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Buying Support without

Brokers: Conditional

Cash Transfers in

Turkey and Argentina

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**Buying Support without
Brokers: Conditional
Cash Transfers in
Turkey and Argentina**

by

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Report

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Dedication

To my brother, my mother, and the memory of my aunt

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Abstract

Buying Support without Brokers: Conditional Cash Transfers in Turkey and Argentina

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2015

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Abstract: This master's report examines how the implementation of conditional cash transfer (CCT) programs, which allocate benefits according to objective poverty criteria, affect entrenched patterns of clientelism, that is, the long-established provision of social benefits for political-electoral purposes. By analyzing two "most different" cases, Turkey and Argentina, the thesis probes the explanatory power of three major approaches in political science. Culturalism predicts that the traditional values underlying clientelism will corrode CCT implementation and lead to the distribution of the new benefits as political favors. Constructivism, by contrast, expects the modern, advanced principles embodied in CCTs sooner or later to create pressures for the transformation of traditional social programs and the abandonment of clientelism. But my extensive field research shows that neither of these approaches is convincing. Instead, non-clientelistic CCTs and traditional clientelistic programs exist side by side. This finding provides support for a rational-choice institutionalist approach that highlights the political-electoral incentives for politicians to target some constituencies with traditional clientelistic programs while

appealing to others with modern, non-clientelistic CCTs. Moreover, poorer voters have incentives to obtain benefits in whatever way they are offered, entering into traditional exchange relationships to obtain clientelistic benefits while simultaneously complying with the objective criteria and conditions for receiving CCTs.

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Introduction

The politics of distribution, especially in the developing world, is replete with stories of clientelistic exchanges between politicians and specific constituents in which constituents' receipt of a benefit is contingent upon their political support (Fox 1994; Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007; Magaloni, Díaz-Cayeros and Estévez 2007; Scott 1972; Stokes 2007). The essential features of clientelism contrast starkly with the basic tenets of a rights-enhancing policy orientation. The unequal, particularistic, and vertical relationship between political officials and constituents central to clientelism is antithetical to the concept of democratic citizenship, since constituents forfeit their political autonomy in order to gain access to distributive programs.¹

In recent decades, however, many developing countries have begun to implement unique and innovative social welfare programs known as conditional cash transfers (hereafter CCTs) against the backdrop of traditional clientelist politics. These programs aim to reduce poverty by transferring money to low-income individuals on the condition that they send their children to school and take them for regular check-ups at health centers. In theory, CCTs are centralized, bureaucratically administered, and based on

1 Following Guillermo O'Donnell, I define citizens as "carriers of rights and obligations that derive from their membership in a polity, and [who] hold personal and legal autonomy and, consequently, responsibility for their own actions" (O'Donnell 1999, 305). The status of full citizenship, therefore, entails the attainment of universal political rights, a guarantee of civil rights and social entitlements, including the right to have access to the educational system and social services through the rule of law, and a rigorous network of accountability (Marshall 1950; O'Donnell 1999). Clientelism is therefore viewed as contradictory to the basic notion of citizenship, which is premised on universal rights and entitlements rather than personal and arbitrary favors.

objective eligibility criteria. Such cash transfer programs currently operate in at least 45 countries throughout the developing world, including several in Latin America and the Middle East, and provide cash to roughly 110 million families (Hanlon, Barrientos, and Hulme 2010).

Incumbent political parties' widespread CCT implementation, especially in countries like Turkey and Argentina that have pervasive clientelism, can result in one of three outcomes. First, the adoption of the programs can perpetuate firmly-established clientelistic practices, if traditionally clientelist parties manage to use the new benefits in exchange for political support. Second, CCTs can achieve distribution of benefits based on citizenship rights, coexisting side-by-side with extant clientelistic practices. Third, CCTs can improve overall social assistance distribution through spillover effects to other programs which lead to the purging of clientelist intermediation. This paper examines which outcome best describes the changes instilled in society by CCTs. Do clientelistic politicians corrupt CCTs' positive characteristics? Or do the programs bring about real change, either by introducing certain non-clientelistic practices or by transforming the entire nature of social assistance for the poor?

The current paper proceeds as follows: I first discuss the design features of CCTs and lay out the expectations of three basic paradigms in political science: culturalism, rational choice institutionalism (RCI), and constructivism, which give rise to the three hypotheses just mentioned. Then I explain the case selection of Turkey and Argentina. In the following section, I present the empirical findings from the case studies. I argue that

clientelistic and non-clientelistic programs in Turkey and Argentina coexist as a result of the strategic calculations of incumbent political leaders. These findings support a rational choice explanation and challenge the assumptions of culturalism and constructivism. The final section discusses the substantive significance and implications of the results.

Theory and Hypotheses

As conceived by the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) that promote them, CCT programs differ from the traditional clientelistic allocation of social services. CCTs possess several features that differentiate them from broker-mediated, clientelistic exchanges, which are contingent upon recipients' electoral support. By design, CCTs are regularized and guided by objective criteria rather than being ad-hoc, non-regular, and discretionary like clientelistic forms of social assistance. Second, there is a conditionality attached to the programs such that the continuation of benefits hinges on recipients' compliance with pre-specified criteria, especially regular school attendance and health clinic check-ups for children, including receipt of all childhood vaccinations. Accordingly, a CCT recipient loses her benefit when she does not fulfill these conditions. Presumably, the receipt of the benefit depends not on the beneficiary's vote choice but on the fulfillment of the income eligibility and conditionality criteria. Third, CCTs allocate direct, non-mediated cash transfers to poor people. Recipient mothers can go directly to local bank branches or post offices to withdraw their payments by showing their IDs or bankcards. This feature of the CCT is meant to prevent the intervention of a political party broker in the disbursement of the benefit. Finally, there is a toll-free phone service in which citizens can ask questions about the program, the application process, and payments and receive information. As with the direct distribution of CCTs, this bureaucratic problem-solving mechanism associated with the CCT should hinder the interference of political party brokers because bureaucratically administered social policy offices, rather than political party branches, are in charge of solving recipients' problems

concerning their CCT payments. The formal design features of the CCTs diminish the likelihood of mediation and thus the possibility that benefits will be offered by party brokers as part of a clientelistic bargain.

