way to EU-blaming rhetoric, criticizing its reluctance to take responsibility in the face of the migration crisis (Kentmen-Cin, Sunay, and Baltepe 2025). The current stance of the incumbent party and its migration policies, however, remains far from what the public desires. Of particular interest, the AKP's strategy has changed over the years by strategically decreasing the salience of immigration (Elçi, Sert, and Balta 2025).

Furthermore, despite their nationalist origins, the parties MHP, İYİP, and ZP adopt policy positions on refugees and immigrants that differ markedly from those of their Western European counterparts. Analyzing social media posts, Secen, Al, and Arslan (2024) identify İYİP's comparatively liberal stance, rooted in cooperation with countries of origin, and ZP's far-right orientation. MHP, on the other hand, pursues a strategy of deliberate silence. The authors attribute these divergent positions to the dynamics of electoral alliances within the presidential system. A similar pattern is evident in the parliamentary discourse of MHP representatives, who refrained from discussing migration policies during the early days of alliance negotiations after the coup attempt in 2016 (Apaydın and Müftüler-Baç 2022). Such differentiated strategies arise because the parties purposefully set the agenda during their electoral campaigns. Budge, Robertson, and Hearl (1987, 39) argue that “[p]arties compete by accentuating issues on which they have an undoubted advantage, rather

than by putting forward contrasting policies on the same issues.” Expanding this line of thought, later studies highlight, for instance, that the Republican Party is perceived by the US public as more competent on issues such as crime and national defense, whereas the Democratic Party is seen as more competent on welfare and civil rights (Petrocik 1996). Issue-competence and issue-salience theories extend the Downsian spatial model by rejecting its implicit assumption that voters and parties attach equal importance to every policy dimension.

Mauerer, Thurner, and Debus (2015) take the saliency argument a step further, arguing that it is not only demand-side (voter) issue saliency that matters for spatial models, but also supply-side (party) issue saliency. Political parties during campaigns selectively emphasize or ignore issues in line with their political agendas. Consequently, voters’ interest in a given issue also varies based on their allegiance to a political party. Therefore, AKP’s deliberate avoidance of the migration issue may have reduced its salience among the party’s own voters. Thus, taken together the elite-level discourse from the incumbent party and its alliance-party, the issue salience of migration should be lower for their followers who prioritize other issues such as stability and foreign policy. Partisan identity shapes the extent to which policy distance matters. AKP supporters may downplay distance on migration, while opposition voters are more likely to emphasize it.

Hypothesis 3 (Asymmetric Proximity Effect): *The effect of distance on migration policies on the probability of supporting a candidate is greater among opposition voters than among incumbent voters.*

Last but not least, in a similar vein, partisanship is often a stronger predictor of vote choice than actual policy positions. When voters feel a deep attachment to a political party, they tend to align their decisions with group identity rather than with specific issue evaluations. In other words, loyalty often trumps policy. This tendency is particularly pronounced in the case of migration, a polarizing issue that political elites frequently use to test and reinforce or establish party loyalty (Chapter 2). For opposition voters, these cues may resonate or backfire depending on their own views. But for incumbent supporters, the message is often clear: standing with the party means standing with its leader—regardless of the specific policy. In this context, migration becomes more than a policy question; it becomes a marker of allegiance. To reject the leader’s stance is to risk signaling disloyalty.

This pattern is echoed in broader empirical findings. Previous studies show that views on immigration are strongly sorted along partisan lines (Alesina and Tabellini 2024), particularly among conservative or working-class voters who tend to oppose immigration (Gethin, Martínez-Toledano, and Piketty 2022). Yet, despite this op-

position, many continue to back the incumbent. Their support is not driven by alignment on migration policies but by identification with the party and its leadership (Jessee 2010). Co-partisans are more likely to downplay broken promises or reframe them as inevitable policy trade-offs (e.g., increasing regional dominance of Türkiye). This reinforces a broader argument: when partisanship is strong, issue-based voting often takes the back seat. What is more, this loyalty often holds even when migration policies fall short. Symbolic actions such as appeals to national identity or promises to protect borders often matter more than actual policy results. This creates a political environment where loyalty protects incumbents from the electoral consequences of policy failures, especially on contentious issues like immigration. Therefore, the last hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 4 (Partisan Moderation): *Because party loyalty induces motivated reasoning, the marginal negative effect of migration policy on vote choice will be weaker among stronger party identifiers.*

4.2 Research Design

To test the theoretical expectations, this chapter utilizes the data coming from a face-to-face survey carried out in Türkiye immediately after the 2023 elections (Tsourapas and Apaydin 2025). The survey was conducted by FREKANS, a company considered one of the more reliable and competent survey firms, whose data have been used in multiple studies (Aytaç, Çarkoğlu, and Elçi 2024; Elçi 2022). The company also administers surveys in Türkiye for the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) project under the Turkish Election Studies (Çarkoğlu and Kalaycıoğlu 2022).

Participants were selected through a stratified cluster sampling design. According to the Address-Based Population Registration System, the sample was proportionally drawn from rural and urban populations across the twenty-six NUTS-2 regions of Türkiye. Within each province, the firm randomly chose neighborhoods and then households. Interviews were carried out from July to September 2023, and the overall response rate was fifty-five per cent. Overall, 2,075 respondents were interviewed to represent Turkish electoral population (1,003 males and 1,072 females).²

2. Note on experiment and treatment spillover: Although survey experiments can suffer from treatment spill-over and priming effects, the questionnaire employed here contained no experimental manipulations, no vignettes, conjoint tasks or randomized wording. The survey used in this chapter was not part of any experimental setup, and responses to other questions were used in a separate study to present descriptive evidence (Neundorff et al. 2024). Therefore, recent critics

In addition to demographic items, the survey asked respondents about the perceived migration stances of the presidential candidates and their own positions, their ideological orientation and partisan identification, and the party and candidate they supported in the 2023 presidential and parliamentary elections.³

For the main interest of the chapter, the respondents are asked to place themselves and the candidates on their position of refugee policies on scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means “*too soft on refugees*” and 10 means “*very hard on refugees*.” Although one might question the wording here, as explained in Chapter 2, in the Turkish context, categorizing immigrants based on their legal status has lost its relevance due to the politicization and marginalization of these groups as a whole. Based on responses to this question, the main independent variable, the utility loss function of a voter (U_{ij}), to test spatial models is calculated as follows:

$$(4.1) \quad U_{ij} = \beta \cdot \text{Spatial Distance}_{ij}$$

$$(4.2) \quad \begin{aligned} \text{Proximity}_{ij} &= -|V_i - C_j| \\ \text{Directional}_{ij} &= (V_i - S)(C_j - S) \end{aligned}$$

Where V_i represents the position of the respondent i , whereas C_j represents the perceived position of candidate j by the respondent i . For each respondent in the sample, two values are created based on their respective distance to President Erdoğan and the main opposition candidate Kılıçdaroğlu. ε_{ij} denotes the unobserved, stochastic component of voter i 's utility for candidate j . To account for perception bias and test Hypothesis 2, alternative models replace C_j with the candidates' mean positions ($\bar{C}_j = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n$). The mean placement for President Erdoğan is 2.33, while that for Kılıçdaroğlu is 6. Compared to the expert evaluated positions of the AKP and CHP, which place them at 2.78 and 7.36 respectively, there is some alignment, though differences remain due to the distinct positions taken by the candidates and their parties during the electoral campaigns. Nonetheless, although expert placements reflect the positions of parties rather than individual candidates, in Appendix B.3 I replicate the models by replacing C_j with the expert-placed mean positions of the candidates, weighted by each party's relative strength in the alliance based on their vote share (Equation B.1). Finally S represents the middle point in policy alternatives (5).⁴

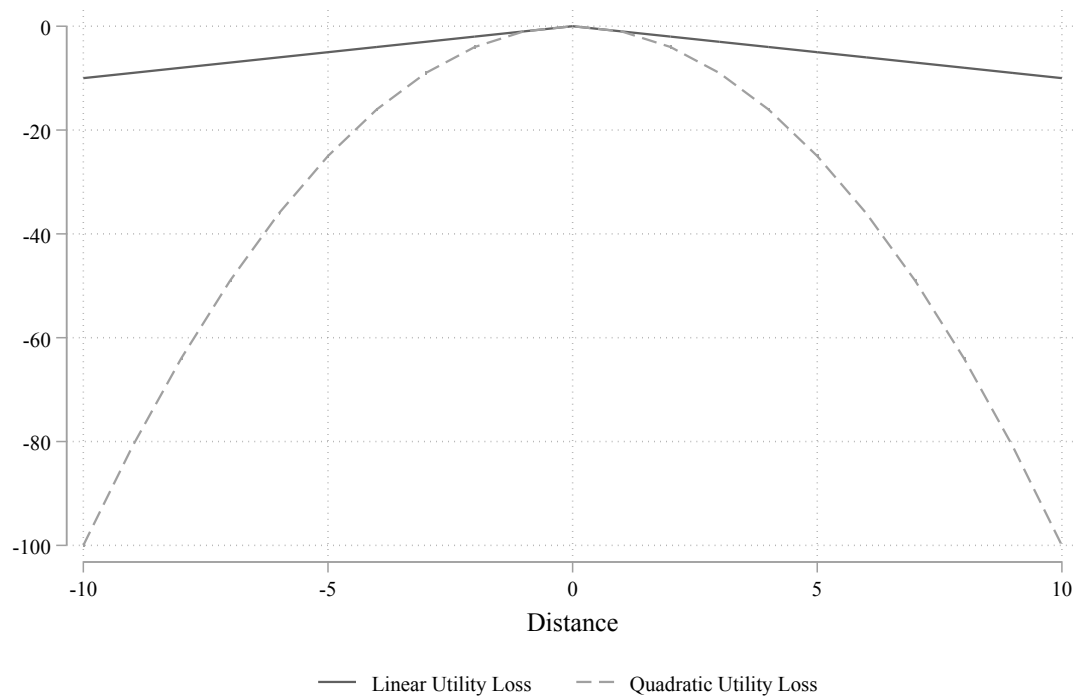
are not relevant for this study.

3. The survey questions can be found in Appendix B.1.

4. Concepts such as the region of acceptability are not incorporated in order to maintain parsimonious estimates. A basic directional model is included solely to assess its relative impact

For the calculation of the utility loss function, I opted for a linear specification. This city-block, non-quadratic forms of utility loss function is widely employed in the literature (e.g., Tiemann 2022), albeit other studies also utilize the quadratic form of the utility (e.g., Jessee 2010; Pardos-Prado and Dinas 2010). In terms of their relative power, Merrill (1995) compares the explanatory power of utility functions by examining explained variance and concludes that the linear function performs better for the examined surveys. Singh (2014) later confirms the superiority of the linear specification. Different operationalizations of the utility function, however, entail distinct theoretical expectations.

Figure 4.3 Utility loss function | Linear vs. quadratic



Because the quadratic loss function is strictly concave, the disutility it assigns to policy distance accelerates with each additional unit between the candidate and voter. Beyond very small distances, the penalty it imposes is larger than that of a linear (absolute distance) loss, implying greater voter alienation when candidates are far away. Alienation arguments, in return, posit that such voters are prone to abstain or to support more radical options (Adams, Dow, and Merrill 2006). Hence, a quadratic specification embeds the theoretical expectation that alienation plays a stronger role in electoral behavior than a linear specification does (Singh 2014). Figure 4.3 shows how the utility loss function differs across two measures. To address any potential concerns arising from how the utility function is operationalized, a

size compared to proximity models and is not part of the main hypothesis testing.

robustness test using the quadratic utility loss function is also presented.

To test the explanatory power of spatial models, I transformed the dataset into a stacked format, generating two observations for each respondent: one for President Erdoğan and the other for the opposition candidate Kılıçdaroğlu. In this structure, the distance variable varies not only across respondents but also across candidates for each respondent. The remaining covariates are respondent-specific and thus remain constant across both rows. A binary choice variable was then created, taking the value of 1 for the candidate the respondent reported voting for. This stacked format generates two rows per respondent, one for each candidate. These rows represent the pair of alternatives available to the respondent, from which they select one. Because the two alternatives are mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive, treating these rows as independent observations would violate the independence assumption of standard binary logit models. Instead, discrete choice models such as conditional logit are required, as they explicitly account for the structure of the choice set.

Conditional logit is more suitable in this context. It treats the two rows as a single decision, comparing alternatives within each voter, removing all respondent-specific constants, and estimating how attributes like spatial distance on issues affect the likelihood that a given candidate is chosen. With just two rows per respondent, this reduces to a fixed-effects logit model where the probability of choosing President Erdoğan over Kılıçdaroğlu depends entirely on the difference in their proximity to each voter.

$$(4.3) \quad \Pr(\text{Choice}_{ij} = 1) = \frac{\exp(\beta U_{ij})}{\exp(\beta U_{i0}) + \exp(\beta U_{i1})} \quad \text{where } j \in \{0, 1\}$$

The equation for the main model is given in Equation 4.3. $j \in \{0, 1\}$ index the two candidates (0 = Kılıçdaroğlu, 1 = Erdoğan). U_{ij} is the utility loss function described earlier in Equation 4.1, change across different operationalization of the function as in Equation 4.2 (mean, square, expert placed, directional). This setup is a simplified version of McFadden's (1974) broader choice model, which allows for multiple alternatives and includes correlated errors or varying preferences. For a two-candidate election using stacked data, however, the simplified conditional logistic regression model is sufficient. It accounts for the paired data structure, adjusts for individual-level bias, and produces consistent estimates for how the spatial proximity influences vote choice. For the alternative models to test Hypothesis 3, U_{ij} in 4.1 expands to:

$$(4.4) \quad U_{ij} = \beta_1 \text{Spatial Distance}_{ij} + \beta_2 (\text{Spatial Distance}_{ij} \times \text{Opposition Bloc}_i)$$

whereas to test Hypothesis 4, U_{ij} in 4.1 expands to a interactive model:⁵

$$(4.5) \quad U_{ij} = \beta_1 \text{Spatial Distance}_{ij} + \beta_2 \text{Party Identification}_i + \beta_3 (\text{Spatial Distance}_{ij} \times \text{Party Identification}_i)$$

There are several extensions of McFadden (1974)'s choice model. For instance, Stoetzer and Zittlau (2015) question the separability of preferences in multidimensional spatial voting models. Focusing on two dimensions (economic and socio-cultural issues) and running Monte Carlo experiments, the authors show that the conventionally accepted separability assumption is violated. Even when voters hold meaningful preferences on both dimensions, these preferences are often translated into vote choices through a one-dimensional concept (Stoetzer and Zittlau 2015, 424). Alternatively, Moral and Zhirnov (2018) challenge the assumption that choice sets are stationary and fixed across individuals. They argue that individuals' choice set compositions vary and that voters choose from smaller or larger sets depending on individual traits such as party identification. To address this, the authors propose a constrained-choice conditional logit model.

While each of these extensions enriches our understanding of the empirical applications of spatial and issue-saliency theories, neither is relevant to the setting in this chapter. Although preferences on migration are likely to be non-separable from preferences in other dimensions such as religiosity and the economy, the focus here is limited to the migration dimension. Positions on other relevant issues are not included due to data limitations. Respondents were asked to place themselves only on the migration and traditional left–right scales. However, they were not asked to locate candidates on the left–right scale, which would create a mismatch between how utility loss is operationalized across dimensions (perceived versus actual placement, akin to expert evaluations of parties rather than candidates). This discussion is therefore excluded from the main analysis. In Appendix, however, I follow Stoetzer and Zittlau (2015) and run a weighted-Euclidean interaction specification, in which preferences on different dimensions are interacted. The results and discussion are presented in Appendix (Table B.4 and Figure B.1).

The second extension, constrained choice conditional logit, is more straightforward to address. Given that there are only two alternatives, each respondent's alternatives are fixed (Erdoğan versus Kılıçdaroğlu) and does not vary across individuals. Since the relevant third candidate's policy position (Sinan Oğan) is unknown, there is no meaningful way to include individual-level variation in choice sets. One might suggest including Sinan Oğan as an alternative with an evaluated policy position

5. The rationale for using additive and multiplicative models is explained in Appendix B.1.

above 8, since he was the candidate of the extreme-right alliance. Yet he received only 5% of the vote in the first round, corresponding to around 57 individuals (prior to weighting) in the sample. Including him would add complexity while contributing marginal explanatory power. Therefore, I do not test models with three-alternative choices.

