Prefects in the Midst of Storms: The Case of Turkey

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19.1 Introduction

Turkey has witnessed a comprehensive transformation of the politico-administrative system since the beginning of the 2000s. This process altered the configuration of public administration considerably. During almost two decades of reallocation of resources, authority, and responsibilities, significant decentralization practices in certain fields and some recentralization tendencies in others have been observed. Moreover with the recent shift to the presidential system these transformations, which bear characteristics of both Turkey’s specific conditions and more global processes, have had important consequences on the territorial composition of Turkey.
In such a context, the evolving role of the *vali*, the Turkish word for prefect, needs to be investigated. The *vali* is a figure whose gradually changing status is demarcated by central public bureaucracy, local, and national politics. On the one hand, the changing politics of scale and the effects of an increasing yet ambivalent administrative decentralization weaken Turkish prefect’s position. On the other hand, factors such as the insistence of the country’s political elite on centralism, escalating politics of security, crises and State of emergencies or the need to coordinate the exercise of power and responsibilities passed down from central to local administrations enforce the on-going relevance of the prefectoral institution. The prefectoral institution and the figure of the prefect seem to be caught in the middle of various storms, consequences of which we cannot foresee at the moment. Depending on the direction of the process of transformation, the fate of the blinking presence of prefects in the darkness of this storm is also related with the socio-historical understanding of the institution.

We are now in a paradoxical situation where the reforms of the 2000s have certainly been major driving forces behind the weakening of the territorial administration of the State—that is the prefectoral system—but some recent developments during the implementation of these reforms, or as a consequence of them, have strengthened the power of the prefect again. There are major challenges and limits in obtaining a complete and accurate portrait of the administrative reforms. At a first glance, administrative reforms were not continuous, but rather chaotic. Yet beyond this, Turkey was subjected to major shocks as the largest refugee and displacement crisis or, more importantly, as a failed military coup attempt in 2016. They could lead to biased estimates of the effects of the reforms as being major obstacles to understand whether this actual situation represents a permanent condition or a transient stage towards a more decentralized public governance.

In this chapter, we will first focus on the traditional position of the prefect figure in Turkish public administration and its social origins. Then, we will outline the new status and roles assigned to prefects and the evolutions of the political context and to answer the question of how it is possible to decentralize public governance by giving greater authority and financial power to the local authorities, while retaining central control over the former through the prefects.
19.2 The Prominent Position of Prefects in the Turkish Territorial Administration

State administration can only be understood within certain historical and social conditions. The biggest obstacle against a proper understanding of State mechanism is the insistence on perceiving public administration as a completely rational process separated from politics, in which the bureaucrat is merely seen as a part of this great machinery. Yet the bureaucrat is not the only one who mechanically performs his/her expertise, but (s)he directly involves in policy making as well as its implementation by doing or not doing a certain act for reasons of general or private interest. The administrative structure of a country cannot be reduced to a mere technical framework that defines the relationship between the central administration and other units, institutions, organizations located in the provinces. As much as, and perhaps even more than its administrative-technical meaning, public administration has a pure political nature and content. In addition, public administration is one of the important tools of politics, with its direct role in the political decision-making process. Therefore, key administrative bodies like the prefectorate are determined by and influence their political and social conditions all the time.

It is also impossible to analyse the territorial administration of the State outside of the discussion on centralism. In Ottoman-Turkish political life, the centralism of the nineteenth century Tanzimat (Reform) period had been constitutive for the prefect’s role and provincial administration. The Law on Provinces (Vilayet Nizamnamesi) of 1864, which divided the Empire into provinces and subdivisions, and introduced deconcentration and decentralization, marks the beginning of the province system in the modern sense. This arrangement was largely inspired by the French Napoleonic system of prefectures, arrondissements and municipalities, but also incorporating some elements and principles of the Ottoman administrative tradition and ‘policy style’. In addition to several domestic and international factors the administrative heritage of the Empire was interrupted by various changes. The Provincial Administration Law of 1929 (No. 1426) was one of the first initiatives of the Republic to establish a relatively more stable administrative system than the laws inherited from the Ottoman period. The Napoleonic model is one of the key elements to understand Turkish administrative system (Bolukbasi and Ertugal 2018).
The existing literature on local and territorial administration in Turkey seems to be trapped into a dilemma regarding the analysis of the relationship between the central and the local. In Turkey, scholars draw the distinction between central and local administration on the ground of a specific and delimited geographical territory. Accordingly, the notion of ‘centre’ is generally criticized as a representation of distance from the people and a geographical rupture, whereas the notion of ‘local’ is considered to be an illustration of proximity to the people and democracy. However, in addition to the location of buildings and personnel, it is also the monopoly over decision-making and resource allocations at national level that differentiates the centre from the local (Çiner and Karakaya 2013: 65).