Will the formal institutional features of CCTs supersede the entrenched clientelistic practices and regulate distribution in a non-clientelistic fashion? Or will these programs lead to even more transformative and permanent changes within these societies? For example, once normatively superior CCTs are established, will the rights-based design features of these programs spill over to existing clientelistic practices and alter the logic of social assistance distribution? Three important schools of thought in political science address these questions from different perspectives, from which the current paper's three rival hypotheses are derived.

Hypothesis 1: Entrenched clientelistic practices will prevail over the formal design of the CCTs. Accordingly, CCTs will end up being administered in a clientelistic way.

First, a culturalist perspective emphasizes the strength of entrenched beliefs, customs, and expectations that are internalized and extensively shared among individuals in a society (Ross 2009, 158). According to culturalism, it is hard to change these deep-rooted habits and practices simply by changing formal institutions. Therefore, a cultural paradigm questions the role institutions play in shaping outcomes. Formal institutional rules that do not consider the enduring practices and value systems in societies are seen as unsustainable (Inglehart 1997; Inglehart and Carballo 1997; Lichbach 2003). Culturalism, thus, concludes that it is necessary to turn to shared cultural meanings to

understand the true political processes and dynamics in a society (Lagos 1997). In other words, entrenched cultural habits will corrode new formal institutions.

A cultural framework hypothesizes that the introduction of formal institutional reforms such as CCTs is insufficient to transform the dominant, underlying social practices and to bring about genuine change in political outcomes. From this perspective, politicians and local brokers in traditionally clientelistic societies will find ways to manipulate the design of the conditional cash transfer programs in order to safeguard their entrenched powers and advantages, offering CCTs in exchange for votes. In this scenario, preexisting clientelistic practices will dominate over formal institutional changes. In other words, even if centrally designed public assistance programs with clear criteria are introduced, the established political elites and local patrons will subvert non-clientelist design efforts and will not change their grounded practices. Party brokers who offer material inducements to voters in exchange for their support will offer the conditional cash transfers as part of a similar clientelistic bargain. Voters, who are used to receiving clientelist inducements, will view the CCTs as contingent on reciprocity. Clientelistic traditions and attitudes, rather than the formal rules, will shape the behavior of the actors in these societies. Deeply rooted clientelistic patterns will prevail over formal institutional changes, thereby hindering an abrupt policy reform in CCT allocation.

Hypothesis 2: Conditional cash transfers will be distributed in a programmatic way in line with the formal institutional design of the program. However, politicians will continue to distribute traditional programs in a clientelistic manner.

In contrast to a cultural perspective, which attributes a causal role to deeply rooted habits and practices, rational choice institutionalism (RCI) highlights the importance of institutions as they create incentives and constraints for self-interested behavior. Institutions establish the context in which political actors determine their strategies and follow their interests (Ames 2001). Therefore, while culturalists are pessimistic about the effects of formal institutions, rational choice institutionalists are moderately optimistic about their impact. They postulate that the design of institutions provides information and incentives for societal actors. Thus, utility-maximizing individuals respond pragmatically to the specific incentives and constraints of each program, easily adjusting to their particular features. According to this calculus approach, since people aim to maximize their interests, rather than adhere to a coherent set of principles or values, they will flexibly adapt to different program designs. Preferences, however, are unaffected by institutions. Because preferences are exogenous, institutional reforms in one particular sphere will not generate profound changes in other spheres or transform actors' underlying normative orientations (Hall and Taylor 1996; Shepsle 1989; Weingast 2002).

According to this framework, politicians and local brokers will act in accordance with the formal institutional design of the conditional cash transfer programs rather than seek to undermine them. The incentive structure of the cash transfer programs constrains

brokers and politicians, preventing them from meddling with the bureaucratic process. However, self-interested party brokers are able to use traditional programs in a clientelistic fashion and allocate resources to their clientele contingent on each beneficiary's support. Voters will realize their receipt of CCT benefits does not hinge on political support and will adjust their behavior based on the design of the CCT program. This will remain distinct from clientelistic exchanges. Institutional reforms in one sphere will not serve to reorient the underlying normative beliefs of actors toward a more rights-based perspective. Instead, programmatic CCTs and traditional clientelistic programs will coexist in these societies, and actors will follow the corresponding rules to gain access to each of these programs.

Hypothesis 3: The introduction of rights-based cash transfers in one sphere of welfare provisioning will lead actors to redefine their interests and change their behaviors, encouraging reforms in traditional particularistic programs.

As yet another school of thought, constructivists argue that ideational factors and changing political norms, rather than rational incentives, shape people's policy expectations and behavior (Finnemore and Sikkink 2001; Hall 1989; Sikkink 1991). Since identities and interests are not objectively grounded in material forces, understanding interests is much more complex than envisioned by rationalist paradigms. Thus, widely shared normative self-understanding and epistemic interpretations of the material world, rather than instrumental rationality, shape policy choices and outcomes (Adler 1997; Ruggie 1998). Principled beliefs do not merely act as "theoretical fillers"

but can trigger actors to redefine their interests and change their behaviors (Blyth 1997). Intersubjective norms channel and regulate behavior by restricting the alternatives of choice and constraining actions. Therefore, idea and norm shifts are the major channels for system transformation (Finnemore 1996; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Risse and Sikkink 1999).

According to this model, rights-based values will establish themselves and eventually proliferate because of their normative superiority over particularistic and clientelistic policies. The constructivist paradigm suggests that the introduction of conditional cash transfers, which are universally oriented, programmatic, and normatively superior to clientelistic programs, will transform the underlying normative orientations of local brokers, politicians, and bureaucrats in charge of social policy provisioning as well as of beneficiaries receiving CCTs. This normative shift toward programmatic distribution will encourage bureaucrats to redesign other traditional programs to be compatible with the principles of a rights-enhancing policy framework. This changed normative consciousness might also propel CCT beneficiaries to demand similar programmatic and rights-based plans that cannot be conditioned on political support, triggering a spillover effect of rights-based plans delivered through the social assistance framework. The introduction of a principled social program will bring about the demise of inferior clientelistic programs.