Finally, in the extended conditional logistic models, a series of control variables capture demographic characteristics: age, gender, income, and self-reported religiosity. Due to varying levels of missingness in these variables, the effective sample size decreases with their inclusion. Furthermore, the conditional logistic model incorporates respondent-level control variables only through their interactions with the choice-specific variable. In practice, this means that variables which do not vary across alternatives drop out of the model, as they are perfectly collinear within each respondent's choice set. Consequently, the effects of such respondent-specific covariates cannot be estimated directly. To address this limitation and to provide a more complete picture, I also estimate a simple binary logistic regression after the conditional logistic model.

4.3 Results

Table 4.1 Conditional logit estimates of alternative spatial utility function

Pr(Choice)	Model 1 Linear Function	Model 2 Quadratic Function	Model 3 Linear (Mean) Function	Model 4 Directional Function
Coefficient	0.30*** (0.03)	0.03*** (0.00)	0.16*** (0.04)	0.06*** (0.01)
Constant	0.88*** (0.12)	0.85*** (0.11)	0.40** (0.13)	0.69*** (0.11)
One-SD Change	1.04	1.05	0.38	0.82
One-SD Odds-Ratio	2.84	2.87	1.47	2.26
Control Variables	X	X	X	X
N	2998	2998	2998	2998
Log Likelihood	-1.94	-1.96	-2.46	-2.06
AIC	7.88	7.92	8.91	8.13
BIC	19.89	19.93	20.92	20.14

◊ Standard errors are in parentheses. Post-survey weights are applied.

◊ Two-tailed tests. † $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 1 presents the simplified conditional logistic models using different operationalization of utility loss functions. First of all, the sample sizes decrease to 2,998 (two rows for each 1,499 respondents) due to missing data. While 57 and 18 of the respondents voted for Sinan Oğan and Muharrem İnce, respectively, 378 of them did not cast a ballot in the first-round of the elections or refused to answer. Therefore,

for these 453 respondents there is no alternative chosen among the choices.⁶ Secondly, raw coefficients cannot be interpreted across models given that the scale of each measurements differ and they are not standardized. For each distance measurement, multiplying the raw coefficient by this within-case SD puts all four estimates on a common “one-SD change”, so the effect sizes can be compared across models. Finally, each models present the odds-ratios along with the coefficients to highlight substantial effect size.

Across all models, the coefficient for the distance measure is positive and statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). Greater utility derived from being closer to a candidate (whether based on perceived or mean placement) increases the odds of voting for that candidate. When comparing models based on a standardized one-standard-deviation increase, the linear (city-block) and quadratic distance measures yield the largest effects (approximately 2.8 times the odds), followed by the directional model (around 2.2 times). The mean-candidate measure shows the weakest effect (about 1.5 times).

Because all models use the same sample and number of parameters, their information criteria can be directly compared. Model 1 provides the best fit to the data. Among the four specifications, the linear measure performs best, with the highest log-pseudolikelihood (-1.94) and the lowest penalized likelihood scores ($AIC = 7.88$; $BIC = 19.89$). The quadratic model follows closely, with the directional left-right metric in third place. The mean-party placement performs the worst ($LL = -2.555$; $AIC = 9.110$; $BIC = 21.19$). Substantively, this suggests that first-round vote choices are most strongly shaped by simple linear proximity to a candidate on migration position, and that neither a quadratic transformation, a directional left-right scale, nor a mean-based placement significantly improves on the classic Downsian spatial-voting model. Although slightly providing better fit than quadratic utility function, this confirms the earlier findings in the literature on utility function (Singh 2014).

Taken all these together, the results presented in Table 4.1 confirms both Hypotheses 1 and 2 that spatial proximity can explain the voting behavior of the Turkish electorate in 2023 presidential elections vis-à-vis congruence on migration policies. An important point to highlight here is Model 3 and its weak explanatory power in light of Hypothesis 2. Although statistically significant, reducing the distance between respondents’ own position and the mean President Erdoğan placement from the

6. Among the remaining 1,622 respondents, 93 did not answer any position questions. Of these, 32 skipped all such questions, while the other 61 declined to answer at least one. Notably, 38 respondents failed or refused to place only President Erdoğan on the immigration policy position scale. Finally, 30 respondents were missing post-survey weights in the dataset. Including them slightly alters the results (decreasing the baseline coefficient by 0.007) but not in a meaningful way. All empirical analyses presented in this section apply post-survey weights.

maximum (7 points) to the minimum (perfect congruence) increases the predicted probability by only 26%. In comparison, such an extreme change (from maximum distance to perfect congruence) in the linear utility calculation increases the predicted probability by nearly 60% (42% if the same seven-point scale is considered). Therefore, as anticipated, most of the effect size stems from the perception bias individuals hold. Respondents tend to place their preferred candidate closer to their own position (or mimic the candidate’s position) and the non-preferred candidate further away. In fact, comparing rank-and-file voters’ perceptions of candidates with expert evaluations of the associated parties reveals nearly identical model-fit statistics and effect sizes (Appendix B.3). Nonetheless, both the statistical and substantive findings support spatial voting theories, providing strong evidence in favor of both hypotheses. The extent to which spatial considerations vary by party identification and between supporters of the incumbent and the opposition is yet to be answered.

As discussed in depth under the theoretical framework party identification moderates the spatial considerations. If individual is strongly associated with a party, not only their probability to vote for that party increases but spatial considerations also lose its importance. While the earlier studies test this argument with an additive structure (Adams 2001; Jesse 2010); Lachat (2015) expands this to conditionality, spatial considerations are also conditional on party identification. I opt for the conditionality, though the overall fit and inferences remain broadly similar with the additive model. To control for party identification, I created a binary variable coded as 1 if respondents reported feeling either *“too close”* or *“a little close”* to a political party represented by one of the candidates. I deliberately excluded the *“not very close”* category, as it may be a less reliable indicator of partisan attachment. For the president, the candidate of the Cumhur Alliance, I coded respondents who identified with either the AKP or the MHP, given the latter’s consistent support for his candidacy. In the case of Kılıçdaroğlu, I included only those who identified with the CHP. I deliberately excluded respondents identifying with the İYİ Party, as the party has long represented a source of tension within the Millet Alliance and, at one point, even withdrew to promote alternative candidates (the winning candidates: the mayors of Istanbul and Ankara) over the unappealing CHP leader.

Model 3 in Table 4.2 reports a conditional logistic regression model in which the linear utility loss function (proximity) is interacted with party identification, allowing spatial sensitivity to vary by partisan status. Before turning to the results, it is important to note that Model 2 includes the control variables: sex, age, education, and self-reported religiosity. For comparison purposes, Model 1 replicates the same specification from Table 1 but with a reduced sample size due to the inclusion of

Table 4.2 Conditional logit estimates of with party-identification

Pr(Choice)	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
	Linear Function	Linear Function	Party-Identification	Party-Identification
Proximity	0.30*** (0.03)	0.30*** (0.03)	0.27*** (0.03)	0.30*** (0.03)
Party Identification			4.05*** (0.41)	2.75*** (0.43)
Party Identification $\times$ Proximity				-0.28** (0.09)
Education Level		-0.54*** (0.11)	-0.52*** (0.15)	-0.56*** (0.16)
Sex		0.03 (0.17)	0.32 (0.23)	0.35 (0.23)
Age		-0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)
Self-reported Religiosity		0.26*** (0.04)	0.25*** (0.05)	0.25*** (0.05)
Constant	0.92*** (0.13)	0.59 (0.55)	-0.79 (0.79)	-0.63 (0.81)
N	2834	2834	2834	2834
Log Likelihood	-1.84	-1.67	-0.98	-0.96
AIC	7.68	15.34	15.95	17.92
BIC	19.57	51.04	57.60	65.52

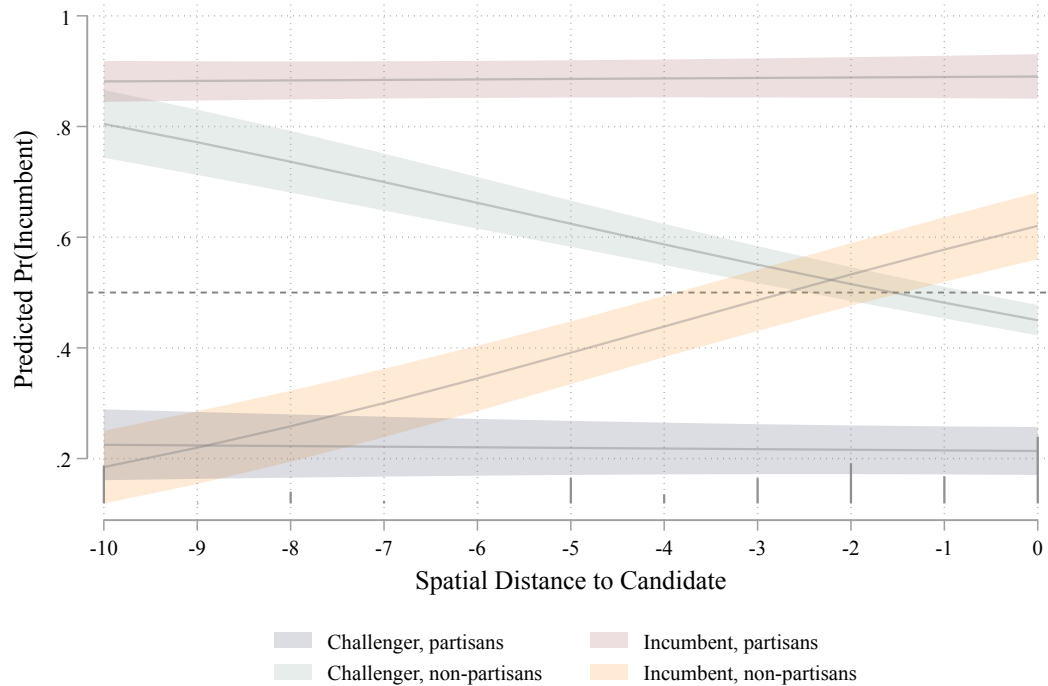
◇ Standard errors are in parentheses. Post-survey weights are applied.

◇ Two-tailed tests. † $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

control variables. Although the likelihood-ratio test fails to reject the null that the additional control variables are jointly insignificant ($\chi^2(5) = 0.27$, $p = 0.998$), I keep the control variables in the rest of the models following the literature. Turning back to Model 3, both constitutive terms, proxies and party identification are statistically significant and have positive coefficients. The interaction term, on the other hand, has a negative coefficient.

To better interpret the findings, Figure 4.4 plots predicted probabilities of selecting a candidate as a function of proximity on migration policies, broken down by partisan attachment. Spikes show the distribution of the proximity variable in the estimated sample. The differences are especially striking when we look at predicted probabilities. Among non-partisan voters (shown in green and orange), proximity strongly shapes the likelihood of choosing a candidate: when spatial distance is at its maximum value (-10), the probability of choosing the candidate is only around 20 to 25 percent. But as the candidate becomes aligned with preferred position (0), the probability rises to about 45 to 50 percent, a swing of roughly 25 to 30 percentage points driven by proximity alone. In contrast, partisan respondents (gray and maroon lines) show minimal responsiveness to proximity. Incumbent partisans already choose the incumbent with 88% percent probability even when he is spatially distant, rising slightly to 89% at full alignment. Opposition partisans likewise show little movement, with a consistent probability (22–25%) of choosing the incumbent regardless of his position in migration policies. These patterns support the Asymmetric Proximity Effect (H3): spatial proximity influences choice among unaffiliated

Figure 4.4 Predicted probability of choosing President Erdoğan | Distance and party identification



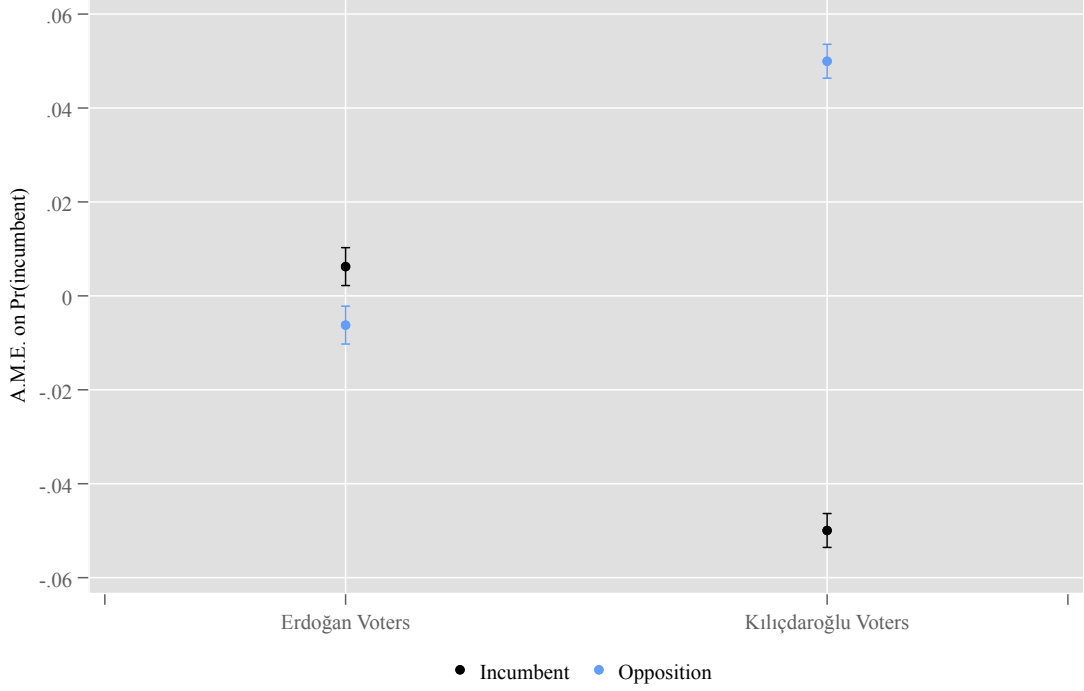
voters, but for partisans, candidate loyalty dominates spatial considerations.

Finally, Figure 4.5 shows the average marginal effects (AMEs) of a unit increase in migration issue proximity on the probability of selecting the incumbent (President Erdoğan), estimated from the conditional logit model in Table B.5. The point estimates on the left-hand side (“Erdoğan Voters”) reveal that, among respondents who supported the president in the first round, spatial distance is essentially irrelevant. Moving President Erdoğan one unit closer to a voter’s preferred policy position increases his probability of being chosen by only 0.6 percentage points, while moving the opposition candidate one unit closer reduces the incumbent’s probability by a similarly small margin. Although statistically significant, these effects are substantively negligible, indicating that President Erdoğan loyalists base their choices on non-policy factors—such as partisanship, as shown above—rather than on issue congruence regarding migration policies.

By contrast, the estimates in the right-side (“Kılıçdaroğlu Voters”) shows that opposition voters are highly responsive to spatial alignment. If President Erdoğan is imagined as one unit closer to their own position, his probability of being selected increases by roughly 5 percentage points, while moving Kılıçdaroğlu one unit closer decreases President Erdoğan’s probability by a similar margin. This sharp contrast underscores the conditional nature of spatial considerations and highlights

their strong influence on vote choice among opposition voters. Taken together, these results support the Partisan Attenuation Hypothesis (H4): proximity on the migration policies plays a decisive role for opposition voters, while partisan loyalty among incumbent supporters effectively neutralizes spatial incentives.