Contrary to France, the prefect status is not identified in the constitution of Turkey.1 Articles 123 and 126 of the current Constitution of the Republic of Turkey (dated 1982), which determines the basics of central-local administration distinction and administrative departments of the country, draws the boundaries of mülki2 organization; a field in which the institution of prefectorate is also located. Territorial or civil administration (mülki idare) refers to the materialized form of the performing of State’s functions over a given territory. The Constitution states that public administration forms a whole and that its organization and functioning are based on the principles of centralization and decentralization (Article 123). It also states that in terms of central administrative structure, Turkey is divided into provinces on the basis of geographical situation, economic conditions, and public service requirements; provinces are further subdivided into lower level administrative units (Article 126). Turkey is organized as a unitary State and since its establishment as a republic its administration is organized according to province-based divisions, which constitute the highest administrative level. By subdivision, the

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1 The major texts determining the legal status of Turkish prefects are: Provincial Administration Law (1949, No. 5442), Special Provincial Administration Law (2005, No. 5302), Law on the Organisation and Tasks of Ministry of Interior (1985, No. 3157), State Officials in Ministry of Interior Law (1930, No. 1700), Law of State Officials (1965, No. 657). In addition, no less than 700 laws, regulations, bylaws, and directives also give specific missions or responsibilities to prefects.

2 The Arabic word Mülk refers to the domain or the country of a state. Mülki idare, refers to both the organization of the state and the domain outside of military and judiciary administration.
Constitution means the districts (ilçe).\textsuperscript{3} As a consequence of the central administration principle, the provinces and districts are incorporated into the State’s legal personality. Central administration utilizes deconcentration in order to distribute public services and its authority throughout the country. In a sense, deconcentration principle is a measure for determining the level of centralism. However, since the Constitution (Article 126) bases only the administration of provinces on deconcentration, sub-prefects, unlike prefects, cannot take advantage of deconcentration: they do not have authority to make decisions or issue general orders without asking the permission of the centre. Responsible for the general administration of a district, the sub-prefect represents the government in a district and does not have the authority to represent the State.

Exercising the deconcentrated authority, the prefect represents the State and the government in the district. Therefore, the prefect assumes an executive function with political characteristics, in addition to an administrative one. Interestingly enough, the sub-prefect, who is a career public servant without any political authority and does not have any authority to represent the State, was defined as the representative of the government in Provincial Administrative Laws of both 1929 (No. 1426/43) and 1949 (No. 5442/27). This illustrates the spirit of the single-party era in which the government was regarded merely as an element of technical-bureaucratic apparatus and ‘the political’ was considered as a domain of the State, not of the government (Güler 2009: 262).

The Provincial Administration Law (No. 5442) determines the jurisdiction of prefects in a very broad way. The prefect is recognized as the head of general provincial administration (Article 4). As the State representative, the prefect appears at the top of protocol lists, chairs official ceremonies (5442/9k), and handles the relations with foreign consuls and border officials. As the State representative, prefects can issue ‘general