Justification of Case Selection

Two principles govern my case selection. First, I select two countries with rampant clientelistic practices, which are “least likely” cases for a CCT to be administered in a proper manner. Second, I select two “most different” cases, which diverge across all analytically relevant variables except the crucial similarity of their CCT creation. If CCTs have similar outcomes in these widely different settings, my findings can claim broader applicability. A comparative analysis of Turkey and Argentina best fits this case selection logic.

First, the literature on both countries highlights their rampant clientelism, especially the strong clientelistic networks between the parties in power (Turkey’s AKP and Argentina’s FPV) and the poor (Auyero 1999; Auyero 2000; Bugra and Candas 2011; Gunes-Ayata 1994; Kemahlioglu 2012; Levitsky 2003; Nichter 2008; Ozbudun 1981; Stokes 2005; Yagci 2009). Scholarship on Argentine social programs demonstrates that most such programs tend to be distributed in a clientelistic and discretionary fashion (Calvo and Murillo 2004; Giraudy 2007; Lodola 2003; Nichter 2008; Stokes 2005; Weitz-Shapiro 2006). Studies of social assistance programs other than CCTs in Turkey attest to the predominance of clientelistic dynamics similar to those of Argentina (Aydogan 2009; Yoltar 2007). Furthermore, the AKP has forged strong clientelistic linkages with poor voters (Arikan-Akdag 2013; White 2012). Thus, given the predominance of clientelism in Turkey and Argentina and the heavy involvement of

incumbent political parties in clientelistic exchanges, these two countries are “least likely” cases for a CCT to be administered in a proper fashion.

Second, Turkey and Argentina also are “most different systems”: They are maximally different across all analytically relevant variables except the independent variable of interest (i.e., CCT creation). For instance, the two countries are located in different world regions, have disparate cultures, and are governed by different institutional setups (i.e., federalism in Argentina and a unitary system in Turkey). In addition, the ideologies of the incumbent parties differ significantly; the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey is a center-right conservative party with a neoliberal economic agenda, while the Front for Victory coalition in Argentina (FPV) is dominated by the left wing of the Peronist Justicialist Party (PJ).² At the same time, there are two key similarities: their CCTs and widespread clientelistic exchanges that the incumbent parties have with the poor. This case-selection technique allows me to test whether CCT creation will result in similar outcomes in these two different settings (Bennett and Elman 2006; Gerring 2001; Levy 2002; Przeworski and Teune 1982; Seawright and Gerring 2008).

² Aytac and Onis (2014) categorize AKP as fitting a right-wing populism while juxtaposing this with FPV’s left-wing populism. On the other hand, the authors analyze the expansion of social assistance programs in Turkey and Argentina, specifically highlighting the introduction of CCTs in both countries.

The Political Impact of CCTs in Turkey and Argentina

In the clientelistic settings just described, can CCTs distribute their benefits in a non-clientelistic fashion? Can CCTs exert contagion effects and induce existing social programs to become less clientelistic? The current research suggests that a rational institutionalist explanation of the Conditional Cash Transfers in Turkey and Argentina is most persuasive. The evidence from the case studies shows that actors are savvy and adjust to the rules of the game. As a result, CCTs operate in non-clientelistic ways yet exist side-by-side with established clientelistic programs. Both politicians and citizens rationally adapt to these different institutional settings, playing simultaneously by the divergent rules of these two “games.”

The present comparison of two poverty-relief programs, the Conditional Cash Transfer (*Şartlı Nakit Transferi - ŞNT*) in Turkey and the Universal Child Allowance for Social Protection (*Asignación Universal por Hijo para Protección Social - AUH*) in Argentina, demonstrates that political parties known for their clientelistic histories *did* implement non-mediated and non-clientelistic social assistance programs in order to attract poor voters. Yet, I also show that the introduction of CCTs has failed to exert a spillover effect and prompt a transformation of established clientelistic programs, as constructivism hopes. Instead, Turkey’s AKP and Argentina’s FPV have continued to use existing social programs for patronage-based practices in order to appeal to their poor electorates. Consequently, party leaders apply two different logics, clientelistic and non-clientelistic, side-by-side. Similarly, citizens pragmatically seek benefits in whatever way

they can be obtained: in a clientelistic fashion here yet a non-clientelistic fashion there. Thus, I develop a rational theory in order to account for the coexistence of clientelistic and non-clientelistic programs in Turkey and Argentina, calling into question the expectations of culturalist and constructivist paradigms.

Culturalism Challenged: Eliminating Brokers by Design

Contrary to culturalist predictions, the ruling AKP and the FPV did not interfere with the non-partisan allocation of the CCTs and did not manipulate these programs in order to make clientelistic bargains with constituents in exchange for their political support. I use the results of the CCT Impact Assessments, findings from a 2012 Americas Barometer Survey, and my field observations in Istanbul and Buenos Aires to provide evidence of the non-clientelistic allocation of the CCTs.

I rely on two questions asked in the CCT Impact Assessments to assess whether entrenched clientelism corrupted the design features of the CCT in Turkey. I first examine responses to a question asking who referred poor families to the CCT. If the majority of the respondents mentioned political parties, party brokers, or party representatives, this would indicate that ingrained clientelistic patterns prevailed over the institutional characteristics of the CCTs. According to the household survey (Ahmed et al. 2006) and the Second Qualitative and Anthropological Study (Adato et al. 2007), recipients cited schoolteachers, neighbors and relatives, neighborhood headmen (*muhtars*), and foundations as the primary information sources on the program rather than political parties and party brokers (Ahmed et al. 2007, vii). Therefore, these results conflict with the expectations of the culturalist paradigm.