Figure 4.5 Average marginal effect of proximity | Incumbent vs. opposition



4.4 Robustness Test

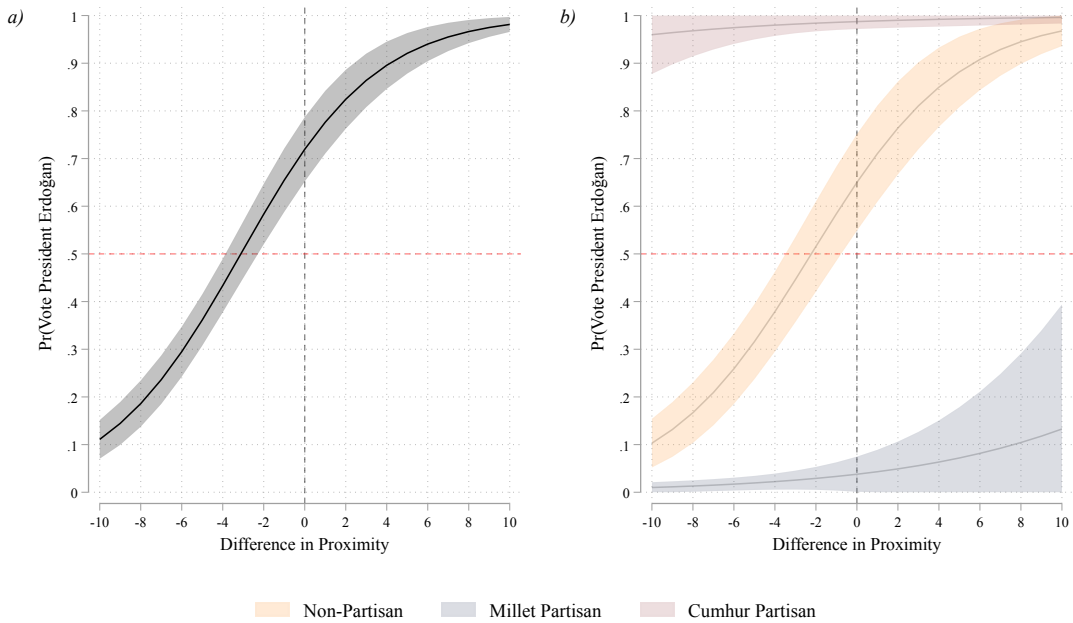
Up to this point, using a simplified version of McFadden’s (1974) conditional choice model, the findings highlight the central role of proximity on migration policies in shaping respondents’ vote choices in the 2023 presidential elections. This effect is especially pronounced among opposition and non-partisan voters. Nevertheless, when there are only two alternatives, the conditional logit effectively reduces to a fixed-effects binary logit. As a result, the model has limited ability to incorporate respondent-level covariates, which can only enter through interactions with the choice indicator. This restriction prevents a full assessment of the role of individual-level controls.

$$(4.6) \quad \text{Difference in Proximity}_i = -|V_i - C_1| - (-|V_i - C_0|)$$

To address these limitations, I estimate a robustness model using a simple logistic regression without stacking the data. For each respondent, I calculate the difference between proximity to President Erdoğan and proximity to the opposition candidate Kılıçdaroğlu, as shown in Equation 4.6. This variable ranges from -10 to 10, where higher values indicate that respondents view Erdoğan as closer to their own position and Kılıçdaroğlu as farther away, and vice versa. Logistic regressions using this operationalisation are reported in the Appendix (Table B.6).

Figure 4.6 illustrates the results. On the left, the probability of voting for a candidate increases as the candidate's perceived position moves closer to the respondent's own preferred position. This provides further support for Hypothesis 1. Notably, however, the predicted probability of voting for Erdoğan remains above 50 percent even when respondents' preferred position is closer to Kılıçdaroğlu, as seen between values -3 and 0.

Figure 4.6 Predicted probabilities using the difference in proximity



On the right-hand side, the analysis incorporates party identification. The flat predicted probabilities for respondents identifying with either the Cumhur or Millet alliances are consistent with Hypothesis 4, whereas non-partisan voters behave more in line with spatial voting theory, adjusting their choices based on the relative proximity of the candidates.

Overall, while the alternative specification alters the magnitude of the coefficients, the substantive findings remain consistent. Both approaches underscore the importance of spatial proximity on migration policy preferences in shaping vote choice in

the 2023 elections.

4.5 Conclusion

Migration governance and policies have long been a debate in the Turkish politics. But until the 2023 presidential elections, their relative importance for both political elites and citizens were not prominent. With the formation of single-issue anti-immigrant party in 2021 has reinforced the elite mobilization and framing on the issue. Combined with the worsening economy, these factors have increased the saliency of the issue approach the 2023 elections and transformed the migration policies into electoral contestation. Chapter 4 draws on this political transformation to examine whether voters rewarded candidates who aligned with their own migration preferences and how party identification shaped that relationship. Using data from a face-to-face post-election survey of 2,075 respondents and a series of conditional logit models, the chapter identifies three central findings.

First, the proximity on migration policies influences vote choice, but not uniformly across the electorate. On average, a smaller distance between a respondent's migration stance and a candidate's policy position increases the probability of support. Even when addressing perception bias by using expert or mean placed candidate positions, a one-point reduction in distance corresponds to a statistically significant rise in predicted vote share. This suggests that many voters assess candidates in policy terms, rather than viewing migration purely through symbolic or identity-based frames.

Second, however, this effect is conditioned by partisanship. Among voters without a strong party identification, the pattern closely follows classic spatial voting models: moving from opposite side to alignment nearly doubles the probability of support. Among partisan voters, however, the relationship weakens. Supporters of President Erdoğan show almost no response to the proximity on migration policies. Their choices appear to be guided by other factors such as loyalty, leadership appeal, or broader ideological alignment on secular versus conservative spectrum. Kılıçdaroğlu's supporters, on the other hand, remain somewhat more responsive to issue proximity, though to a lesser extent than independents. This decreasing effect points to the role of party cues in shaping, amplifying, or muting issue-based voting in a polarized context (Elçi, Sert, and Balta 2025).

Third, the analysis helps explain why earlier studies found weak or null electoral consequences of refugee arrivals. In the early years of the Syrian displacement,

migration had not yet become a salient electoral issue, and the main parties largely refrained from politicizing it. By 2023, however, that dynamic had shifted. The combination of economic crisis, intensified elite rhetoric, and the rise of the ZP placed migration at the center of the political agenda. Still, heightened salience alone did not lead to electoral punishment for incumbents. What proved more consequential was whether voters perceived clear policy alternatives and whether their partisan commitments enabled them to act on those distinctions.

These findings caution against overly deterministic accounts that link economic anxiety or cultural threat directly to anti-immigrant backlash. In Türkiye, even voters who favor stricter controls may continue to support the government when party identification dominates, or when opposition alternatives lack clarity or credibility. At the same time, independent voters remain responsive to policy distinctions, suggesting that migration can become a more influential electoral issue if parties choose to campaign on it more explicitly.

Several limitations should be noted. The survey captures views immediately following the presidential elections in 2023. A panel data would be necessary to assess how attitudes and preferences toward migration policies evolved over time. The candidate positions are coded along a single policy dimension, which limits the ability to explore more complex issue bundles. Moreover, the analysis does not isolate the role of media exposure or local dynamics in shaping how voters engage with migration as an issue. Future research should address these gaps.

With respect to its broader contribution to the framework outlined in Chapter 1, the strategies adopted by political actors in shaping the salience of migration indeed play a central role. The incumbent can respond to public concerns by enacting restrictive measures, such as the dispersal policy, while simultaneously reducing the issue's visibility by shifting attention to other policy domains. For President Erdoğan's supporters, migration governance carries limited electoral consequences, not because of the alignment on the migration policies, but due to enduring partisan loyalty. This challenges explanations grounded in humanitarian or religious appeals often used to interpret public preferences in the Global South, which do not adequately capture the attitudes of Turkish voters. At the same time, the incumbent may appeal to non-loyalist voters by adopting increasingly restrictive policies that align with the average citizen's hardline stance on migration. The external validity of these findings and their implications for the theoretical framework will be explored in greater detail in the next section.

5. CONCLUSION

The dissertation aims to explain the competition over issue salience between opposition radical right parties and incumbents in the context of migration governance by highlighting the foreign–domestic linkages that shape political outcomes. Using Türkiye as a case study, it asks whether and why anti-immigrant actors have failed to achieve electoral success despite the rising number of immigrants. The first chapter identifies a key gap in the existing literature: most studies on immigration politics focus on Western democracies and often treat Turkey either as a testing ground for EU externalization strategies or as a humanitarian exception. As a result, context-specific and reactive migration policies in the Global South remain underexplored. To address this, the dissertation develops a framework (Figure 1.1) that connects immigrant numbers and public attitudes to the contestation over issue salience and policy responses, with a focus on domestic and electoral consequences. A central argument is that incumbents and radical challengers compete not only over policy content but also over how much attention the issue receives. This allows incumbents to deflect blame by combining selective restrictions with appeals to morality or foreign policy.

Chapter 2 traces how this strategy has shaped migration governance in Türkiye since 2010. Key developments—such as the expansion of the legal framework through the Law on Foreigners and International Protection, the establishment of the Presidency of Migration Management, and the construction of border walls—gradually transformed the system from a fragmented and permissive structure into a more centralized and security-oriented regime. Each policy shift tightened the rules on entry, residence, and border control, yet official rhetoric continued to emphasize humanitarian values. This combination of restrictive practice and humanitarian discourse sets the foundation for the empirical analyses in the following chapters.

Chapter 3 shifts to the local level and analyzes the effects of the dispersal policy initiated in 2021 as an example of a reactive restriction. The policy prohibits further settlement of foreigners in neighborhoods where their share exceeds 20 percent.

Using a difference-in-differences approach with monthly rental data, the chapter finds a sharp decline in rents in affected neighborhoods, likely due to reduced demand and deteriorating local amenities. Matching estimates then reveal that, despite an overall decline in vote share, the *Cumhur Alliance* gained about one to one-and-a-half percentage points in closed neighborhoods in the 2023 presidential and 2024 local elections. These results suggest that some voters, particularly those facing economic pressure from rising rental costs or concerned about immigrant presence, responded positively to the policy. In this way, selective restrictions allowed the government to contain the issue without ceding ground to more radical opponents.

Chapter 4 turns to individual-level survey data collected after the 2023 election to assess how voters reacted to migration policies and candidate positions. The findings show that issue alignment matters more for opposition voters than for Erdoğan supporters. For the latter, party loyalty overrides policy disagreement, indicating that strategic silence on migration can be effective in retaining support. This suggests that incumbents can reduce the electoral risks of migration by downplaying its salience while maintaining targeted policy interventions.

Taken together, the chapters show that President Erdoğan has managed migration governance through a combination of visible restrictions and symbolic framing rooted in humanitarian and foreign policy narratives. This approach reduced housing market pressures for loyal voters, sent political signals to others, and allowed the incumbent to maintain control over the agenda. As a result, the typical link between rising immigrant numbers and electoral losses has been weakened. The dissertation contributes to the literature by examining a non-Western case and demonstrating how the salience of migration, rather than preferences alone, shapes the connection between policy and voting.

There are limitations. The rental data are drawn from listings rather than completed contracts and do not track individual residential moves, making it difficult to assess whether locals left affected neighborhoods or who exactly moved in. Moreover, it is unclear which segments of the population rewarded the incumbent in migrant-dense areas. The electoral analysis relies on neighborhood-level matching and a single cross-sectional survey; panel data or experimental designs would better capture how voters translate policy exposure into vote choice. Finally, the study focuses on Istanbul, the city most directly impacted by immigration and dispersal policies, and the findings may not generalize to smaller cities or rural settings.

In terms of the external validity of the findings, it is true that the Turkish case contributes to both theory development and theory testing. However, the same theoretical framework can be applied to other contexts, such as the case of a second

Trump administration in the United States. A renewed Trump presidency would likely involve a continuation and deepening of anti-immigrant, restrictive policies. Yet existing studies suggest that such measures often lead to unintended consequences. For example, with respect to high-skilled immigration, research shows that increased admissions through the H-1B visa program are associated with greater employment in science and engineering fields and more patenting activity by inventors (Kerr and Lincoln 2010). The Trump administration’s rollback of this policy would therefore be expected to reduce high-skilled productivity. Similarly, an increase in ICE raids targeting irregular immigrants has been linked to rising unemployment within immigrant communities, which in turn may contribute to higher labor and product costs in the long run (East et al. 2023)

Although such policies are designed to address the growing stock and flow of immigration, their long-term economic consequences could nonetheless benefit the Republican Party and radical-right actors in the United States. As in the Turkish case, independent voters who favor more restrictive immigration policies may shift their support toward Republican candidates. At the same time, the negative macroeconomic outcomes associated with these policies could lead independents to move away from Trump-like candidates, particularly if other policy concerns surpass migration in political salience. Therefore, unlike Erdoğan, who seeks to balance migration policies with issue salience, the more likely scenario for Trump is to continue exploiting migration governance and highlighting the perceived lack of restrictive measures under the Biden administration to appeal to his electoral base.

Future research could incorporate more detailed mobility data, link municipal expenditures to dispersal outcomes, or explore whether similar strategies remain effective during periods of economic instability. Even so, the evidence presented here suggests that when governments manage both the material and symbolic dimensions of migration governance, they can influence public attitudes and reduce the political risks posed by large-scale immigration.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abdelaaty, Lamis. 2021. "Refugees and Guesthood in Turkey." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 34(3): 2827–2848.
- Abdelaaty, Lamis, and Liza G. Steele. 2022. "Explaining Attitudes Toward Refugees and Immigrants in Europe." *Political Studies* 70(1): 110–130.
- Abdelaaty, Lamis, and Rebecca Hamlin. 2022. "Introduction: The Politics of the Migrant/Refugee Binary." *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies* 20(2): 233–239.
- Abou-Chadi, Tarik, and Marc Helbling. 2018. "How Immigration Reforms Affect Voting Behavior." *Political Studies* 66(3): 687–717.
- Abou-Chadi, Tarik, and Werner Krause. 2020. "The Causal Effect of Radical Right Success on Mainstream Parties' Policy Positions - a Regression Discontinuity Approach." *British Journal of Political Science* 50(3): 829–847.
- Accetturo, Antonio, Francesco Manaresi, Sauro Mocetti, and Elisabetta Olivieri. 2014. "Don't Stand So Close to Me: The Urban impact of immigration." *Regional Science and Urban Economics* 45(1): 45–56.
- Adams, F. James. 2001. *Party Competition and Responsible Party Government: A Theory of Spatial Competition Based Upon Insights from Behavioral Research*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Adams, F. James, Jay Dow, and Samuel III Merrill. 2006. "The Political Consequences of Alienation-based and indifference-based Voter Abstention: Applications to Presidential Elections." *Political Behavior* 28(1): 65–86.
- Adams, F. James, Lawrence Ezrow, and Zeynep Somer-Topcu. 2014. "Do Voters Respond to Party Manifestos or to a Wider Information Environment? An Analysis of Mass-Elite Linkages on European Integration." *American Journal of Political Science* 58(4): 967–978.
- Adams, F. James, Samuel III Merrill, and Bernard Grofman. 2005. *A Unified Theory of Party Competition: A Cross-National Analysis Integrating Spatial and Behavioral Factors*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Adams, James, Luca Bernardi, Lawrence Ezrow, Oakley B. Gordon, Tzu-Ping Liu, and Christine M. Phillips. 2019. "A Problem with Empirical Studies of Party Policy Shifts: Alternative Measures of Party Shifts are Uncorrelated." *European Journal of Political Research* 58(4): 1234–1244.
- Adamson, Fiona B. 2019. "Sending States and the Making of Intra-Diasporic Politics Turkey and Its Diaspora(s)." *International Migration Review* 53(1): 210–236.
- Adamson, Fiona B. 2021. *Migration Governance in Turkey*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press pp. 367–412.