\textsuperscript{3}According to Provincial Administration Law (No. 5442/Article 1) bucaık was the smallest unit of territorial administration. Since the 1970s, there were no new appointments made to replace public officials whose term of service ended in bucaık. Then, bucaık were step-by-step abolished, first in metropolitan cities (2008), then in newly established 14 metropolitan cities (2012), and lastly in all other provinces (2014).
orders’ to ensure good enforcement of laws, bylaws, directives, and presidential decrees (Article 9/Ç). In provinces, prefect is the representative of the president and its administrative executive (formerly described as the representative of the State and the government and also of each minister and as their political administrative and political executive). Instead of encompassing both political and administrative dimensions, this shift in its definition does not necessarily mean that the prefects cannot or do not wear a ‘double hat’, rather it shows the politicization of the State through the administrative apparatus in the presidential era. (Article 9), exerting a hierarchical authority over all public officials and ministerial employees working in the provincial offices of each central ministry—with the exception of the judiciary and the military (Article 13). Prefects are responsible for the public order in their province, and can make decisions concerning the police forces (Article 11). The new amendments or decrees prior to (e.g. Law No. 6638 publicly known as ‘domestic security package [iç güvenlik paketi]’) and in the aftermath of the coup d’État attempt of 15 July 2016 (e.g. the Decree-law No. 674) empowered even more the prefects to assume some roles of the prosecutors and of the mayors, respectively, as will be discussed later. Prefects monitor the activity of all districts and villages in the province and report to relevant ministries. However, their competence and responsibility concerning certain institutions located on provincial borderlines are limited. Judicial and military institutions, local administrations, and functional local administrations

4 ‘Regulatory tasks performed by the prefect to ensure implementation of general orders, laws, bylaws and directives at the provincial level’ (Gözler and Kaplan 2014: 176).

5 Law number 5442, Article 26 states: ‘Prefects shall inspect all districts and sub-districts at such times as they deem appropriate, and certain villages by turns as included in the schedule, and the entire organization within the province. They shall hear the wishes and needs of the public on the location, and act as required. They shall report to the relevant ministries at year end or at other times they deem necessary about the administrative, financial, economic, cultural, health and social situation of the province and the results of decisions and measures taken by the government and effects thereof on the public’.
(public institutions) are beyond prefect’s hierarchy.\(^6\) The prefect’s relationship with these institutions is arranged by the law. However, it is more important to understand the actual role of prefects in the field than to comment on their missions as stated by the law.

As a result of prefect’s ‘single administrator’ (Tosun 1970) position in the province, he is assigned several tasks related to various fields that require professional and technical expertise, e.g. public education, veterinary services, or tourism services.\(^7\) This shows that prefects are not responsible only for important decisions to be taken in the province, but for almost all decisions. Such broadness of the prefect’s portfolio of responsibilities make him the highest authority in the province, elevating his/her real status much higher than what the law allows.

The broad executive powers of Turkish prefects are crucial for their position vis-a-vis legislators and elected politicians. In Turkey, the prefect is conceived as an influential actor, as emblematically coined by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in a sentence which is displayed in every prefectorate building: ‘The people who implement and execute are always more powerful than decision-makers’.

### 19.3 The Modest Social Origins of Turkish Prefects

There is a widespread (but nowadays more and more contested) view in Turkey that high civil servants constitute a class, a State elite that leads the social change (see Mardin 1973; Heper 1985; Keyder 1987). However, it seems plausible to suppose that with more analysis on the figure of the prefect as a personified representation of the State authority and on its activities blurring lines and formal demarcations between politics

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\(^6\)Concerning the military domain, prefects listen people’s complaints about compulsory military service and report on them. Military authorities are obliged to address prefect’s demands. Moreover, prefects can ask support from military units when necessary for securing public order. Concerning the judicial domain: prefects supervise the security of penal institutions and monitor them. In collaboration with the public prosecutor, they track and monitor the health conditions of inmates. Over local administration institutions, prefects exercise the administrative tutelage delineated by the Constitution (Article 127).

\(^7\)One can see the complexity and length of prefects’ task list in ‘The Final Report on the Reorganisation Studies on the Ministry of Interior Services and Organization: Ministry of Interior, General Provincial Administration, Internal Organization, General Report, Vols. I–II, Book: 5, Ministry of Interior (İcişleri Bakanlığı 1972).
and administration, this kind notion of a bureaucracy that is differentiated from society could become even more questionable. It is therefore important to gather information on prefects’ social origins and on their educational background, which may help defining a sort of archetype of the Turkish prefect.