In line with the results of the CCT Impact Assessment, a mother receiving CCT benefits in Bagcilar, a low-income neighborhood in Istanbul, provided a similar story about the primary source of information and the CCT application process:

I receive child money. I heard about this assistance from my neighbors talking about it. I went to the Bagcilar Social Solidarity Foundation. Then, I went and received the money from the Post Office. I kept receiving my payments, and I did not face any problem receiving my payments. I receive child money every two months.³

The effort to allocate the CCTs according to need is an indicator that this social assistance program is not distributed in a clientelistic or partisan fashion. The findings of the Impact Assessments demonstrate that the CCT is a well-targeted program. Bureaucratic criteria rather than partisan connections constitute the main factor that determines eligibility for the CCT. This finding is also at odds with the expectations of a culturalist paradigm. According to the findings of the Second Qualitative and Anthropological Study (Adato et al. 2007), poverty stands out as the major selection criterion cited by most beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries (Ahmed et al. 2007, 41). Terry Roopnaraine, who worked on the qualitative component of the CCT evaluation in Turkey prepared by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), echoed these findings:

A majority cited poverty as the main criterion of selection: Very few mentioned corruption or nepotism as the major selection criterion. About seventy percent thought that the selection process was fair. Errors of exclusion were reported as more of an issue than errors of inclusion.⁴

³ Interview conducted by Elif Ozdemir and the author in Bagcilar on May 13, 2013. Among the recipients in Turkey, the CCT is known as child money (*çocuk parası*). Social Solidarity Foundations are responsible for distributing CCTs in Turkey.

⁴ Interview conducted by Gokce Baykal and the author, May 10, 2013.

Jeanine Braithwaite, former senior economist at the World Bank, responsible for preparing the first draft of the Proxy Means Testing Scoring Formula, underscores how the targeting mechanism of the CCT was intended to eliminate politicization and discretion in choosing CCT recipients:

I was somewhat concerned about discretion; however, I knew most of the deserving poor were going to be captured by the scoring formula. The scoring formula was unusually well targeted. My concern was that, before the CCT, there had had to be a high level of discretion, because they did not really have any written procedures: they did not have any monitorable way to discuss who would be in and out. With the Proxy Means Testing Scoring Formula, there was now a paper record that showed you how many children, household assets, and sheep, or goats, etc. the applicant had.⁵

My interviewees echoed the view that the CCTs are distributed based on need and poverty rather than partisan connections. A woman in Bagcilar responded to the question of why she is receiving the CCT money as follows: “I receive this money because I am not in good condition and because my husband is not with me. I am needy.”⁶

Furthermore, bureaucrats at the Ministry of Family and Social Policy in Turkey suggested that CCT recipients are aware of the toll-free number and use it to ask questions about why their applications are rejected. In other words, the applicants use this bureaucratic mechanism rather than asking favors from party brokers to solve their problems with the CCT.

⁵ Interview conducted by Gokce Baykal and the author, June 6, 2013.

⁶ Interview conducted by Elif Ozdemir and the author, May 13, 2013.

Employees try to respond to these calls, either by checking whether the applicants have social security and whether they have an asset such as a house and are thus deemed ineligible for the CCT. Citizens also use 144 to ask questions about their payments. Employees respond to citizens' calls by telling them that their payments are ready and they can withdraw the money from a Ziraat Bank branch or at post offices by showing their IDs.⁷

My research in Argentina yielded similar findings. An Americas Barometer Survey (Lodola and Seligson 2012) shows that the AUH is distributed according to predetermined economic criteria. Contrary to culturalist expectations, receiving the AUH is not dependent on any political or electoral factors. Neither petitioning a mayor nor participating in a form of protest or mobilization influences access to the AUH. The program is well targeted in its allocation and not driven by a political or electoral logic (Lodola and Seligson 2012; Lodola and Mangonnet 2013). These are important results, given the long history of misusing social goods provisioning for electoral purposes in Argentina.

The fieldwork conducted in low-income neighborhoods of Buenos Aires corroborates these findings. Respondents stated that the AUH signaled a rupture with the political allocation of previous social assistance programs. One of the interviewees, a resident in La Cava, stated the following:

The *Plan Trabajar* and *Plan Jefes y Jefas de Hogares* were used politically. Families benefiting from those plans had to respond to the demands of the *Piquetero* movements;

⁷ Interview with Ahmet Fatih Ortakaya, family and social policy expert, conducted by the author, July 30, 2012. Ziraat Bank is a state-owned bank.

they had to protest in the streets. They were obliged to do this in order to keep the plans. The AUH is a right. It is not like, “If you do not vote for me, you will no longer have this bag of food.”⁸

Furthermore, most of my interviewees in Buenos Aires emphasized that the AUH is a right granted to children whose mothers are receiving support, rather than a favor allocated at the discretion of the Peronist Party machine in return for political support:

AUH is implemented in order to fulfill the rights of children in the areas of health and education. If you do not comply with the conditions of the AUH, then you will lose your benefit.⁹

Overall, the empirical evidence provided in the case studies calls into question the expectations of culturalism. The CCTs have remained immune from deeply ingrained clientelistic practices of the incumbent political parties in Turkey and Argentina.

⁸ Interview with Norma Arispe conducted by Marina González and the author, August 14, 2013. *Piqueteros* refer to the unemployed workers that started demonstrating in Argentina since 1997. The *Piquetero* movement gained momentum and spread throughout the country as the movement united unemployed workers in the wake of the 2001 financial crisis, forming a consistent base of support for previous president Néstor Kirchner.

⁹ Interview with Mariana Miño conducted by Marina González and the author, August 22, 2013.

Questioning Constructivism: The Persistence of Clientelism

If clientelism cannot penetrate and corrode the CCTs, as the previous section showed, then can these novel social programs over time push aside the clientelism pervading traditional social assistance? In other words, do the CCTs with their modern and advanced principles have the potential to bring about, incrementally, a broader transformation in the social assistance framework of Turkey and Argentina, as constructivism predicts?

The constructivist paradigm does not predict an immediate transformation of the social assistance framework such as the demise of clientelistic practices, which would take time: The introduction of modern social programs such as CCTs would inspire growing demands for change and sooner or later unleash pressure for a transformation. Accordingly, given the amount of time that has passed since the introduction of AUH in 2009, constructivists would have expected that there would by now be significant demands in Argentina to transform the existing clientelistic social programs. Furthermore, because more than a decade has passed since the initiation of the Turkish CCT in 2004, constructivism predicts actual efforts and, perhaps changes in the Turkish social assistance scheme. However, neither demands from lower classes in Argentina nor genuine efforts towards the dissolution of existing clientelistic programs in Turkey have emerged. Instead, as the following section shows, clientelistic practices persist relatively unaffected in both countries. The absence of demands from the lower classes in

Argentina and the lack of genuine political change in Turkey call into question the progressive hopes of constructivism.