- Adamson, Fiona B., and Kelly M. Greenhill. 2023. "Deal-making, Diplomacy and Transactional Forced Migration." *International Affairs* 99(2): 707–725.
- Adiguzel, Serkant Fatih, Aslı Cansunar, and Gozde Corekcioglu. 2023. "Out of Sight, Out of Mind? Electoral Responses to the Proximity of Health Care." *The Journal of Politics* 85(2): 667–683.
- Adler, David, and Ben Ansell. 2020. "Housing and Populism." *West European Politics* 43(2): 344–365.
- AIDA. 2023. Asylum Information Database. Türkiye – Country Report https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/AIDA-TR_2023-Update.pdf. Report.
- Akar, Sevda, and Mustafa M. Erdoğan. 2019. "Syrian Refugees in Turkey and Integration Problem Ahead." *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 20(3): 925–940.
- Akgündüz, Yusuf E., Yavuz S. Hacıhasanoğlu, and Fatih Yılmaz. 2023. "Refugees and Housing: Evidence from the Mortgage Market." *The World Bank Economic Review* 37(1): 147–176.
- Akçapar, Şebnem K., and Damla B. Aksel. 2017. "Public Diplomacy through Diaspora Engagement The Case of Turkey." *Journal of International Affairs* 22(3): 135–160.
- Alakoc, B. Pinar, G. Ugur Gokse, and Alan Zarychta. 2022. "Political Discourse and Public Attitudes toward Syrian Refugees in Turkey." *Comparative Politics* 54(3): 547–571.
- Alden, Lina, Mats Hammarstedt, and Emma Neuman. 2015. "Ethnic Segregation, Tipping Behavior, and Native Residential Mobility." *International Migration Review* 49(1): 36–69.
- Alesina, Alberto, and Marco Tabellini. 2024. "The Political Effects of Immigration: Culture or Economics?" *Journal of Economic Literature* 62(1): 5–46.
- Allport, Gordon W. 1954. *The Nature of Prejudice*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Almasri, Shaddin. 2023. "Why is Syria a War but Not Afghanistan? Nationality-based Aid and Protection in Turkey's Syria Refugee Response." *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 42(1): 29–54.
- Alrababah, Ala, Andrea Dillon, Scott Williamson, Jens Hainmueller, Dominik Hangartner, and Jeremy Weinstein. 2021. "Attitudes Toward Migrants in a Highly Impacted Economy: Evidence From the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Jordan." *Comparative Political Studies* 54(1): 33–76.
- Alrababah, Ala, Daniel Masterson, Marine Casalis, Dominik Hangartner, and Jeremy Weinstein. 2023. "The Dynamics of Refugee Return: Syrian Refugees and Their Migration Intentions." *British Journal of Political Science* 53(4): 1108–1131.

- Altındağ, Onur, and Neeraj Kaushal. 2021. “Do Refugees Impact Voting Behavior in the Host Country? Evidence from Syrian Refugee Inflows to Turkey.” *Public Choice* 186(1): 149–178.
- Andersson, Henrik, Heléne Berg, and Matz Dahlberg. 2021. “Migrating Natives and Foreign Immigration Is There a Preference for Ethnic Residential Homogeneity.” *Journal of Urban Economics* 121(103296).
- Andı, Simge, Ali Çarkoğlu, and Susan Banducci. 2023. “Closing the Information Gap in Competitive Authoritarian Regimes? The Effect of Voting Advice Applications.” *Electoral Studies* 86(1): 102678.
- Ansell, Ben, Frederik Hjorth, Jacob Nyrop, and Martin V. Larsen. 2022. “Sheltering Populists? House Prices and the Support for Populist Parties.” *Journal of Politics* 84(3): 1420–1436.
- Apaydın, Samet, and Meltem Müftüler-Baç. 2022. “Turkish Perceptions of the EU Migration Deal Based on Turkish Parliamentary Debates.” *International Migration* 60(5): 217–236.
- Arslan, Zerrin, Şule Can, and Thomas M. Wilson. 2021. “Do Border Walls Work?: Security, Insecurity and Everyday Economy in the Turkish-Syrian Borderlands.” *Turkish Studies* 22(5): 744–772.
- Arzheimer, Kai. 2009. “Contextual Factors and the Extreme Right Vote in Western Europe, 1980–2002.” *American Journal of Political Science* 53(2): 259–275.
- Auspurg, Katrin, Andreas Schneck, and Thomas Hinz. 2019. “Closed Doors Everywhere? A Meta-Analysis of Field Experiments on Ethnic Discrimination in Rental Housing Markets.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 45(1): 95–114.
- Aydın-Düzgit, Senem, Bahar Rumelili, and Alp E. Topal. 2022. “Challenging Anti-Western Historical Myths in populist Discourse: Re-visiting Ottoman Empire–Europe Interaction During The 19th Century.” *European Journal of International Relations* 28(3): 513–537.
- Aytaç, Erdem S. 2024. “Economic Voting in the 2023 Turkish General Election.” *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 24(2): 363–381.
- Aytaç, Erdem S., Ali Çarkoğlu, and Ezgi Elçi. 2024. “Populist Appeals, Emotions, and Political Mobilization.” *American Behavioral Scientist* 00027642241240343.
- Baker, Andrew, Brantly Callaway, Scott Cunningham, Andrew Goodman-Bacon, and Pedro H.C. Sant’Anna. 2025. “Difference-in-Differences Designs: A Practitioner’s Guide.” *arXiv preprint arXiv(2503.13323)*.
- Balkan, Binnur, Elif O. Tok, Huzeyfe Torun, and Semih Tumen. 2018. “Immigration, Housing Rents, and Residential Segregation: Evidence from Syrian Refugees in Turkey.” *IZA Institute of Labor Economics Discussion Paper Series No. 11611*.
- Bansak, Kirk, Jens Hainmueller, and Dominik Hangartner. 2016. “How Economic, Humanitarian, and Religious Concerns Shape European Attitudes Toward Asylum Seekers.” *Science* 354(6309): 217–222.

- Been, Vicki, I. Gould Ellen, and Katherine O'Regan. 2019. "Supply Skepticism: Housing Supply and Affordability." *Housing Policy Debate* 29(1): 25–40.
- Bircan, Tuba, and Ulaş Sunata. 2015. "Educational Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Turkey." *Migration Letters* 12(3): 226 – 237.
- Bosch, Mariano, Angeles M. Carnero, and Lidia Farré. 2015. "Rental Housing Discrimination and The Persistence of Ethnic Enclaves." *SERIEs* 6(1): 129–152.
- Boustan, Leah P. 2010. "Was Postwar Suburbanization "White Flight"? Evidence from the Black Migration." *Journal of Economics* 125(1): 417–443.
- Braakmann, Nils. 2019. "Immigration and the Property Market: Evidence from England and Wales." *Real Estate Economics* 47(2): 509–533.
- Budge, Ian, David Robertson, and Derek Hearl. 1987. *Ideology, Strategy and Party Change: Spatial Analyses of Post-War Election Programmes in 19 Democracies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Callaway, Brantly, and Pedro H.C. Sant'Anna. 2021. "Difference-in-Differences with Multiple Time Periods." *Journal of Econometrics* 225(2): 200–230.
- Card, David, Alexandre Mas, and Jesse Rothstein. 2008. "Tipping and the Dynamics of Segregation." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 123(1): 177–218.
- Carkoglu, Ali, and Kerem Yildirim. 2024. "Media Effects in a Polarized Political System: The Case of Turkey." *Political Behavior* 46(2): 1189–1211.
- Carkoğlu, Ali, and Ersin Kalaycıoğlu. 2022. *Elections and Public Opinion in Turkey: Through the Prism of the 2018 Elections*. London: Routledge.
- Carrera, Sergio, Meltem Ineli Ciger, Lina Vosyliute, and Leiza Brumat. 2022. "The EU Grants Temporary Protection for People Fleeing War in Ukraine: Time to Rethink Unequal Solidarity in EU Asylum Policy." *CEPS Policy Insights* 09(<https://hdl.handle.net/1814/74394>).
- Casas, Agustin. 2018. "Distributive Politics with Vote and Turnout Buying." *American Political Science Review* 112(4): 1111–1119.
- Cassarino, Jean-Pierre. 2025. "Using Development Aid as a Leverage in the EU's External Relations: Challenges and Consequences." *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 23(1): 34–46.
- Chiu, Albert, Xingchen Lan, Ziyi Liu, and Yiqing Xu. 2023. "What To Do (and Not to Do) with Causal Panel Analysis under Parallel Trends: Lessons from A Large Reanalysis Study." *arXiv preprint* arXiv:2309.15983.
- Cinar, Kursat. 2024. "The 2024 Local Elections in Turkey: A Critical Juncture for Turkish Democracy." *South European Society and Politics* 29(1): 109–134.
- Clayton, Katherina, Jeremy Ferwerda, and Yusaku Horiuchi. 2022. "The Stability of Not-In-My-Backyard Attitudes toward Refugees: Evidence from the Ukrainian Refugee Crisis." *Working Paper* Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4126536> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4126536>.

- Cordero, Guillermo, Piotz Zagorski, and Jose Rama. 2023. "Economic Self-Interest or Cultural Threat Migrant Unemployment and Class-based Support for Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe." *Political Behavior* 46(2): 1397–1416.
- Crawley, Heaven, and Dimitris Skleparis. 2018. "Refugees, Migrants, Neither, Both: Categorical Fetishism and The Politics of Bounding in Europe's 'Migration Crisis'." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44(1): 48–64.
- Czaika, Mathias, and Armando Di Lillo. 2018. "The Geography of Anti-Immigrant Attitudes Across Europe, 2002-2014." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44(15): 2453–2479.
- Dahlström, Carl, and Anders Sundell. 2012. "A Losing Gamble. How Mainstream Parties Facilitate Anti-Immigrant Party Success." *Electoral Studies* 31(2): 353–363.
- Dardağan Kibar, Esra. 2013. "An Overview and Discussion of the New Turkish Law on Foreigners and International Protection." *Perceptions* 18(3): 109–128.
- De Chaisemartin, Clément, and Xavier d'Haultfoeuille. 2020. "Two-way Fixed Effects Estimators with Heterogeneous Treatment Effects." *American Economic Review* 110(9): 2964–2996.
- De Coninck, David. 2020. "Migrant Categorizations and European Public Opinion: Diverging Attitudes Towards Immigrants and Refugees." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 46(9): 1667–1686.
- De Coninck, David. 2023. "The Refugee Paradox During Wartime in Europe: How Ukrainian and Afghan Refugees are (not) Alike." *International Migration Review* 57(2): 578–586.
- de Haas, Hein, Katharina Natter, and Simona Vezzoli. 2016. "Growing Restrictiveness or Changing Selection? The Nature and Evolution of Migration Policies." *International Migration Review* 52(2): 324–367.
- Degen, Kathrin, and Andreas M. Fischer. 2017. "Immigration and Swiss House Prices." *Swiss Journal of Economics and Statistics* 153(1): 15–36.
- Dennison, James, and Andrew Geddes. 2018. "Brexit and The peris of 'Europeanised' Migration." *Journal of European Public Policy* 25(8): 1137–1153.
- Desmond, Matthew, and Nathan Wilmers. 2019. "Do the Poor Pay More for Housing? Exploitation, Profit, and Risk in Rental Markets." *American Journal of Sociology* 124(4): 1090–1124.
- Dimitriadi, Angeliki, Ayhan Kaya, Başak Kale, and Tinatin Zurabishvili. 2018. "EU-Turkey Relations and Irregular Migration: Transactional Cooperation in the Making."
- Dinas, Elias, Erin Hartman, and Joost van Spanje. 2016. "Dead Man Walking: The Affective Roots of Issue Proximity Between Voters and Parties." *Political Behavior* 38(1): 659–687.

- Dinas, Elias, Konstantinos Matakos, and Dominik Hangartner. 2019. "Waking Up the Golden Dawn: Does Exposure to the Refugee Crisis Increase Support for Extreme-Right Parties?" *Political Analysis* 27(2): 244–254.
- Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Addison-Wesley.
- Drazanova, Lenka. 2022. "Sometimes It is The Little Things: A Meta-analysis of Individual and Contextual Determinants of Attitudes toward Immigration (2009–2019)." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 87(1): 85–97.
- East, Chloe E., Annie L. Hines, Philip Luck, Hani Mansour, and Andrea Velásquez. 2023. "The Labor Market Effects of Immigration Enforcement." *Journal of Labor Economics* 41(4): 957–996.
- Edo, Anthony, Yvonne Giesing, Jonathan Oztunc, and Panu Poutvaara. 2019. "Immigration and Electoral Support for the Far-left and the Far-right." *European Economic Review* 115(1): 99–143.
- Ekşi, Nuray. 2018. "Humanitarian Residence Permit in Light of Court Decisions." *Public and Private International Law Bulletin* 38(2): 243–283.
- Elçi, Ezgi. 2022. "Politics of Nostalgia and Populism: Evidence from Turkey." *British Journal of Political Science* 52(2): 697–714.
- Elçi, Ezgi, Deniz Ş. Sert, and Evren Balta. 2025. "Electoral Pressure, Reputational Risks, and Coalition Politics: How Established Parties Respond to the Rise of Anti-immigrant Parties." *New Perspectives on Turkey* .
- Enelow, James, and Melvin Hinich. 1984. *The Spatial Theory of Voting: An Introduction*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Esen, Berk. 2021. *Competitive Authoritarianism in Turkey under the AKP Rule*. London: Routledge pp. 153–167.
- Esen, Berk, and Şebnem Gümüüşçü. 2019. "Killing Competitive Authoritarianism Softly: The 2019 Local Elections in Turkey." *South European Society and Politics* 24(3): 317–342.
- Fazekas, Zoltan, and Zsombor Z. Méder. 2013. "Proximity and Directional Theory Compared: Taking Discriminant Positions Seriously in Multi-party Systems." *Electoral Studies* 32(4): 693–707.
- Fennema, Meindert. 1997. "Some Conceptual Issues and Problems in the Comparison of Anti-immigrant Parties in Western Europe." *Party Politics* 3(4): 473–492.
- Ferrer-Gallardo, Xavier, and Lorenzo Gabrielli. 2022. "The Ceuta Border Peripeteia: Tasting the Externalities of EU Border Externalization." *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 37(3): 645–655.
- Fisunoğlu, Ali, and Deniz Ş. Sert. 2019. "Refugees and Elections: The Effects of Syrians on Voting Behavior in Turkey." *International Migration* 57(2): 298–312.

- Francis, Jenny, and Daniel Hiebert. 2014. "Shaky Foundations: Refugees in Vancouver's Housing Market." *The Canadian Geographer* 58(1): 63–78.
- Gaikwad, Nikhar, and Gareth Nellis. 2017. "The Majority-Minority Divide in Attitudes toward Internal Migration Evidence from Mumbai." *American Journal of Political Science* 61(2): 456–472.
- Gallati, Laura, and Nathalie Giger. 2020. "Proximity and Directional Voting: Testing for the Region of Acceptability." *Electoral Studies* 64(Online First): <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2019.02.015>.
- Genç, Deniz H. 2018. "Responding to Irregular Migration: High Potential of Local Governments in Turkey." *International Migration* 56(3): 73–87.
- Gethin, Amory, Clara Martínez-Toledano, and Thomas Piketty. 2022. "Brahmin Left versus Merchant Right: Changing Political Cleavages in 21 Western Democracies, 1948–2020." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 137(1): 1–48.
- Golder, Matt. 2003. "Explaining Variation In The Success Of Extreme Right Parties In Western Europe." *Comparative Political Studies* 36(4): 432–466.
- Gonzalez, Libertad, and Francesc Ortega. 2013. "Immigration and Housing Booms Evidence from Spain." *Journal of Regional Science* 53(1): 37–59.
- Goodman-Bacon, Andrew. 2021. "Difference-in-differences with Variation in Treatment Timing." *Journal of Econometrics* 225(2): 254–277.
- Goodman, Simon, Ala Sirriyeh, and Simon McMahon. 2018. "The Evolving (Re)categorisations of Refugees Throughout The "Refugee/Migrant Crisis"." *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology* 27(2): 105–114.
- Grande, Edgar, Tobias Schwarzbözl, and Matthias Fatke. 2019. "Politicizing immigration in Western Europe." *Journal of European Public Policy* 26(10): 1444–1463.
- Grofman, Bernard. 2004. "Downs and Two-party Convergence." *Annual Review of Political Science* 7(1): 25–46.
- Gubler, Joshua R., and Nathan P. Kalmoe. 2015. "Violent Rhetoric in Protracted Group Conflicts: Experimental Evidence from Israel and India." *Political Research Quarterly* 68(4): 651–664.
- Gyourko, Joseph, and Raven Mollow. 2015. *Regulation and Housing Supply*. Amsterdam: Elsevier p. 1289–1337.
- Gökalp Aras, N. Ela, and Zeynep Mencütek-Şahin. 2018. "Evaluation of Irregular Migration Governance in Turkey From a Foreign Policy Perspective." *New Perspectives on Turkey* 59: 63–88.
- Gökalp Aras, N. Ela, and Zeynep Mencütek-Şahin. 2019. "Border Management and Migration Controls Turkey."
- Hainmueller, Jens, and Daniel J. Hopkins. 2015. "The Hidden American Immigration Consensus: A Conjoint Analysis of Attitudes toward Immigrants." *American Journal of Political Science* 59(3): 529–548.