The prefects are appointed solely by the absolute discretion of the President. According to the Presidential Decree No. 3 (2018), the President is not only an approval authority anymore but the appointments of most of high civil servants, including prefects, will be made by its decision. Although prefects are not the holders of a career-office, since they are politically appointed, when considering the persons appointed throughout the Republic’s history, public officials in State territorial representative (STR) service class are the primary and almost single recruitment pool of future prefects, excluding extraordinary periods of military governments (Tosun 1970: 32). Therefore, the social configuration of STRs is illustrative for prefects as well.

The number of countrywide field studies on State territorial administration is limited in Turkey. Basic resources in this field include official reports and studies carried out collaboratively with various universities, with the initiative of the Ministry of Interior. 8

The 2002 The Future of Territorial Administration in Turkey surveys 1089 STRs aged from 22 to 78, and shows that a big majority of the participants (60%) spent the first 15 years of their life in towns and villages, where socio-cultural climate is determined by relatively homogeneous and traditional values. Analysing five generations of administrators, whose service starting date ranges from 1939 to 2001, the study reveals a

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8 This chapter utilizes the same basic resources in Turkish: Reports titled Türkiye’de Mülki İdarenin Geleceği, 2002 (The Future of Territorial Administration in Turkey) and Halkın Mülki İdareye Yönelik Tutum ve Beklentileri, 2003 (Attitudes and Expectations of the People about Territorial Administration) are the result of the project carried out by the Strategy Centre, founded by Ministry of Interior in 2000, Turkish Administrative Studies Foundation (TIAV), which was established the same year, and Ankara University Faculty of Political Sciences; Rapor I: Vatandaş Algısı, 2013 (Report No. I: Citizen’s Perception) and Rapor IV: Mülki İdare Amırlarının Algısı, 2014 (Report No. IV: Perceptions of State Territorial Representatives) that are part of a four-volume study prepared by Ministry of Interior and a research group in Konya Selçuk University and titled Toplumda İçişleri Bakanlığı ve Mülki İdare Amırları Algısı (Perception of Ministry of Interior and State Territorial Representatives in Society). In addition, we utilize the results of a survey among STRs by Turkish Administrators Association (TID) in 2013.
low proportion who grew up in metropolitan cities—excluding the participants living in small and medium sized cities. Socialization places show a shift from provincial and small-sized city centres to big urban places as we move from older to newer generations (Özuğurlu and Emre 2002: 46).9

Although it does not provide direct data about socialization places, 2014 study (Report No. IV: Perceptions of STRs) shows that the participants who were born in villages and towns are a high 42.1% and the ones who were born in metropolitan cities are a low 9.4% (TIAV 2014: 14). The fact that 77.4% of the STRs surveyed received their primary and middle school degrees, and 60.6% received their high school degrees in their birthplaces, indicates the limitations on spatial mobility in socialization processes (TIAV 2014: 16). Regardless of generation, metropolitan cities are far from being the main socialization place for STRs, which is an important clue about the social origins of them.

Another pertinent data for approaching the family social background of prefectoral administrators in Turkey is the profession/occupation of their fathers. The distribution of STRs according to ‘father’s profession’ reveals that urban higher classes feed very little into this group. Both 2002 and 2014 studies show that a significant third (32.5 and 32.8%, respectively) of their fathers worked in the public service *lato sensu* (civil servant, high official, military officer, school teacher). However, these studies also indicate a low and decreasing percentage (4.5 and 2.2% for 2002 and 2014, respectively) of prefects with military and civilian bureaucratic backgrounds.10 Among the higher civil servants, we would expect a higher hereditary transmission, which ensures the continuity of the value system attributed to this professional group (Darbel and Schnapper 1973: 13). However, we do not observe such an ‘inbreeding’ process in Turkey (Özuğurlu and Emre 2002: 49). The most salient changes between 2002 and 2014 studies are a 5% decrease in the number of fathers who are farmers (25.8 and 20.3%, respectively) and a similar increase in

9 However, one should be cautious about the fact that the classification of urban population in Turkey is done according to administrative borders (province and districts populations) and population criteria. The law regulating metropolitan municipalities (No. 6360) abolished 48% of the villages (16,544) located in metropolitan areas. After enforcement of this law, the proportion of urban population to total population in Turkey became 92.8% (TurkStat 2019).