Turkey's AKP, using its resource advantage over the opposition parties, appeals to voters largely by means of clientelistic social assistance and by offering patronage to party members. The AKP has been in power for twelve years and has had a strong presence in local politics. These advantages enable the AKP to target patronage and clientelistic benefits in order to attract voters and win their support. Party brokers have access to information about the needs of their districts, and they can easily curry favor with destitute sectors (the needy, the elderly, and the disabled) by offering material benefits. The Composite Clientelism Index prepared by Kitschelt and his team bears testimony to the governing party's dominant clientelistic practices. Accordingly, the incumbent party has the highest score in Turkey, with an index score of 3.93, where the index ranges from 1 to 4 (Kitschelt 2011).¹⁰ Interviews in low-income neighborhoods of Istanbul confirm this finding, portraying the everyday operations of the AKP's clientelistic machine. Interviews in Bagcilar, for example, revealed that citizens come to the AKP branch to ask for all kinds of favors, ranging from obtaining work permits to appealing a court decision.¹¹ Contacts at the AKP branch can also help with finding a job. Numerous citizens leave their resumes for this purpose:

¹⁰ Details of this expert survey project and datasets can be found at <https://web.duke.edu/democracy/index.html>

¹¹ The environment in the AKP Party office in Bagcilar was strikingly similar to that of an Argentine Peronist Party branch (*Unidad Básica*), as presented in Javier Auyero's influential *Poor People's*

Half of those who come here ask for employment. For example, if we know that there are employment opportunities, we would like to direct these opportunities to our party members. We inform our neighborhood party organizations. People are leaving their resumes in the neighborhood organizations. How actively they are working in these neighborhood organizations and how they have been serving the party are important in terms of providing them employment.¹²

Other interviewees mentioned AKP's distribution of patronage as a crucial tool for attracting support and highlighted that party connections increase one's likelihood of finding employment.¹³ In addition to allocating patronage, the AKP also distributes other material benefits including Turkish coffee, pens, badges, coal, furniture, washing machines, dishwashers, refrigerators, food cheques, and food boxes to win the support of voters, especially prior to elections. Neighborhood headmen underscored how the municipalities governed by the AKP and party organizations prepared lists to distribute food packages and social assistance to their party members.¹⁴ One neighborhood headman stated the following:

Politics. There was a huge influx of people in the office, asking for a variety of favors from the political party representatives.

¹² Interview with party officer at AKP Umraniye District Organization conducted by Elif Ozdemir and the author, May 21, 2013.

¹³ A neighborhood headman (*muhtar*) in Bagcilar on May 20, 2013, stated in an interview with the author "Generally, those affiliated with the AKP organizations are recruited and given employment especially for private-sector-related jobs." In a similar vein, a neighborhood headman's son in Bagcilar on May 13, 2013, stated "People who have connections with the AKP organization have no problem getting recruited or finding employment."

¹⁴ A neighborhood headman in Umraniye on May 27, 2013 stated "The AKP's women's branches prepare lists to allocate resources on the basis of party ID in a political way." On October 19, 2012, another neighborhood headman in Kartal, a low-income neighborhood in Istanbul stated "The social assistance allocated through the AKP municipalities is political. The AKP organization prepares lists and distributes social assistance to people in their own circles."

I have heard from residents of instances of the distribution of food and gold and other valuable presents by AKP officials in AKP-affiliated vehicles. These instances generally coincide with the election times.¹⁵

In Argentina, clientelism is also a tool that the FPV continues to use to appeal to voters. For example, 13.4 percent of respondents to the Americas Barometer Survey in Argentina reported to have been offered a range of material goods in exchange for their vote; this figure rose to 15.3 percent among those who voted for President Fernández de Kirchner in the 2011 elections. These figures are probably low estimates as many respondents may be unwilling to confess their participation in vote exchanges due to social desirability bias (Lodola and Seligson 2012, 243–244).

The empirical evidence gathered through this study in low-income neighborhoods in Buenos Aires supports these findings. The interviewees attested to the continuation of vote buying in these poor neighborhoods. One of the interviewees noted that La Cámpora, a political youth organization supporting the FPV, distributes material benefits and asks for reciprocity. “They oblige you to attend the organization’s meetings in exchange,”¹⁶ she stated. Furthermore, most of these exchanges take place before an election. When she was asked whether vote buying takes place in her neighborhood, she responded “There is vote buying everywhere.”¹⁷ Another interviewee elaborated further: “La Cámpora has more things to distribute, because it

¹⁵ Interview with a neighborhood headman in Kartal conducted by Sebnem Gumuscu and the author, October 19, 2012.

¹⁶ Interview with Clarissa conducted by Marina González and the author, August 19, 2013.

¹⁷ Ibid.

uses the resources of the state. This is called clientelism. They make you think that the provision is a favor that they grant rather than a right that the state is responsible for.”¹⁸

The persistence of clientelism in both countries casts doubt on constructivist hypotheses. Constructivism emphasizes the normative superiority of rights-based ideas and practices and their eventual spread over time; therefore, the theory would expect CCTs to exert a spillover effect on existing social programs. However, the creation of CCTs has not prompted a redefinition of interests among political parties providing clientelistic benefits to voters or voters receiving clientelistic benefits in exchange for political support. The introduction of the CCTs in these two countries has not engendered calls from the lower classes for the dissolution of clientelistic practices. The party machines of the AKP and the FPV continue to rely on the clientelistic distribution of material benefits as voters continue to receive these material benefits and offer for political support in exchange.

¹⁸ Interview with Silvia conducted by Marina González and the author, July 19, 2013.