- Hainmueller, Jens C., and Daniel J. Hopkins. 2014. "Public Attitudes Toward Immigration." *Annual Review of Political Science* 17: 225–249.
- Halla, Martin, Alexander F. Wagner, and Josef Zweimüller. 2017. "Immigration and Voting for the Far Right." *Journal of the European Economic Association* 15(6): 1341–1385.
- Han, Kyung Joon. 2015. "The Impact of Radical Right-Wing Parties on the Positions of Mainstream Parties Regarding Multiculturalism." *West European Politics* 38(3): 557–576.
- Hangartner, Dominik, Elias Dinas, Moritz Marbach, Konstantinos Matakos, and Dimitrios Xefteris. 2019. "Does Exposure to the Refugee Crisis Make Natives More Hostile?" *American Political Science Review* 113(2): 442–455.
- Harter-Dreiman, Michelle. 2004. "Drawing Inferences about Housing Supply Elasticity from House Price Responses to Income Shocks." *Journal of Urban Economics* 55(2): 316–337.
- Hatton, Timothy J. 2021. "Public Opinion on Immigration in Europe: Preference and Salience." *European Journal of Political Economy* 66(1): 101969.
- Hazlett, Chad, and Matto Mildenberger. 2020. "Wildfire Exposure Increases Pro-Environment Voting within Democratic but Not Republican Areas." *American Political Science Review* 114(4): 1359–1365.
- Helbling, Marc, and Dorina Kalkum. 2018. "Migration Policy Trends in OECD Countries." *Journal of European Public Policy* 25(12): 1779–1797.
- Held, Alexander, and Paulina Patana. 2023. "Rents, Refugees, and the Populist Radical Right." *Research and Politics* 10(2): 1–9.
- Hintz, Lisel, and Harun Ercan. 2024. "Permissive Prejudice in Localized Authoritarian Consolidation: Evidence from Turkey's Municipalities." *Democratization* 31(8): 1912–1936.
- Hopkins, Daniel J. 2010. "Politicized Places: Explaining Where and When Immigrants Provoke Local Opposition." *American Political Science Review* 104(1): 40–60.
- Hopkins, Daniel J., Yotam Margalit, and Omer Solodoch. 2024. "Personal Economic Shocks and Public Opposition to Unauthorized Immigration." *British Journal of Political Science* 54(3): 928–936.
- Hoxhaj, Rezart, and Carolina v. Zuccotti. 2021. "The Complex Relationship between Immigrants' Concentration, Socioeconomic Environment and Attitudes Towards Immigrants in Europe." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 44(2): 272–292.
- Iacus, Stefano M., Gary King, and Giuseppe Porro. 2012. "Causal Inference without Balance Checking: Coarsened Exact Matching." *Political Analysis* 20(1): 1–24.
- Icduygu, Ahmet. 2004. "Demographic Mobility and Turkey: Migration Experiences and Government Responses." *Mediterranean Quarterly* 15(4): 88–99.

- Icduygu, Ahmet. 2015. *Syrian Refugees in Turkey: The Long Road Ahead*. Washington DC: Migration Policy Institute.
- Icduygu, Ahmet. 2021. “Decentring Migrant Smuggling Reflections on the Eastern Mediterranean Route to Europe.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 47(14): 3293–3309.
- Icduygu, Ahmet, and Damla B. Aksel. 2012. *Irregular Migration in Turkey*. Ankara: International Organization for Migration.
- Icduygu, Ahmet, and Doğu Şimşek. 2016. “Syrian Refugees in Turkey towards Integration Policies.” *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 15(3): 59–69.
- Irgil, Ezgi. 2024. “Intergroup Encounters in Urban Public Spaces: Everyday Strategies of Host Community Members Following a Refugee Influx.” *International Migration Review* 58(1): 386–409.
- Ivarsflaten, Elisabeth. 2008. “What Unites Right-wing Populists in Western Europe? Re-examining Grievance Mobilization Models in Seven Successful Cases.” *Comparative Political Studies* 41(1): 3–23.
- Jaffe, Austin J., Bengt Turner, and Anders Victorin. 1995. *Property Rights and Privatisation in the Baltic Countries*. Nordic Council of Ministers, Copenhagen and Stockholm: Lanham, UNIPUB.
- Jessee, Stephen A. 2010. “Partisan Bias, Political Information and Spatial Voting in the 2008 Presidential Election.” *Journal of Politics* 72(2): 327–340.
- Kale, Başak, and Murat Erdoğan. 2019. “The impact of GCR on Local Governments and Syrian Refugees in Turkey.” *International Migration* 57(6): 224–242.
- Karadağ, Sibel. 2019. “Extraterritoriality of European Borders to Turkey: An Implementation Perspective of Counteractive Strategies.” *Comparative Migration Studies* 7(<https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-019-0113-y>).
- Kayaoglu, Aysegul. 2025. “Refugee Exposure and Attitudes Toward Refugees in a Developing Country Context: Evidence from Türkiye.” *Journal of Refugee Studies* Online First: <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feaf034>.
- Kentmen-Cin, Cigdem, Selcuk Sunay, and Nazli E. Baltepe. 2025. “Framing of Syrian Refugees in Turkish Politics: An Analysis of Turkish Grand National Assembly Debates.” *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* (Online First): <https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2025.2451342>.
- Kerr, William R., and William F. Lincoln. 2010. “The Supply Side of Innovation: H-1B Visa Reforms and U.S. Ethnic Invention.” *Journal of Labor Economics* 28(3): 473–508.
- King, Gary, and Richard Nielsen. 2019. “Why Propensity Scores Should Not Be Used for Matching.” *Political Analysis* 27(4): 435–454.
- Kirişçi, Kemal. 2000. “Disaggregating Turkish Citizenship and Immigration Practices.” *Middle Eastern Studies* 36(3): 1–22.

- Kirişçi, Kemal. 2003. "The Question of Asylum and Illegal Migration in European Union Turkish Relations." *Turkish Studies* 4(1): 79–106.
- Kirişçi, Kemal, and Ayselin Yıldız. 2023. *Turkey's Migration Management Regimes*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press pp. 674–693.
- Kirkwood, Steve. 2017. "The Humanisation of Refugees: A Discourse Analysis of UK Parliamentary Debates on the European Refugee 'Crisis'." *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology* 27(2): 115–125.
- Koca, Burcu T. 2015. "Deconstructing Turkey's "Open Door" Policy towards Refugees from Syria." *Migration Letters* 12(3): 209–225.
- Kocapınar, Gülnur, and Ersin Kalaycıoğlu. 2024. "Elections and Partisanship: Analyzing the Results of the 2023 General Elections in Turkey." *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 24(2): 237–257.
- Krause, Werner, Denis Cohen, and Tarik Abou-Chadi. 2023. "Does Accommodation Work? Mainstream Party Strategies and The Success of Radical Right Parties." *Political Science Research and Methods* 11(1): 172–179.
- Kriner, Douglas L., and Andrew Reeves. 2015. "Presidential Particularism and Divide-the-Dollar Politics." *American Political Science Review* 109(1): 151–171.
- Kustov, Alexander. 2023. "Do Anti-immigration Voters Care More? Documenting the Issue Importance Asymmetry of Immigration Attitudes." *British Journal of Political Science* 53(2): 796–805.
- Kustov, Alexander. 2024. "Beyond Changing Minds: Raising the Issue Importance of Expanding Legal Immigration." *Perspectives on Politics* Online First: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592724001117>.
- Kustov, Alexander, Dillon Laaker, and Cassidy Reller. 2021. "The Stability of Immigration Attitudes: Evidence and Implications." *Journal of Politics* 83(4): 1478–1494.
- Kutlay, Mustafa, and Ziya Öniş. 2024. "Governance Crises and Resilience of Authoritarian Populism: 2023 Turkish Elections from the Perspective of Hirschman's 'Exit, Voice, and Loyalty.'" *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 24(2): 383–403.
- Laaker, Dillon. 2024. "Economic Shocks and the Development of Immigration Attitudes." *British Journal of Political Science* 54(1): 220–240.
- Lachat, Romain. 2015. "The Role of Party Identification in Spatial Models of Voting Choice." *Political Science Research and Methods* 3(3): 641–658.
- Lahdelma, Ilona. 2023. "Do Local Economic Benefits of Asylum Seekers Lead to More Support for Local Refugee Intake?" *Journal of Politics* 85(4): 1–16.
- Laube, Lena. 2019. "The Relational Dimension of Externalizing Border Control Selective Visa Policies in Migration and Border Diplomacy." *Comparative Migration Studies* 7: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-019-0130-x>.

- Lavenex, Sandra, and Frank Schimmelfennig. 2009. "EU Rules Beyond EU Borders: Theorizing External Governance in European Politics." *Journal of European Public Policy* 16(6): 791–812.
- Lee, Ju-Sung, and Adina Nerghes. 2018. "Refugee or Migrant Crisis? Labels, Perceived Agency, and Sentiment Polarity in Online Discussions." *Social Media + Society* 4(3): 1–22.
- Lehmann, Pola, Simon Franzmann, Denise Al-Gaddooa, Tobias Burst, Christoph Ivanusch, Sven Regel, Felicia Riethmüller, Andrea Volkens, Bernhard Weßels, and Lisa Zehnter. 2024. "The Manifesto Data Collection. Manifesto Project (MRG/CMP/MARPOR). Version 2024a." <https://doi.org/10.25522/manifesto.mpd.2024a>.
- Lewis, Jeffrey B., and Garry King. 2000. "No Evidence on Directional vs. Proximity Voting." *Political Analysis* 8(1): 21–33.
- Liu, Licheng, Ye Wang, and Yiqing Xu. 2024. "A Practical Guide to Counterfactual Estimators for Causal Inference with Time-Series Cross-Sectional Data." *American Journal of Political Science* 68(1): 160–176.
- Liyang, Sun, and Sarah Abraham. 2021. "Estimating Dynamic Treatment Effects in Event Studies with Heterogeneous Treatment Effects." *Journal of Econometrics* 225(2): 175–199.
- Luca, Davide, and Andrés Rodríguez-Pose. 2019. "Building Consensus: Shifting Strategies in The Territorial Targeting of Turkey's Public Transport Investment." *Regional Studies* 53(11): 1591–1602.
- Léonard, Sarah, and Christian Kauner. 2022. "De-centring the Securitisation of Asylum and Migration in the European Union: Securitisation, Vulnerability and the Role of Turkey." *Geopolitics* 27(3): 729–751.
- Macdonald, Stuart E., Ola Listhaug, and George Rabinowitz. 1991. "Issues and Party Support in Multi-party Systems." *American Political Science Review* 85(4): 1107–1131.
- Majcher, Izabella, and Tineke Strik. 2021. "Legislating without Evidence The Recast of the EU Return Directive." *European Journal of Migration and Law* 23(2): 103–126.
- Mauerer, Ingrid, Paul W. Thurner, and Marc Debus. 2015. "Under Which Conditions Do Parties Attract Voters' Reactions to Issues? Party-Varying Issue Voting in German Elections 1987–2009." *West European Politics* 38(6): 1251–1273.
- McConnell, Brendon. 2024. "Can't See the Forest for the Logs: On the Perils of Using Difference-in-Differences With a Log-Dependent Variable." *Working Paper* <https://brendonmcconnell.github.io/pdf/logDD.pdf>.
- McFadden, Daniel. 1974. *Conditional Logit Analysis of Qualitative Choice Behavior*. New York: Academic Press p. 105–142.

- Meguid, Bonnie M. 2005. "Competition between Unequals: The Role of Mainstream Party Strategy in Niche Party Success." *American Political Science Review* 99(3): 347–359.
- Mencütek-Şahin, Zeynep. 2022. "The Institutionalization of "Voluntary" Returns in Turkey." *Migration and Society* 5(1): 43–58.
- Mencütek-Şahin, Zeynep. 2023. "The Geopolitics of Returns: Geopolitical Reasoning and Space-Making in Turkey's Repatriation Regime." *Geopolitics* 28(3): 1079–1105.
- Merkley, Eric, and Dominik A. Stecula. 2021. "Party Cues in the News: Democratic Elites, Republican Backlash, and the Dynamics of Climate Skepticism." *British Journal of Political Science* pp. 1439–1456.
- Merrill, Samuel III. 1995. "Discriminating between the Directional and Proximity Spatial Models of Electoral Competition." *Electoral Studies* 14(3): 273–287.
- Merrill, Samuel III, and Bernard Grofman. 1999. *A Unified Theory of Voting: Directional and Proximity Spatial Models*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Moral, Mert, and Andrei Zhirnov. 2018. "Issue Voting as a Constrained Choice Problem." *American Journal of Political Science* 62(2): 280–295.
- Morgul, Kerem, and Osman Savaskan. 2021. "Identity or Interests? Religious Conservatives' Attitudes toward Syrian Refugees in Turkey." *Migration Studies* 9(4): 1645–1672.
- Müftüler-Baç, Meltem. 2022. "Externalization of Migration Governance, Turkey's Migration Regime, and The Protection of the European Union's External Borders." *Turkish Studies* 23(2): 290–316.
- Nathan, Noah L., and Melissa L. Sands. 2023. "Context and Contact: Unifying the Study of Environmental Effects on Politics." *Annual Review of Political Science* 26(1): 233–252.
- Neundorf, Anja, Aykut Ozturk, Ksenia Northmore-Ball, Katerina Tertytchnaya, and Johannes Gerschewski. 2024. "A Loyal Base: Support for Authoritarian Regimes in Times of Crisis." *Comparative Political Studies* 58(9): 1854–1889.
- Norman, P. Kelsey. 2020a. "Migration Diplomacy and Policy Liberalization in Morocco and Turkey." *International Migration Review* 54(4): 1158–1183.
- Norman, P. Kelsey. 2020b. *Reluctant Reception: Refugees, Migration and Governance in the Middle East and North Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Okay, Aslı S. 2017. "Turkey's post-2011 Approach to its Syrian Border and its Implications for Domestic Politics." *International Affairs* 93(4): 829–846.
- Orhan, Yunus Emre. 2022. "The Relationship between Affective Polarization and Democratic Backsliding: Comparative Evidence." *Democratization* 29(4): 714–735.

- Orhan, Yunus Emre, and Semih Nargül. 2025. "Turkey-Iran Border and Irregular Migration from a Geographical Perspective." *Journal of Borderlands Studies* pp. 1–24.
- Pacciardi, Agnese, and Joakim Berndtsson. 2022. "EU Border Externalisation and Security Outsourcing: Exploring the Migration Industry in Libya." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 48(17): 4010–4025.
- Paluck, Elizabeth L., Seth A. Green, and Donald P. Green. 2019. "The Contact Hypothesis Re-Evaluated." *Behavioural Public Policy* 3(2): 129–158.
- Pardos-Prado, Sergi, and Elias Dinas. 2010. "Systemic Polarisation and Spatial Voting." *European Journal of Political Research* 49(6): 759–786.
- Petrocik, John R. 1996. "Issue Ownership in Presidential Elections, with a 1980 Case Study." *American Journal of Political Science* 40(3): 825–850.
- Pettigrew, Thomas F., and Linda R. Tropp. 2006. "A Meta-Analytic Test of Intergroup Contact Theory." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 90(5): 751–783.
- Pichler-Milanovich, Natasha. 2001. "Urban Housing Markets in Central and Eastern Europe: Convergence, or Policy 'Collapse'." *Journal of Housing Policy* 1(2): 145–187.
- Polat, Rabia Karakaya, and Vivien Lowndes. 2021. "How Does Multi-Level Governance Create Capacity to Address Refugee Needs, and with What Limitations? An Analysis of Municipal Responses to Syrian Refugees in Istanbul." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 35(1): 51–73.
- Rabinowitz, George, and Stuart E. Macdonald. 1989. "A Directional Theory of Issue Voting." *American Political Science Review* 83(1): 93–121.
- Robinson, Corey. 2024. "Offshoring and Outsourcing Anti-Smuggling Policy: Capacity Building and the Geopolitics of Migrant Smuggling, Geopolitics." *Geopolitics* 29(1): 13–38.
- Roth, Jonathan. 2022. "Pretest with Caution: Event-Study Estimates After Testing for Parallel Trends." *American Economic Review: Insights* 4(3): 305–322.
- Rottmann, Susan, and Ayhan Kaya. 2021. "We Can't Integrate in Europe. We Will Pay a High Price if We Go There": Culture, Time, and Migration Aspirations of Syrian Refugees in Istanbul." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 34(1): 474–490.
- Rovny, Jan, Ryan Bakker, Liesbet Hooghe, Seth Jolly, Gary Marks, Jonathan Polk, Marco Steenbergen, and Milada A. Vachudova. 2025. "25 Years of Political Party Positions in Europe: The Chapel Hill Expert Survey, 1999–2024." [Manuscript in Preparation] <https://www.chesdata.eu/2024-chapel-hill-expert-survey-ches>.
- Rydgren, Jens. 2002. "Radical Right Populism in Sweden: Still a Failure, But for How Long." *Scandinavian Political Studies* 25(1): 27–56.