10 Results of the 2014 Study utilized by recalculating the percentages only for the respondents who gave a valid answer to this question, see p. 17; and for 2002 Study see p. 48.
the number of fathers who are workers (15.1 and 21.5%, respectively). This is an expected and compatible situation considering the urbanization trend mentioned above. Another result that shows up in both studies is the low percentage of fathers belonging to professional groups with higher-middle class characteristics.

The data on educational status and profession of mothers also seem to be supporting the conclusion that STRs, therefore the prefects, are not coming from an elite background in terms of culture and class status. The 2002 Study reveals that 50.2% of mothers are without a university degree and only 3.4% of mothers have a high school and university degree (Emre 2002: 321). The data from 2014 Study reinforces the findings above. Mothers who do not work are 69.6% and those who are farmers are 19.9% (TIAV 2014: 17). Considering the fact that women’s unpaid domestic labour constitutes a large portion of farming activities in provinces, we can conclude that urban higher classes feed very little into the background of STRs. In fact, the tendency of youth coming from urban higher classes to move away from professions of public good is a trend observed both in Turkey (Özuğurlu and Emre 2002: 50) and France (Dreyfus 2006).

Another fundamental element in the formation of a professional habitus, namely a totality of values that harmonize the attitudes of members of a professional group in various circumstances, is the educational pathway of members. In Turkey, the entrance to public territorial service class had been restricted to certain schools for half a century: the Ministry of Interior Officials Law of 1930 (No. 1700/2) permitted only the graduates of the Faculty of State Sciences (Mekteb-i Mülkiye, which changed its name to Faculty of Political Sciences in 1950, and later merged into Ankara University) and the two Faculties of Law at Istanbul and Ankara Universities to apply for STR profession.11 This monopoly of three institutions was revoked with an Executive Order (No. 435) in 1991 and graduates of faculties of Politics, Law, Economics, Management, and of Economic and Administrative Sciences (FEAS) from all Turkish universities, as well as foreign faculties with a minimum of 4-year programmes

11 The third law faculty in Turkey was founded only in 1978 as a part of Ege University (in 1982 Faculty of Law was handed over to Dokuz Eylül University which was created by the Executive Order No. 41 that divided Ege University into two). In 1986, Istanbul University, Faculty of Political Sciences (Law No. 3286) started training candidates for sub-prefects.
accredited by the Higher Education Council could apply for STR profession. Nevertheless, the distribution of the faculties that prefects graduated from reveals a continuous and salient weight of Faculty of Politics graduates in all time periods (Table 19.1). The only period when the proportion of Faculty of Political Sciences graduates fell below 50% is the Democratic Party era, which also produced the highest proportion of Law Faculty graduates within the profession.

During Justice and Development Party (AKP) governments, the percentage of prefects who were Faculty of Political Science (FPS) graduates were still high, however, at the same period the Mülkiyeli weight among other FPS graduates became debatable. Comparing the data from 2012 with 2020, we observe that the number of Istanbul University FPS graduates increased. During these years there was a strengthening perception in public opinion that Mülkiye graduates were not preferred in prefect appointments. The data presented in Table 19.2 is the annual distribution of prefects who are on active provincial duty. However, besides provincial staff there are also prefects appointed at Ankara in Turkey. Including the number of these prefects without territorial assignment (merkez valisi) which is 96 as of 2014, the distribution of 177 prefects according to their faculty and university of graduation does not present a significant change in the proportion of FPS graduates (72%) within the total (Table 19.2). In 2018, the government decided to abolish prefects without territorial assignment (Decree-law No. 703).

Nevertheless, the ratio of prefects who are in active provincial service is higher for Istanbul University Graduates. In other words, this is compatible with the widespread opinion that the majority of prefects who were appointed to the centre and have a FPS degree are Mülkiye graduates.

Comparing the results of 2002 and 2014 studies after including sub-prefects and deputy prefects, we observe more clearly that Mülkiye graduates are relatively losing ground within the professional group (Table 19.3). But after 2016, Mülkiye seems still the most important institution in Turkey.