A Rationalist Approach: Navigating Bureaucratic and Clientelistic Forms of Social Assistance

The empirical evidence provided above lends credence to a rationalist paradigm. The theory proposed here suggests that making use of both non-clientelistic and clientelistic programs for the poor electorate is rational from the perspective of political parties that desire to maximize their vote-winning potential. By relying on CCTs and broker-mediated clientelistic social programs side-by-side, these political parties strategically use every tool available to attract support among voters. With similar rational pragmatism, voters obtain benefits in a non-clientelistic fashion from CCTs and in clientelistic ways from traditional social programs.¹⁹

Clientelism remains useful for political leaders in Turkey and Argentina as a strategy to attract and retain support from poor voters. Accordingly, both the AKP and FPV continue to offer benefits in exchange for constituents' votes prior to elections. It is strategically important for politicians in these two countries to maintain their clientelistic party machine through the distribution of material inducements by political party brokers. This strategy is crucial among the many tools that enable leaders to garner support from impoverished citizens.

Distributing the CCTs in a non-clientelistic way is also strategically desirable for the leaders in Turkey and Argentina, since they are able to boost their popularity and

¹⁹ I would like to thank Jennifer Pribble and Juan Pablo Luna for their suggestions on distinct linkage strategies.

support and reach out to new groups by efficiently using these non-clientelistic benefits while maintaining their established clientelistic networks. Non-politicized programs are popular in the eyes of the poor electorate and, therefore, help create direct linkages between political leaders and voters. Insights from the literature suggest that these direct social assistance programs yield political rewards: They enhance the reelection bids of the politicians who are credited with initiating them (Díaz-Cayeros, Estévez, and Magaloni 2006; Fried 2012; Hunter and Power 2007; Layton and Smith 2011; Menocal 2001; Schady 2000; Zucco 2008). The following analysis will demonstrate how Turkey's AKP and Argentina's FPV systematically increased their vote shares after the introduction of these popular poverty-alleviation programs. CCTs were vital in the reelection bids of the leaders in Turkey and Argentina. Thus, traditional exchanges and non-clientelistic CCTs coexist, allowing politicians to cast as wide a net as possible.

Distribution of non-clientelistic social assistance can be better for politicians in various ways. Broker-mediated clientelism can sometimes be problematic, because brokers have latitude to defect to other political candidates. Under these circumstances, the introduction of non-clientelistic poverty-relief programs directly associated with leaders provides a more secure allocation of resources to low-income voters, which compensates for party defection among clientelistic brokers. This accounts for why Argentina's President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner made the calculated choice to implement a non-clientelistic program. Furthermore, political parties can also compete with already established clientelistic parties in their effort to attract low-income voters. The need to outcompete an established patronage machine induces governing parties to

implement non-clientelistic programs when facing rival clientelistic parties. Direct and centralized social assistance can also be used to contain more politicized groups or ease unrest within societies. These two factors explain the rational calculations behind Turkey's non-clientelistic allocation of CCT.

Even though the introduction of the Turkish CCT gained its impulse from an exogenous actor, the World Bank, the AKP used this poverty-relief program to strategically bolster its image as a promoter of social justice. The CCT was part of a World Bank-initiated Social Risk Mitigation Project (SRMP), which provided loans to Turkey right after the country's severe 2001 financial crisis. The Turkish CCT was the first regular cash transfer program to target the most vulnerable segments of society. Prior to the initiation of the World Bank-led SRMP, social assistance in Turkey was limited and was composed of ad hoc in-kind allocations (World Bank 2001, 4). The targeting mechanism was also an innovation of the Turkish CCT. The World Bank loan was given to Turkey with strict conditions, especially the establishment of the targeting mechanism to select the CCT beneficiaries.²⁰ The SRMP was introduced by a coalition government consisting of the Democratic Left Party (DSP), the Motherland Party (ANAP), and the Nationalist Action Party (MHP).

²⁰ Jeanine Braithwaite, former senior economist at the World Bank, highlighted this dimension during an e-mail exchange with the author on February 26, 2014. Braithwaite stated "The CCT was designed so that the targeting mechanism could not be manipulated by individuals or agencies. Either Turkey took the targeting as part of the package, or the loan might not have been made."

Although this project was initiated prior to the AKP's rise to power, after its victory, the AKP strategically publicized the SRMP, especially its CCT component, as an opportunity to garner support from economically disadvantaged groups. These efforts have been effective: The SRMP has proven to be a boon for the incumbent party, because various news stories referred to the project as a noteworthy accomplishment of the World Bank and the AKP. In addition, as part of the promotion scheme for the AKP, in 2006, the Project Coordination Unit for the SRMP organized the third international CCT conference in Istanbul. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, then Prime Minister and the leader of the AKP, along with more than 350 participants from various countries, attended the conference (Yilmaz Sener 2010, 102–103). As the governing AKP established ownership over the CCT, the incumbent party cemented its reputation with the poor electorate.

When the World Bank loan ended in 2006, the ruling AKP kept the program in line with the party's strategic calculations, financing it through the Social Solidarity Fund. This poverty-alleviation program was popular in the eyes of its beneficiaries, and impact assessments showed that the program had positive effects. Dismantling the program would have created a backlash among its recipients. As highlighted by one of the interviewees, "The party had seen the value of the CCT program and was aware of the extremely favorable impact evaluation findings."²¹ Furthermore, the AKP, as a savvy actor, not only continued with the program but expanded it. The World Bank's initial coverage target was to reach one million recipients. However, when the AKP government

²¹ Jeanine Braithwaite, in an email exchange with the author, February 26, 2014.

started to finance the CCT with state funds, the program grew to benefit around three million people (Esenyel 2010). Simultaneously, the amount of money allocated for the CCT payments nearly tripled.²²

In line with this electoral logic, the Turkish conditional cash transfer became one of the main themes raised by the AKP leader, then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, during his campaign speeches prior to the 2011 elections. Erdogan underscored the amount of money allocated to poor children by means of the CCT, as well as the total number of youngsters benefiting from this social assistance program, stressing his party's major policies benefiting the poor (Erdogan 2011).²³ Such speeches demonstrate the key role of the Turkish CCT in the incumbent party's campaign strategies. These efforts paid off. The AKP systematically increased its vote share in three consecutive general elections in 2002, 2007, and 2011 from 34 percent to 48 percent and 50 percent, respectively.²⁴

Traditionally clientelistic inducements will be less effective when a political party seeks to attract votes from the low-income supporters of another established clientelistic