- Rydgren, Jens, and Sara Van der Meiden. 2019. "The Radical Right and the End of Swedish Exceptionalism." *European Political Science* 18(3): 439–455.
- Saiz, Albert. 2003. "Room in the Kitchen for the Melting Pot: Immigration and Rental Prices." *Review of Economics and Statistics* 85(3): 502–521.
- Saiz, Albert. 2007. "Immigration and Housing Rents in American Cities." *Journal of Urban Economics* 61(2): 345–371.
- Saiz, Albert, and Susan Wachter. 2011. "Immigration and the Neighborhood." *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* 3(2): 169–188.
- Salvatici, Silvia. 2023. "Missing the Global Turn: Italy, the 1951 Refugee Convention, and the Belated Removal of the Geographical Limitation." *European History Quarterly* 53(2): 357–378.
- Sant'Anna, Pedro H.C., and Jun Zhao. 2020. "Doubly Robust Difference-In-Differences Estimators." *Journal of Econometrics* 219(1): 101–122.
- Savatic, Filip, Hélène Thiollet, Alice Mesnard, Jean-Noël Senne, and Thibaut Jaulin. 2024. "Borders Start With Numbers: How Migration Data Create "Fake Illegals"." *International Migration Review* .
- Sayarı, Sabri. 2014. "Interdisciplinary Approaches to Political Clientelism and Patronage in Turkey." *Turkish Studies* 15(4): 655–670.
- Sağiroğlu, Zafer A. 2021. "Göç Başkanlığı Tartışmalarına bir Der-Kenar [A Note on The Discussion of Migration Presidency]." *Yıldırım Beyazıt University Migration Policy Application and Research Center* <https://aybu.edu.tr/gpm/tr/sayfa/5005>.
- Scheepers, Peer, Mérove Gijsberts, and Marcel Coenders. 2002. "Ethnic Exclusionism in European Countries Public Opposition to Civil Rights for Legal Migrants as A Response to Perceived Ethnic Threat." *European Sociological Review* 18(1): 17–34.
- Secen, Sefa, Serhun Al, and Bekir Arslan. 2024. "Electoral Dynamics, New Nationalisms, and Party Positions on Syrian Refugees in Turkey." *Turkish Studies* 25(3): 419–449.
- Sert, Deniz Ş. 2013. "Turkey's Integrated Border Management Strategy." *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 12(1): 173–179.
- Sert, Deniz Ş., and Didem Danış. 2020. "Framing Syrians in Turkey: State Control and No Crisis Discourse." *International Migration* 59(1): 197–214.
- Simsek, Doğuş. 2020. "Integration Processes of Syrian Refugees in Turkey 'Class-based Integration'." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 33(3): 537–554.
- Singh, Shane. 2014. "Linear and Quadratic Utility Loss Functions in Voting Behavior Research." *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 26(1): 35–58.
- Solodoch, Omer. 2021. "Regaining Control? The Political Impact of Policy Responses to Refugee Crises." *International Organization* 75(3): 735–768.

- Spijkerboer, Thomas. 2022. "Migration Management Clientelism Europe's Migration Funds as a Global Political Project." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 48(12): 2892–2907.
- Steinmayr, Andreas. 2016. "Exposure to Refugees and Voting for the Far-Right: (Unexpected) Results from Austria."
- Stoetzer, Lukas F., and Steffen Zittlau. 2015. "Multidimensional Spatial Voting with Non-Separable Preferences." *Political Analysis* 23(3): 415–428.
- Stokes, Donald E. 1963. "Spatial Models of Party Competition." *American Political Science Review* 57(2): 368–377.
- Stutz, Philipp. 2024. *Unpacking EU Readmission and Return Policy with non-EU Countries*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Sunata, Ulaş, and Amal Abdulla. 2020. "Lessons from Experiences of Syrian Civil Society in Refugee Education of Turkey." *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 18(4): 434–447.
- Sá, Filipa. 2015. "Immigration and House Prices in the UK." *Economic Journal* 125(587): 1393–1424.
- TBMM, Human Rights Investigation Commission. 2017. Investigation Report of Removal Centres in Izmir and Aydın Provinces. Report.
- Turner, Paul W. 2000. "The Empirical Application of the Spatial Theory of Voting in Multiparty Systems with Random Utility Models." *Electoral Studies* 19(4): 493–517.
- Tiemann, Guido. 2022. "Conditions of Proximity and Directional Voting: Voter Sophistication, Political Information, and Party Identification." *Electoral Studies* 75(Online First): <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2021.102436>.
- Tittel-Mosser, Fanny. 2018. "Reversed Conditionality in EU External Migration Policy The Case of Morocco." *Journal of Contemporary European Research* 14(1): 349–363.
- Tomz, Michael, and Robert P. van Houweling. 2008. "Candidate Positioning and Voter Choice." *American Political Science Review* 102(3): 303–318.
- Trojanek, Radosław, and Michał Gluszek. 2022. "Short-run Impact of The Ukrainian Refugee Crisis on The Housing Market in Poland." *Finance Research Letters* 50(1): 103236.
- Tsourapas, Gerasimos. 2019. "The Syrian Refugee Crisis and Foreign Policy Decision-Making in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey." *Journal of Global Security Studies* 4(4): 464–481.
- Tsourapas, Gerasimos, and Samet Apaydin. 2025. "Migration Diplomacy and Electoral Behavior: A Survey of Turkish Public Opinion." [Manuscript in Preparation].
- Turhan, Ebru, and Ayselin Yıldız. 2022. *Turkey's External Differentiated Integration with the EU in the Field of Migration Governance*. London: Routledge.

- Tutkal, Serhat. 2022. "Trustees instead of Elected Mayors: Authoritarian Neoliberalism and the Removal of Kurdish Mayors in Turkey." *Nationalities Papers* 50(6): 1164–1186.
- Ustübeci, Ayşen. 2018. *The Governance of International Migration: Irregular Migrants' Access to Right to Stay in Turkey and Morocco*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Ustübeci, Ayşen. 2019. "The Impact of Externalized Migration Governance on Turkey: Technocratic Migration Governance and The Production of Differentiated Legal Status." *Comparative Migration Studies* 7(1): 1–18.
- Uzun, Şenol. 2023. "Genel Müdürlükten Başkanlığa: Türkiye'de Göç Yönetiminin Dönüşümü [From Directorate General to Presidency: Transformation of Migration Management in Türkiye]." *Ekonomi İşletme Siyaset ve Uluslararası İlişkiler Dergisi* 9(2-1): 42–64.
- Vaagland, Karin. 2023. "How Strategies of Refugee Host States are Perceived by Donor States: EU Interpretations of Jordanian Migration Diplomacy." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 49(12): 3085–3100.
- Vertier, Paul, and Max Viskanic. 2023. "Dismantling the "Jungle": Migrant Relocation and Extreme Voting in France." *Political Science Research and Methods* 11(1): 129–143.
- Vitus, Kathrine, and Hilde Lidén. 2010. "The Status of the Asylum-seeking Child in Norway and Denmark: Comparing Discourses, Politics and Practices." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 23(1): 62–81.
- Vogt Isaksen, Joachim. 2019. "The Impact of the Financial Crisis on European Attitudes toward Immigration." *Comparative Migration Studies* 7(1): 1–20.
- Vrânceanu, Alina, and Romain Lachat. 2021. "Do Parties Influence Public Opinion on Immigration? Evidence from Europe." *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 31(1): 1–21.
- Yaylacı, Şule, and Onur Bakiner. 2025. "Anti-Immigrant Attitudes: The Role of Casual Intergroup Contact in Perceived Group Threat." *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 23(2): 238–253.
- Yitmen, Senay, and Maykel Verkuyten. 2018. "Feelings Toward Refugees and Non-Muslims in Turkey: The Roles of National and Religious Identifications, and Multiculturalism." *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 48(2): 90–100.
- Yıldız, Ayselin. 2021. "Yıldız, A. (2020) Impact of the EU-Turkey Statement on Smugglers' Operations in the Aegean and Migrants' Decisions to Engage with Smugglers." *International Migration* 59(4): 141–157.
- Yıldız, Uğur, and Deniz Ş. Sert. 2023. *The Transformation of Migration Governance in Turkey*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

APPENDIX A

Table A.1 Difference-in-differences estimates

	SES Score
ATET	-8.106***
Treatment vs. Control	(1.627)
Constant	39.10***
	(0.374)
Observations	1918
◇ Standard errors are in parentheses	
◇ Two-tailed tests. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$	

Table A.2 Population by district and geographical area

District	Population	Area(km ²)	Pop.(km ²)	Area Share	Pop Share
Adalar	16690	11.05	1510.41	0.21	0.10
Arnavutköy	326452	450.35	724.89	8.43	2.05
Ataşehir	423127	25.20	16790.75	0.47	2.66
Avcılar	452132	42.01	10762.49	0.79	2.84
Bahçelievler	594350	16.62	35761.13	0.31	3.74
Bakırköy	226684	29.64	7647.91	0.55	1.43
Bayrampaşa	275314	9.61	28648.70	0.18	1.73
Bağcılar	740069	22.36	33097.90	0.42	4.65
Başakşehir	514829	104.30	4936.04	1.95	3.24
Beykoz	247875	310.36	798.67	5.81	1.56
Beylikdüzü	412835	37.78	10927.34	0.71	2.60
Beyoğlu	225718	8.91	25333.11	0.17	1.42
Beşiktaş	175190	18.01	9727.37	0.34	1.10
Büyükkçekmece	277181	139.17	1991.67	2.60	1.74
Çatalca	77421	1115.13	69.43	20.87	0.49
Çekmeköy	296066	148.09	1999.23	2.77	1.86
Esenler	445421	18.43	24168.26	0.34	2.80
Esenyurt	983571	43.13	22804.80	0.81	6.18
Eyüpsultan	422913	228.42	1851.47	4.28	2.66
Fatih	367746	15.59	23588.58	0.29	2.31
Gaziosmanpaşa	495998	11.76	42176.70	0.22	3.12
Güngören	282692	7.21	39208.32	0.13	1.78
Kadıköy	483064	25.09	19253.25	0.47	3.04
Kartal	483418	38.54	12543.28	0.72	3.04
Kağıthane	455943	14.87	30661.94	0.28	2.87
Küçükçekmece	808955	37.54	21549.15	0.70	5.09
Maltepe	528544	52.97	9978.18	0.99	3.32
Pendik	750435	179.99	4169.32	3.37	4.72
Sancaktepe	489848	62.42	7847.61	1.17	3.08
Sarıyer	350454	175.39	1998.14	3.28	2.20
Silivri	217163	869.52	249.75	16.27	1.37
Sultanbeyli	358201	29.10	12309.31	0.54	2.25
Sultangazi	542531	36.30	14945.76	0.68	3.41
Tuzla	288875	123.63	2336.61	2.31	1.82
Ümraniye	732357	45.31	16163.25	0.85	4.60
Üsküdar	524452	35.33	14844.38	0.66	3.30
Zeytinburnu	292616	11.59	25247.28	0.22	1.84
Şile	42611	781.72	54.51	14.63	0.27
Şişli	276528	10.71	25819.61	0.20	1.74

A.1 Equivalence and Placebo Tests

The two-way fixed effects estimator relies on strict exogeneity and the absence of unobserved time varying shocks, assumptions that are rarely met in real world settings. To address this, Liu, Wang, and Xu (2024) propose two practical diagnostics for panel designs.

(1) The equivalence test addresses a simple question: prior to treatment, are the prediction errors for treated units small enough to be considered negligible? To answer this, a researcher defines pre-specified range around zero (default is $\pm 0.36\sigma_\epsilon$, where σ_ϵ is the residual standard deviation) and examines whether each pre-treatment error, along with its confidence interval, falls within that range. If they do, the trajectories of treated and control units are effectively parallel, supporting the plausibility of the key identification assumption (Liu, Wang, and Xu 2024, 169).

(2) The placebo test, by contrast, withholds several pre-treatment periods and treats them as if treatment had already occurred. The model is then re-estimated, and any non-zero effect within this artificial window indicates misspecification or unabsorbed shocks (Liu, Wang, and Xu 2024, 168). Because the equivalence test relies on in-sample prediction while the placebo test relies on out-of-sample prediction, the authors recommend using them jointly to guard against both slow-moving confounders and model over-fitting (Liu, Wang, and Xu 2024, 175).

Figure A.1 presents the results of the equivalence test: all pre-closure residuals fall within pre-specified range ($\pm 0.36\sigma_\epsilon$), and an F-statistic of 2.79 rejects the null of non-equivalence, indicating that rental markets trends in soon to be treated neighbourhoods were statistically similar to those in the control group. Figure A.2 reports the results of the placebo test, which simulates a treatment twelve-months earlier. The estimated effects cluster around zero and yield a high p-value (0.311). Passing both tests suggests that the interactive fixed effects model successfully accounts for latent shocks that could bias a simpler estimator. It also confirms that pre-treatment rental patterns were aligned and that the model does not treat random variation as the causal effect of the policy. The observed post-treatment changes in neighbourhood rents can therefore be interpreted as credible causal effects, with “*little need for more complex methods* (Liu, Wang, and Xu 2024, 171).”