There is a striking increase in the ratio of sub-prefects, especially among the junior ones, with university degrees different from traditional sources of STR staff—especially in the ratio of ones with FEAS degrees. Executive

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12 Prefects can be appointed at the Centre according to Article 37 of Law No. 3152 concerning the organization and tasks of the Ministry of Interior. However, a widespread belief is that this is a form of political disqualification rather than an effective occupation.
Table 19.1  Distribution of prefects according to higher education institution

| Year | Political Sciences and Public Administration | Law | Military School | Other | Police Academy | Total |
|------|---------------------------------------------|-----|-----------------|-------|----------------|-------|
|      | Number | %   | Number | %   | Number | %   | Number | %   | Number | %   | Number | %   |
| 1935 | 34     | 55.7| 18    | 29.5| 7      | 11.5| 2      | 3.3 | –      | –   | –      | 61   |
| 1950 | 44     | 69.8| 12    | 19.0| 3      | 4.8 | 4      | 6.3 | –      | –   | –      | 63   |
| 1955 | 28     | 45.9| 23    | 37.7| 1      | 1.6 | 9      | 14.8| –      | –   | –      | 61   |
| 1960 | 36     | 53.7| 10    | 14.9| 9      | 13.4| 12     | 17.9| –      | –   | –      | 67   |
| 1965 | 46     | 70.7| 8     | 12.3| 7      | 10.8| 4      | 6.2 | –      | –   | –      | 65   |
| 1970 | 49     | 73.1| 5     | 7.5 | 3      | 4.5 | 10     | 14.9| –      | –   | –      | 67   |
| 2001 | 53     | 66.2| 23    | 28.8| –      | –   | –      | –   | –      | 4   | 5.0    | 80   |
| 2012 | 54     | 66.7| 26    | 32.1| –      | –   | –      | –   | –      | 1   | 1.2    | 81   |
| 2014 | 60     | 74.1| 21    | 25.9| –      | –   | –      | –   | –      | –   | –      | 81   |
| 2020 | 64     | 6   | 0     | 0   | 11     | –   | –      | –   | 0      | –   | –      | 81   |

Source: Emre (2002: 45); Official biographies of the provincial prefects of 2012 and 2014. N.B.: from 1935 to 1970, graduates of Police Academy were listed under the category ‘other’. Therefore, we cannot tell how many prefects were graduates from the Police Academy for this period.
### Table 19.2 Distribution of prefects according to university of graduation in 2014 and 2020

| Universities - Faculty | Ankara U. FPS (Mülkiye) | Istanbul U. FPS | Ankara U. Law | Istanbul U. Law | Dicle U. Law | Marmara U. FEAS | Police Academy | Faculty of Theology | Faculty of Science and Education | Other FEAS |
|------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|---------------|----------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|----------|
| Prefects (n = 177)     | 106                      | 22              | 18            | 25             | 1           | 4               | –               | –                   | –                                | –        |
| Prefects (n = 81)      | 41                       | 21              | 2             | 4              | 0           | 0               | 1               | 2                   | 10                               |          |

*The ‘others’ category includes the graduates from FEAS of the universities of Uludağ (4), Gazi (2), Yakındağ (1), Selçuk (1), Dokuz Eylül (1) and of Hacettepe (1)*

*Source* Ministry of Interior Data (2014, 2020)
### Table 19.3 Distribution of STRs according to higher education institution of graduation (2002–2014)

| University of Graduation | Ankara FPS | Istanbul FPS | Ankara Law | Istanbul Law | Other | Total |
|--------------------------|------------|--------------|------------|--------------|-------|-------|
| Position                  | 2002  | 2014  | 2002  | 2014  | 2002  | 2014  | 2002  | 2014  | 2014<sup>a</sup>  | 2002  | 2014  |
| Row %                     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |               |       |       |
| Prefect                   | 54    | 26    | 0     | 5     | 10    | 8     | 13    | 4     | 2    | 0     | 79    | 43    |
| Sub-prefects              | 347   | 127   | 94    | 66    | 51    | 14    | 44    | 16    | 23   | 104   | 559   | 327   |
| Deputy Prefect            | 175   | 87    | 13    | 23    | 31    | 0     | 26    | 0     | 5    | 7     | 250   | 117   |
| Total                     | 576   | 240   | 107   | 94    | 92    | 22    | 83    | 20    | 111  | 30    | 888   | 487   |

<sup>a</sup>In the 2014 Study, the graduates from law faculties and from FEAS are indicated separately under the other category. According to this, 92 sub-prefects and 7 deputy-prefects are graduated from FEAS of different universities.