²² See www.sosyalyardimlar.gov.tr

²³ One such example is Erdogan's election speech in Muş, a city located in Eastern Turkey: "We used to allocate Turkish Lira (TL) 20 (US\$ 9) to boys in primary school. This amount has risen to TL 30 (US\$13 US). We used to distribute TL 25 (US\$ 11) to girls in primary school. Now, it has increased to TL 35 (US\$ 15 US). The amount of money we allocate to boys and girls in secondary school has also risen from TL 35 (US\$ 15) to TL 45 (US\$ 20) and TL 45 (US\$ 20 US) to TL 55 (US\$ 25) respectively. Do you know the amount of assistance we distributed as part of the CCT in total reached 32 trillion (US\$ 14 trillion US) in Muş?" (Erdogan 2011). See <http://www.akparti.org.tr/site/haberler/basbakan-erdoganin-mus-mitinginde-yaptigi-konusmanin-tam-metni/7195#1>

²⁴ See www.ysk.gov.tr

party. This was indeed the case as the governing AKP aimed to increase its popularity in the Kurdish-populated areas of eastern and southeastern Turkey. Eastern and southeastern Turkey are the poorest regions in the country. The incumbent party's main contender in these areas is the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP).²⁵ According to the Composite Clientelism Index devised at Duke University, the BDP is the second most clientelistic party in Turkey with an index score of 3.14 (Kitschelt 2011).²⁶ Furthermore, the results of a survey conducted by KONDA Research and Consultancy, a public opinion polling company, demonstrate that the AKP and the BDP are the major parties vying for the support of the poor electorate. Under these circumstances, the likelihood that the AKP could attract the BDP supporters through traditional, broker-mediated clientelistic means is low. The results of the above-mentioned survey, however, show that about 14 percent of those who supported the BDP at the national level in the 2002 elections shifted their support to the incumbent AKP in 2007 (Yoruk 2012, 523). The allocation of the CCTs can account for this shift in support. The data on the regional distribution of the Turkish CCT as of 2009 show that around 63 percent of the CCT beneficiaries live in eastern and southeastern Turkey (Esenyel 2010). The non-clientelistic distribution of the CCTs gave the AKP a novel opportunity to bypass the BDP's party machine and form a non-mediated link with voters in the region.

²⁵ At the time, the name of the party was the Democratic Society Party (DTP); it was closed in 2009.

²⁶ The author observed the problem-solving nature of the BDP party branch during fieldwork in Istanbul. The visit to the political party branch of the BDP in Bagcilar's Demirkapi neighborhood, which has a large Kurdish population, indicated that, despite the resource limitations, the party seeks to find jobs for their unemployed partisans by using their connections in the textile business, distributes food supplies, and helps solve the daily problems of their supporters.

Consequently, a close comparison of the governing AKP's vote share in cities of eastern and southeastern Turkey in 2002 and 2007 showcases the remarkable increase in the party's support in the region. This trend coincided with a decline in the regional support for the BDP. Although the AKP vote share declined in 2011 compared to its level in 2007, even this level was much higher than its initial support in the 2002 general elections.²⁷

Moreover, as the extant literature shows, social policy can be used to ease tension amongst politicized groups (Bohn 2011; Carrión 2006; Yoruk 2012). The introduction of the Turkish CCT occurred at a very opportune time, as the newly elected AKP administration sought to ease the ethnic problem in the country by reaching out to the Kurds.²⁸ In the words of Mesut Yegen, "The way the AKP promised to show Kurds the compassionate and service-rendering face of the state enhanced the party's appeal to Kurds" (Yegen 2011, 160). The allocation of the CCTs, as regular, non-mediated income subsidy programs can be depicted as a calculating strategy by the AKP to ease the unrest in the region and please Kurdish citizens.

Similar to the Turkish case, Argentine President Fernández de Kirchner's strategic calculations explain the introduction of a non-clientelistic program in Argentina. The results of the 2009 midterm legislative elections in Argentina paved the way for the creation of the AUH. Prior to this contest, an increasing number of Peronists defected

²⁷ For a detailed analysis of the vote shares of the AKP and the BDP for the cities located in eastern and southeastern Turkey for the 2002, 2007, and 2011 general elections, see Mesut Yegen (2011).

²⁸ The Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) fought an armed struggle in order to attain self-determination for Kurds in Turkey. A ceasefire was announced between the PKK and the Turkish state in 2013.

from the governing FPV faction. While some of these politicians established their own parties, others were nominated under other PJ lists. One faction opposing the Kirchners within the Peronist Party forged a center-right alliance, which was led by Mauricio Macri of the Republican Proposal (Propuesta Republicana, or PRO). This center-right coalition included prominent figures like Francisco de Narváez, a dissident Peronist, and Felipe Solá, the former governor of the Province of Buenos Aires. Meanwhile, some other politicians opted to remain within the Peronist Party, even though they decided not to be part of the Kirchners' FPV faction. De Narváez and Solá were at the top of the PRO list for the province of Buenos Aires, where they competed against Néstor Kirchner and Daniel Scioli, on the FPV list (Lupu 2010, 174–175).

The election results signaled a remarkable defeat for the Kirchners as the FPV lost its majority in both houses of Congress. The FPV was defeated in strategic provinces such as Buenos Aires, Mendoza, and Santa Cruz, Kirchner's birthplace. For instance, the FPV list lost to de Narváez's list with 32.2 percent to 34.7 percent (Lupu 2010, 176). The FPV suffered a 15-point drop in its vote share during the 2009 elections compared to the 2007 elections. This sharp decrease in her faction's vote share signaled to the president that her reelection bid in 2011 would be in danger (Calvo and Murillo 2012, 155). In 2009, the defeat of the FPV faction demonstrated that Peronist Party brokers could easily defect from the president. Evidently, the clientelistic distribution of social assistance through political party brokers no longer guaranteed the support of low-income neighborhoods for the president and her allies. To the president, this setback clearly indicated the need to launch a new social assistance program that would allow the FPV

faction to recapture the support of poor voters and help the incumbent in her reelection bid (Pribble 2013). Therefore, on October 13, 2009, President Fernández de Kirchner introduced the AUH with the rationale that by taking the initiative, she and her party could claim the credit for implementing such a program and improve their popularity in low-income neighborhoods.²⁹