Figure A.1 Equivalence test

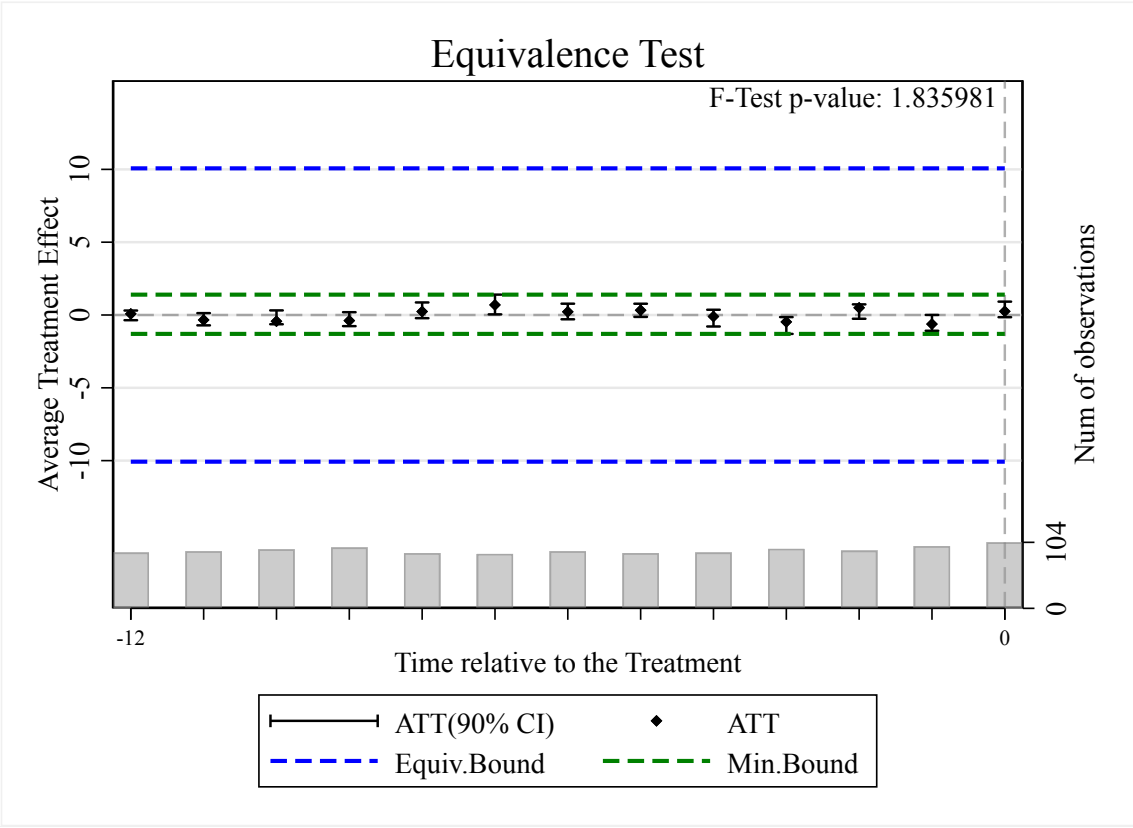
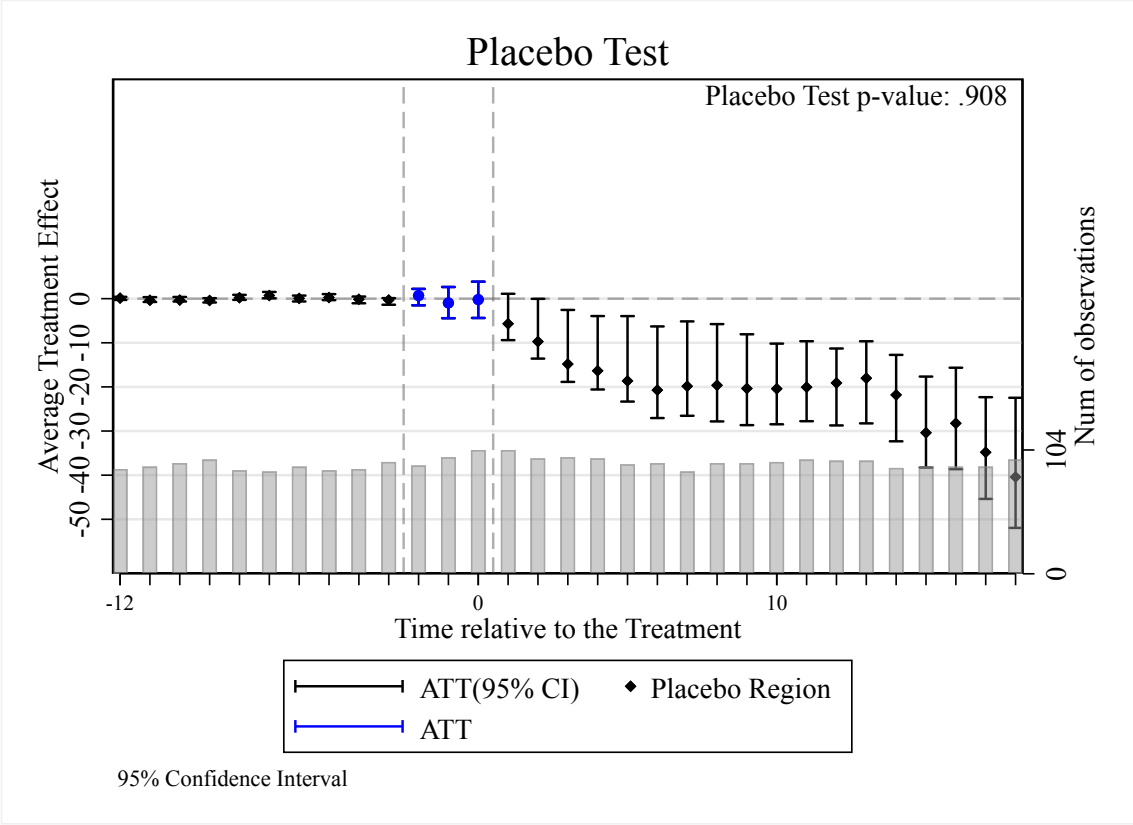


Figure A.2 Placebo test



A.2 Market Value (Original vs. Log Scales)

Figure A.3 Distribution of the dependent variable

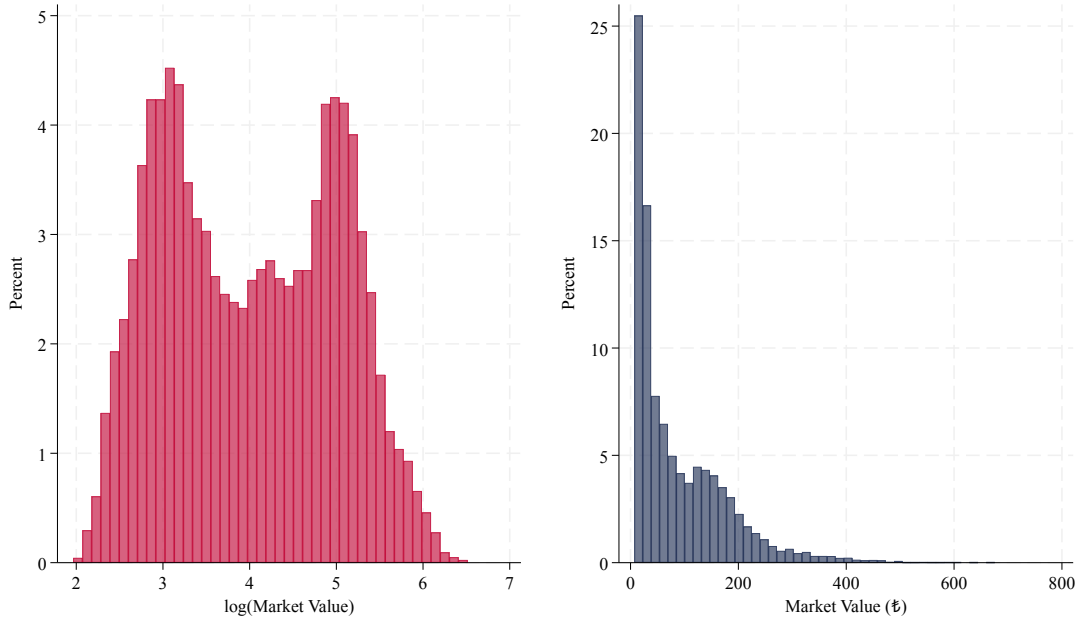
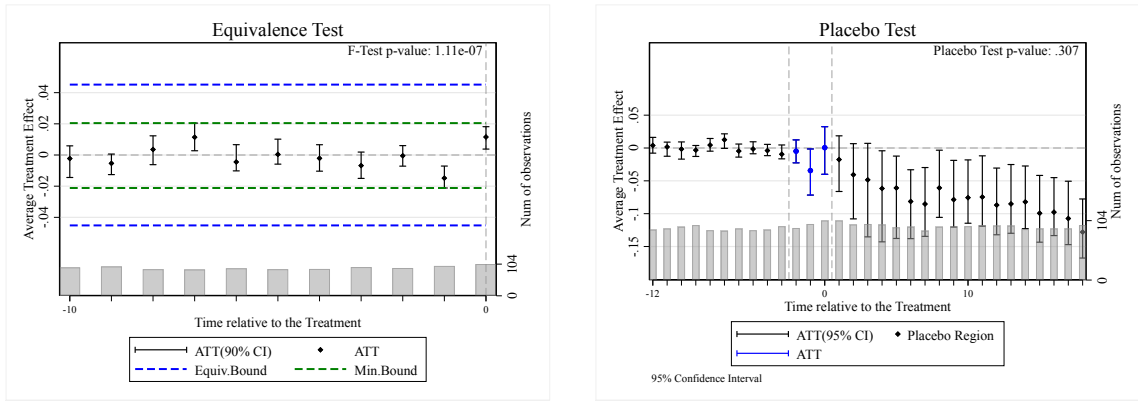


Figure A.4 Robustness checks with log-transformed market value



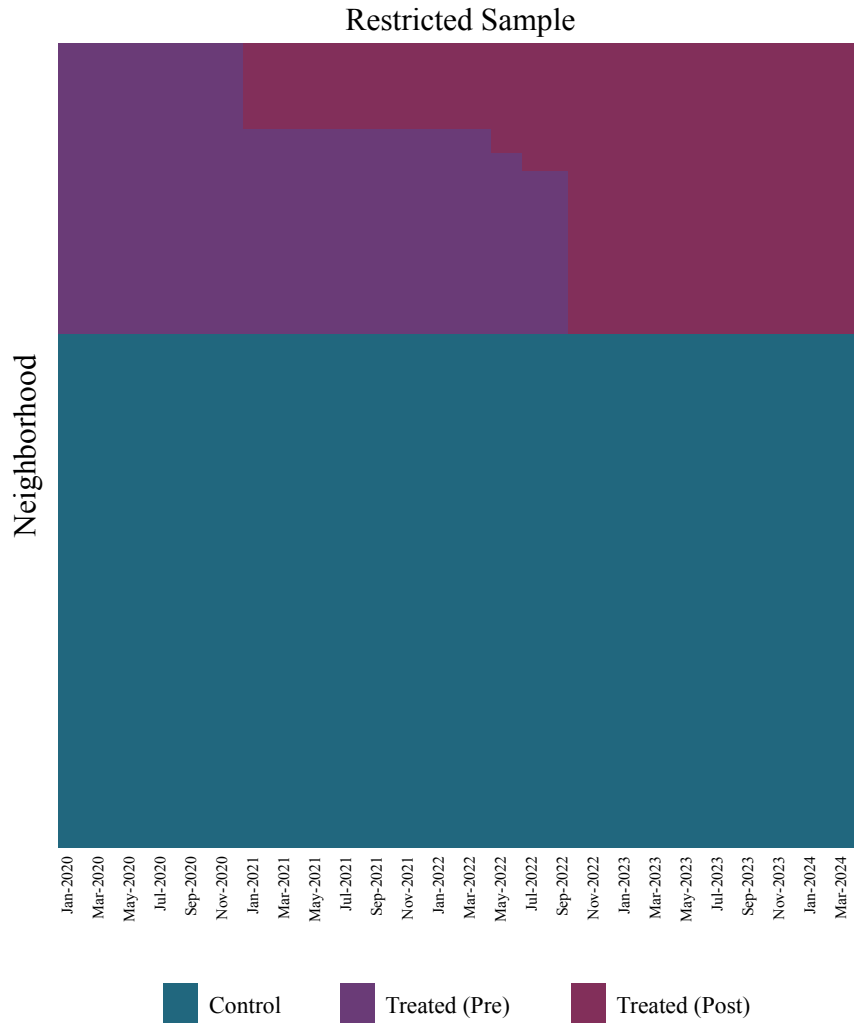
(a) Equivalence test

(b) Placebo test

Section A.1 details the diagnostic procedures. Both the equivalence (Figure A.4a) and placebo (Figure A.4b) tests are satisfied, supporting the validity of the identification strategy with the log-transformed market value.

A.3 Robustness Tests

Figure A.5 Panel view (strongly-balanced sample)



To address missing month-neighborhood observations, even after applying sample restrictions, I replicate the main model using a strongly balanced sample in which no neighborhoods have missing data since January 2020, as shown in Figure A.5. This restricted sample includes only 133 of the 966 neighborhoods, with 85 in the control and 48 treated groups. The results presented in Figure A.6 support the robustness of the main models and indicate a negative effect of the dispersal policy, although the effect size is smaller. This suggests that the findings are not driven by missing data or related misspecification in the DiD estimations.

Figure A.6 Event-study (strongly-balanced sample)

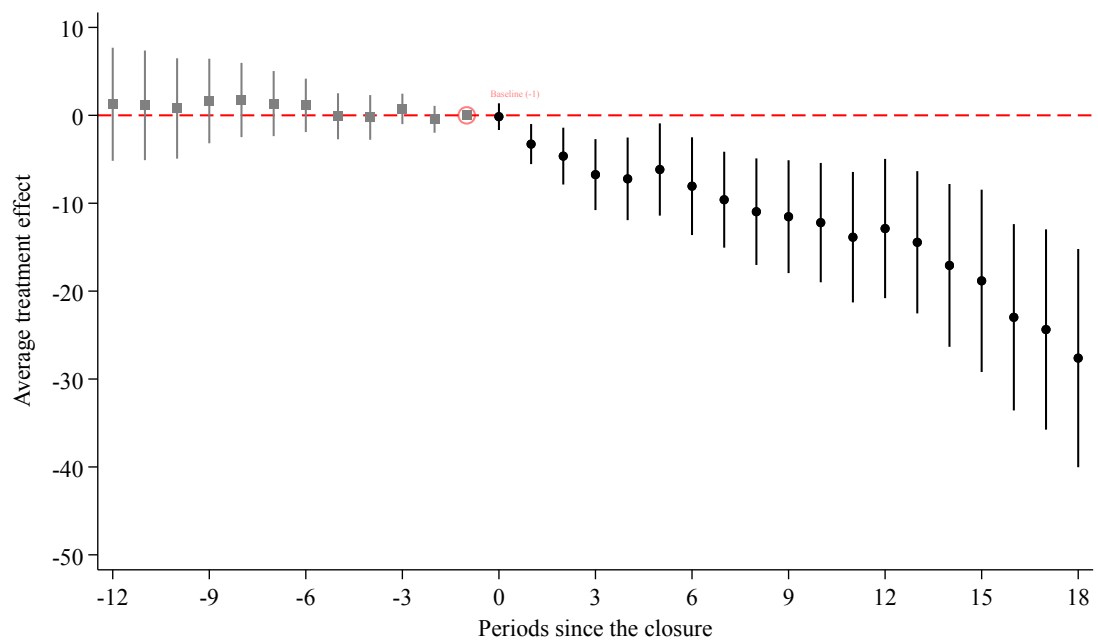


Figure A.7 Event-study (control group: not-yet treated)

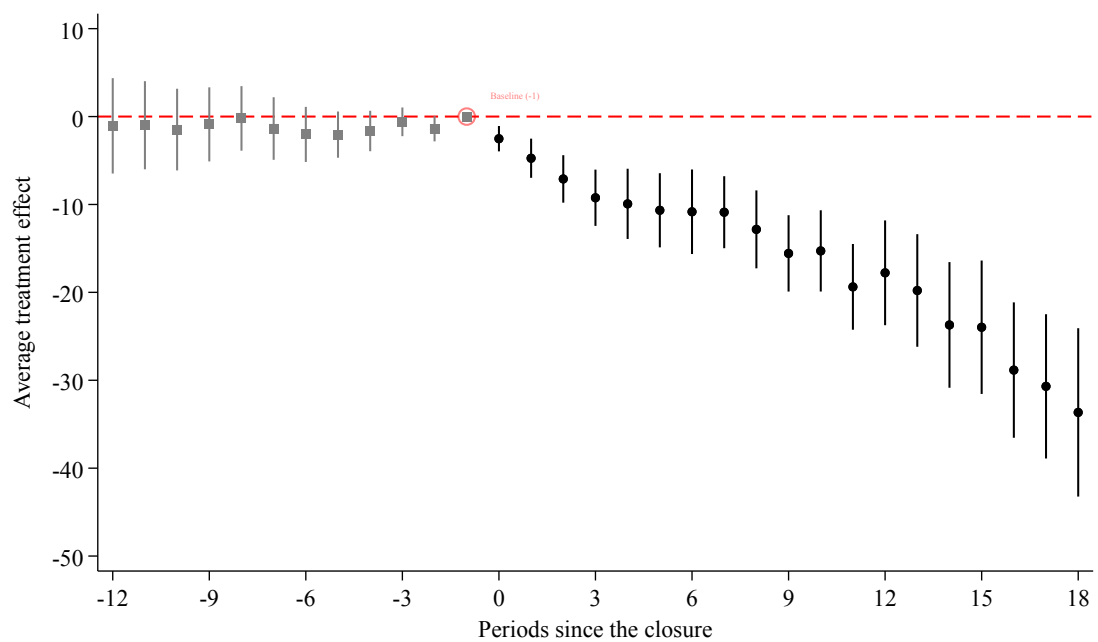


Figure A.8 Event-study (all periods in the sample)

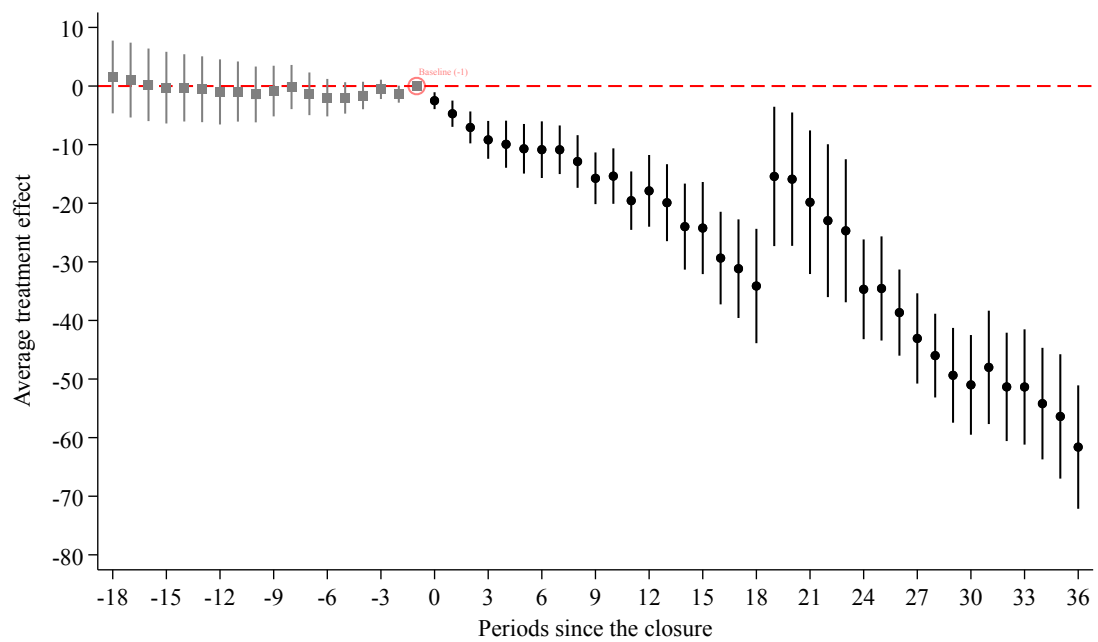
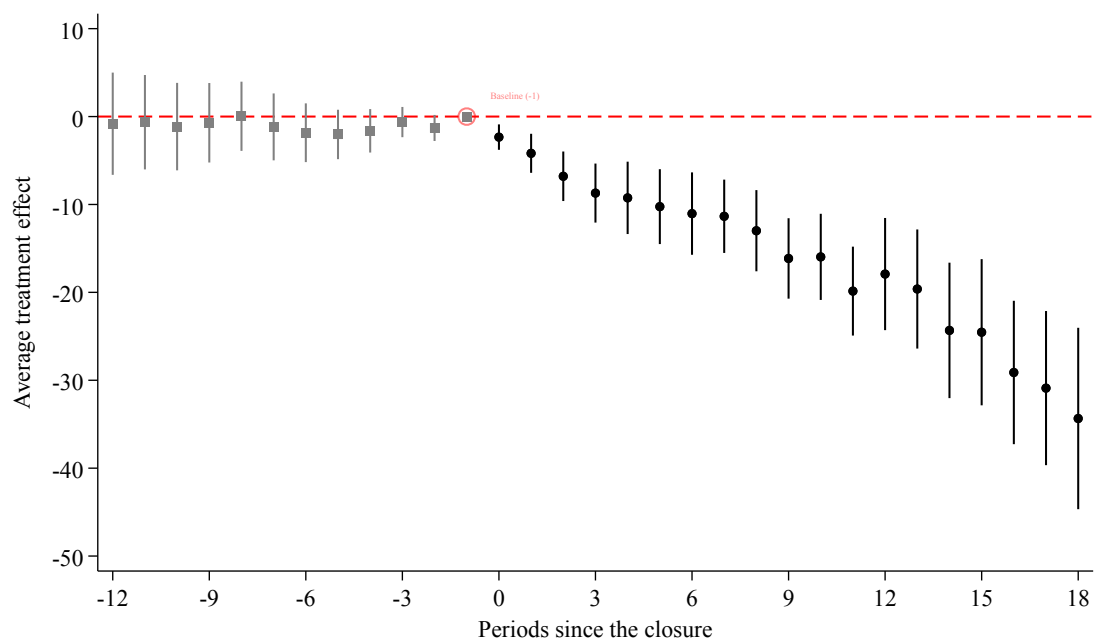


Figure A.9 Event-study (removing new dwelling projects)



APPENDIX B

B.1 Survey Questions

Note: The survey was conducted in Turkish, and the questions presented here are unofficial translations.

S33 In politics, people sometimes talk about left and right. Where would you place yourself on the scale where 0 represents the far LEFT and 10 represents the far RIGHT?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Do not know 99

S36 Which party do you feel close to?

1. CHP
2. AKP
3. MHP
4. İYİ Parti
5. YSP / HDP
90. Other:
99. Do not know

S37 Do you feel very close to this party, a little close, or not so close?

1. Very close
2. A little close
3. Not very close
99. Do not know

S47 Which candidate did you vote for in the first round on May 14, 2023?

1. Kılıçdaroğlu
2. Erdoğan
3. İnce

4. Oğan
98. Did not vote
99. Do not know / No answer

Refugee Policy Scale We want to learn your thoughts on the stance taken by the candidates of the ruling and opposition parties regarding refugee policies during the election period. Now imagine a scale where 0 means “too soft on refugees” and 10 means “very hard on refugees.”

												Do not know
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	99	

S53 Generally speaking, where would you place Erdoğan’s position on this scale?

S54 And, where would you place Kılıçdaroğlu’s position on this scale?

S55 Finally, where would you place your own position on this scale?

S169 Sex of respondent:

1. Male
2. Female
99. Do not know

S170 Year of birth: (99 = Do not know)

S171 Education level:

1. No formal education
2. Attended but did not finish primary school
3. Primary school graduate
4. Attended but did not finish middle school
5. Middle school / elementary graduate
6. Attended but did not finish high school
7. High school graduate
8. Attended but did not finish tertiary education

9. University graduate
10. Master's or doctoral graduate
99. Do not know

S189 Regardless of how often you pray, how religious do you consider yourself?
On a scale where 0 means “not at all religious” and 10 means “very religious.”

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Do not know 99

B.2 Summary Statistics

Due to the varying effective sample sizes across models, the summary statistics are provided for each table, with the corresponding table listed in the reference column.

Table B.1 Summary statistics

For Kılıcdaroğlu (Spatial Distance _{ij} where $j = 0$)						
Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	N	Reference
Linear Function	-2.79	2.66	-10	0	1499	Table 4.1
Quadratic Function	-14.84	24.56	-100	0	1499	Table 4.1
Linear Function (Mean)	-2.82	1.4	-6.15	-0.15	1499	Table 4.1
Directional Function	3.48	11.04	-24.75	30.25	1499	Table 4.1
Linear Function	-5.75	3.45	-10	0	1417	Table 4.2
Party Identification	0.19	0.4	0	1	1417	Table 4.2
Linear Function (Expert)	0.95	1.34	-1.82	1.82	1553	Table B.3
Proximity _{Migration Issue}	2.69	2.47	0	10	1252	Table B.4
Proximity _{L-R}	3.6	1.98	0.5	6.5	1252	Table B.4
For Erdoğan (Spatial Distance _{ij} where $j = 1$)						
Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	N	Reference
Linear Function	-5.76	3.46	-10	0	1499	Table 4.1
Quadratic Function	-45.17	37.08	-100	0	1499	Table 4.1
Linear Function (Mean)	-5.65	2.32	-7.69	-0.31	1499	Table 4.1
Directional Function	-8.19	13.12	-24.75	30.25	1499	Table 4.1
Linear Function	-5.75	3.45	-10	0	1417	Table 4.2
Party Identification	0.3	0.46	0	1	1417	Table 4.2
Linear Function (Expert)	-4.17	1.99	-5.97	-0.03	1553	Table B.3
Proximity _{Migration Issue}	5.76	3.47	0	10	1252	Table B.4
Proximity _{L-R}	3.66	2.77	0.14	8.14	1252	Table B.4
For both (Spatial Distance _{ij} where $j \in \{0, 1\}$)						
Education Level	2.62	0.88	1	4	2834	Table 4.2
Sex	1.46	0.5	1	2	2834	Table 4.2
Age	44.19	15.93	18	90	2834	Table 4.2
Self-reported Religiosity	7.23	2.26	0	10	2834	Table 4.2

B.3 Robustness Check

Table B.2 Chapel Hill expert evaluation

Party	Vote (%)	Immigration Position
AKP	35.61	2.79
CHP	25.33	7.36
MHP	10.07	5.79
İYİ	9.69	8.50
DEM	8.90	3.30
YRP	2.81	6.75
TiP	1.73	4.60

Candidate positions (Erdoğan: $\bar{\varphi}$, Kılıçdaroğlu: $\bar{\theta}$) are calculated by weighting the positions of the parties within their respective alliances and are then inserted into Equation 4.2.

$$(B.1) \quad \begin{aligned} \bar{\varphi} &= \frac{AKP_{vote} AKP_{\varphi} + MHP_{vote} MHP_{\varphi}}{AKP_{vote} + MHP_{vote}} \\ \bar{\theta} &= \frac{CHP_{vote} CHP_{\theta} + İYIP_{vote} İYIP_{\theta}}{CHP_{vote} + İYIP_{vote}} \end{aligned}$$

Table B.3 Conditional-logit estimates of spatial utility function

Pr(Choice)	Model 1 Linear Function
Proximity	0.18*** (0.03)
Within-SD Change	0.3
Within-SD Odds-Ratio	1.35
Control Variables	X
N	3106
Log Likelihood	-2.50
AIC	9.00
BIC	21.08

◇ Standard errors are in parentheses. Post-survey weights are applied.

◇ Two-tailed tests. † $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table B.4 Conditional-logit estimates with alternative issues

	Additive	Multiplicative
Proximity _{Migration Issue}	-0.27*** (0.04)	-0.23** (0.07)
Proximity _{L-R}	-0.49*** (0.03)	-0.44*** (0.08)
Proximity _{Migration Issue} $\times$ P _{L-R}		-0.01 (0.02)
Education Level	-0.57** (0.19)	-0.57** (0.19)
Sex	0.48† (0.27)	0.49† (0.27)
Age	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Self-reported Religiosity	0.16* (0.07)	0.16* (0.07)
Constant	0.71 (0.95)	0.67 (0.97)
N	2504	2504
Log Likelihood	-0.86	-0.86
AIC	15.72	17.72
BIC	56.50	64.32

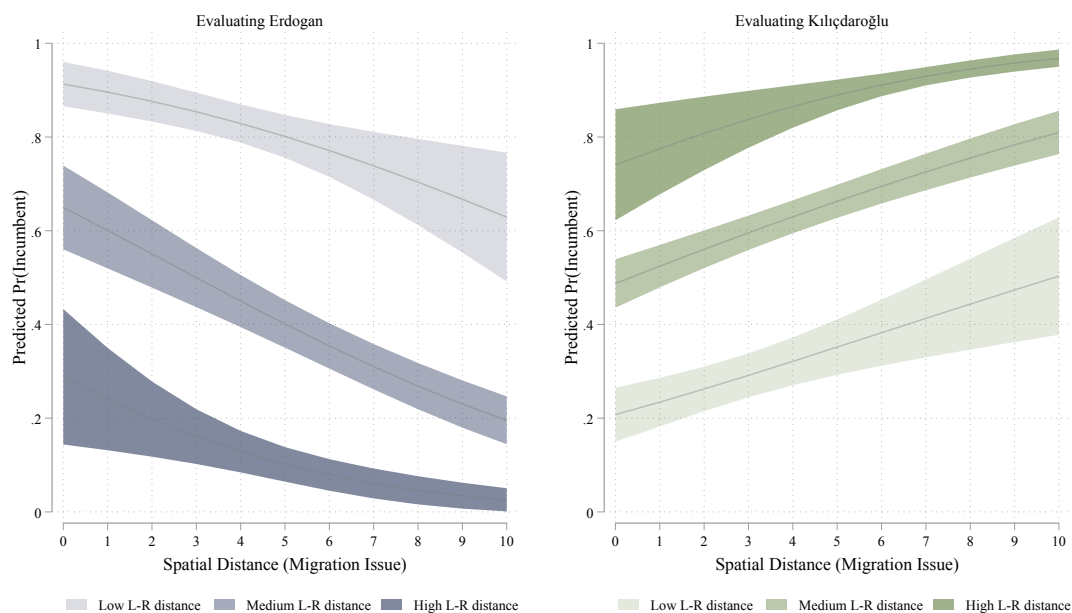
◇ Standard errors are in parentheses. Post-survey weights are applied.

◇ Two-tailed tests. † $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Figure B.1 shows the predicted probabilities of choosing the incumbent based on respondents' evaluations of both Erdoğan and Kılıçdaroğlu, following Stoetzer and Zittlau (2015)'s discussion of non-separable preferences. Only the available candidate placements in the survey are included in the preference set. The candidates' left-right positions are derived from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey. Erdoğan and Kılıçdaroğlu are positioned at 8.14 and 3.51, respectively, on an 11-point scale where 0 indicates the extreme left and 11 the extreme right.

The results confirm that traditional left-right positioning conditions the role of congruence in migration policy preferences. Respondents with high ideological distance on the left-right axis ($L-R = 11$) already show low baseline support for a candidate, but this support drops to below 5% when the distance on migration policy increases. In contrast, low ideological distance ($L-R = 0$) functions as an anchor and mitigates the effect of migration issue distance. The strongest effect is observed among respondents with medium left-right distance ($L-R = 6$), where predicted probabilities vary by nearly 50 percentage points between extreme distance and perfect overlap on migration policy.

Figure B.1 Predicted probability of vote choice | Non-separability of preferences



The **opposition-bloc** variable equals 1 for every row that belongs to a respondent who voted for Kılıçdaroğlu in the first-round presidential election. Because that vote does not vary across the two rows of the respondent's choice set, it is case-specific (constant within each respondent). **Party identification**, in contrast, equals 1 only when the party the respondent feels close to matches the candidate in the current row. Since it can be 1 for one candidate and 0 for the other, it is alternative-specific. Conditional-logit estimation exploits only within-case variation. A purely case-specific variable therefore drops out of the likelihood unless it is interacted with an alternative-specific predictor. For that reason the **opposition-bloc** variable is entered only through its interaction with the proximity variable.

Table B.5 Conditional-logit estimates of spatial utility function | Incumbent vs. opposition blocs

	Model 1)
Proximity _{Migration Issue}	-0.05** (0.02)
Opposition Bloc $\times$ Proximity _{Migration Issue}	0.86*** (0.12)
Education Level	-0.52*** (0.13)
Sex	-0.10 (0.21)
Age	-0.00 (0.01)
Self-reported Religiosity	0.25*** (0.05)
Constant	1.23† (0.67)
N	2834
Log Likelihood	-1.06
AIC	16.11
BIC	57.76

◇ Standard errors are in parentheses. Post-survey weights are applied.

◇ Two-tailed tests. † $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table B.6 Logistic regression estimates with difference in proximity

Pr(Vote for Erdoğan)	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	Base Model	with Controls	Party-Identification
Difference in Proximity	0.30*** (0.03)	0.30*** (0.03)	0.28*** (0.04)
Education Level		-0.54*** (0.11)	-0.49** (0.16)
Sex		0.03 (0.17)	0.20 (0.23)
Age		-0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Self-reported Religiosity		0.26*** (0.04)	0.26*** (0.05)
Millet Partisan			-3.85*** (0.55)
Cumhur Partisan			3.74*** (0.67)
Millet Partisan $\times$ Difference in Proximity			-0.14† (0.08)
Cumhur Partisan $\times$ Difference in Proximity			-0.16 (0.13)
Constant	0.88*** (0.12)	0.59 (0.55)	-0.80 (0.81)
N	1499	1417	1417
Log Likelihood	-1.94	-1.67	-0.92
AIC	7.88	15.34	21.83
BIC	18.51	46.88	74.40

◇ Standard errors are in parentheses. Post-survey weights are applied.

◇ Two-tailed tests. † $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$