The presidential elections of 2011 indeed resulted in a victory for President Fernández de Kirchner by a considerable margin. She amassed 54.1 percent of the votes, exceeding her 2007 vote share by 9 percentage points. There was such a colossal gap between Kirchner and all other presidential candidates that the support for her closest contender, Hermes Binner from the Socialist Party, stood merely at 16.8 percent of the national vote. In addition, Kirchner's FPV coalition secured a majority by winning 135 out of 257 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 38 of 72 seats in the Senate, reversing the setback suffered in the 2009 elections (Calvo and Murillo 2012, 148). President Kirchner garnered astounding support from the voters living in squatter settlements such as Florencio Varela, Guernico, Ezeiza, Lomas de Zamora, and Retiro with more than 60 percent of the ballots (Calvo and Murillo 2012, 157). The increase in President Kirchner's support in low-income neighborhoods and squatter settlements can be partly attributed to the introduction of the AUH, which is very popular among the recipients of the program.

²⁹ The AUH was created by decree 1602-09.

With its innovative design features, the AUH program has achieved acclaim in Argentina. One of the interviewees stated the following: “It is on the agenda of these election campaigns. One of the first things that residents ask an opponent is whether she is going to keep the AUH.”³⁰ Meanwhile, by keeping the AUH as a decree and not turning it into a law, President Kirchner can easily claim credit for the program and depict herself as the guarantor of its maintenance. For example, all of the 30 program recipients interviewed for a study that examined social policy performance in multi-level contexts in December 2009 named the national government as responsible for the initiation of this poverty-relief program (Niedzwiecki 2013, 24). Therefore, the AUH gave President Kirchner and her faction of the PJ a new vehicle by which to appeal to poor voters – one for which she can easily claim credit.³¹ Thus, similarly to Turkey’s CCT, Argentina’s AUH was crucial for the reelection bid of President Kirchner.

From the perspective of strategic political parties, some contexts are more favorable for non-clientelistic social programs than clientelistic ones. Under those circumstances, savvy political leaders will choose non-mediated social policies. This section shed light on the rational calculations of the leaders in Turkey and Argentina by highlighting how the distribution of non-clientelistic CCTs boosted popular support for their leadership. In addition, these popular poverty-alleviation programs helped leaders

³⁰ Interview with Leandro Martín conducted by Marina González, August 23, 2013. In a similar vein, a news story that appeared in *America’s Quarterly* noted “All presidential candidates have promised to maintain the program [AUH] if they win the presidency” (<http://www.americasquarterly.org/content/argentinas-economy-and-2015-presidential-elections>)

³¹ All the news stories that appeared on the AUH portrayed the program in a very positive light, presenting it as one of the most transcendent social policies in Argentina and one of President Kirchner’s most crucial achievements.

with their bids for reelection by enabling them to either circumvent political party brokers or to appeal to populations that they would not be able to attract through broker-mediated, clientelistic inducements.

CCT design differs from traditional clientelistic programs and thus establishes a different incentive structure for savvy voters in terms of their receipt of resources. As the preceding sections demonstrated, voters use bureaucratic problem-solving mechanisms instead of political party connections to gain access to CCTs in Turkey and Argentina. Yet, the same voters continue to make use of political party networks and clientelistic linkages to access benefits that continue to be distributed as favors in these two countries. Thus constituents use clientelistic and non-clientelistic linkages simultaneously to maximize their access to social benefits in order to gain access to CCTs and other benefits. Similar to strategic politicians who use every tool available to attract poor constituents, voters easily adjust their behavior to different rules of the game; they approach party brokers in a clientelistic way while relating as citizens to CCTs.

Conclusion

The comparison of CCT programs in Turkey and Argentina implemented by the thoroughly clientelistic AKP and FPV, respectively, yields a number of important findings and implications. First, it systematically tests the predictions of three major paradigms and lends support to the RCI approach, which contends that actors will adapt to the existing institutional constraints in order to pursue their interests. Rules constrain and incentivize behavior, and pragmatic actors adjust to the different rules of the game and behave accordingly. The design of the CCTs differs from traditional broker-mediated clientelistic programs, which creates a different incentive structure for rational actors with respect to their allocation and receipt of resources. In this case, contrary to the expectations of culturalism, entrenched practices do not determine behavior. Instead, rules shape behavior, even if they conflict with deeply rooted patterns prevailing in societies. More specifically, modern programs are not doomed in clientelistic settings: Established brokers have not managed to capture CCTs and turn their benefit distribution into another source for clientelism.

Second, at the same time, this study challenges the progressive hopes of constructivism. By design, CCTs are normatively superior to traditional clientelistic exchanges: however, their superiority has not induced a broader programmatic shift in social assistance allocation of these two countries. In contrast to the constructivists' optimistic expectations, clientelism has not withered away: CCTs operate parallel to other clientelistic forms of social assistance that target impoverished voters. Political party

brokers continue to distribute clientelistic inducements to low-income citizens in exchange for their political support. Political parties and voters pragmatically adjust their behavior according to the rules of different games, both clientelistic and non-clientelistic.

This research draws attention to how political leaders use rational calculations to shape distributive social policies. As the paired case studies suggest, clientelism can sometimes be risky, difficult, and compromising for savvy political leaders. Under those circumstances, calculating leaders will opt for non-clientelistic poverty-relief programs. Research shows that the non-clientelistic allocation of CCTs in Turkey and Argentina has been politically rewarding for chief executives. The AUH allowed President Fernández de Kirchner to bypass political party brokers and claim credit for her own popular poverty-alleviation program. Likewise, the Turkish CCT provided AKP leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan with a unique opportunity to appeal to the Kurdish population, increase his party's vote share in the eastern and southeastern regions, and ease ethnic unrest.

Finally, this study offers insights into the effectiveness of policy reforms. Partial reform is possible via the introduction of new rules in particular policy areas, as demonstrated by the distribution of CCT benefits to poverty-stricken recipients in Turkey and Argentina. Nevertheless, radical transformation of entrenched practices is hard to achieve. Formal changes do not automatically transform the norms and expectations of actors; that is, such changes only bring about partial reform in specific policy areas rather than drastic transformation of existing practices in societies.

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