Source: The Future of Territorial Administration in Turkey, 2002: 59; Report No. IV: Perceptions of STRs: 18

Decree (No. 435) of 1991 clearly has an influence on the fact that a third of the 327 sub-prefects who participated in the 2014 Study hold degrees from other universities and a very large portion of these degrees are from FEAS. Despite the fact that, in the recent period, almost all prefects are recruited among sub-prefects (100% according to 2002 Study; 98.2% as of September 2014), this influence is not directly visible in the composition of prefectorate staff. This is due to the amendment made in Article 6 of Provincial Administration Law (2006, No. 5540) that makes the appointments from STR service class to prefectorate exclusive to first-degree public officials. This amendment imposes a 15-year service experience for the candidates with sub-prefect background. Considering the fact that the average birth year of 81 prefects in service as of October 2014 is 1962, we can say it is yet early to see the consequences of this new rule.

The distribution of FEAS graduates according to university gives us some additional clues about the STR profile. The 2014 Study reveals that, among 92 FEAS graduates, 20 have a degree from Gazi University, 11 from Selçuk University, and 10 from Uludağ University (TIAV 2014: 19–20). Sub-prefects with FEAS degrees come from 20 different
Table 19.4 Distribution of prefects according to secondary education institutions

| High school type | Prefects | Normal High School | Commerce High School | Private High School | Religious Vocational High School | Police School | Teacher School | Industrial Vocational High School | Anatolian High School |
|------------------|----------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|--------------|---------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
|                  | 104      | 6                  | 3                    | 42                 | 6                               | 13           | 2             | 1                                 |                      |

Source: Ministry of Interior Data (2014)

universities. The central university entrance examination scores required by these universities are relatively low; therefore we can conclude that graduates of universities with higher prestige and score requirements tend to choose other careers. This can be a result of the tendency of young university graduates coming from urban higher classes or with higher expectations of upward social mobility to move away from professions of public service and idealism. Whatever its reasons are, the diversification in higher education backgrounds of sub-prefects makes pre-professional socialization, which is essential for creating a common identity, harder for STRs and promotes a likelihood of deselitisation.

The distribution of 177 prefects working in the centre and provinces as of 2014, according to the types of high school they graduated also supports the conclusion above (Table 19.4). It is striking that the proportion of Anatolian high schools, which accept students through entrance examination and private high schools, which often ask high tuition fees, is only 2%, whereas the number of imam-hatip (religious vocational) high schools graduates is 24. Providing an Islamic education, these high schools give us some clues about the cultural, social, and political family background of prefects.\(^\text{13}\)

Therefore, the social origins of STRs and prefects are not rooted into one particular social group. However, it can be argued that the belonging of prefects to elite social classes is rare and that a strong socialization pattern through a common education trajectory is disputable. If we are

\(^{13}\) Even so, there is a need for caution in interpreting these data; it is also important to take account of the fact that there were not too many options than the ordinary public schools for the prefects in their high school-age years, especially for older ones.
to identify a prefect/sub-prefect habitus, it is mainly acquired by them within their professional practices. As a matter of fact, the training of high civil servants in Turkey is a long-running discussion topic. The lack of a special institution, like the French *grandes écoles*, that would introduce newcomers to the institution and its culture before their appointment has been emphasized before (Peker 1994). Although it is hard to talk about a homogenization based on a single education institution before the 1991 amendment, we can argue that *Mülkiye* assumed a role in shaping an identity for the members of the prefectoral profession. However, a major consequence of the amendment which allows the entrance of FEAS graduates into the profession is the inclusion of candidates coming from all faculties in Turkey, even those with no special curriculum for training high civil servants. We observe the first effects of this process, which will inevitably modify the STR and prefects’ profile, in the middle to long run.

19.4 The Transformations of the Turkish State and Their Effects for Prefects

It is clear that Turkey’s governmental and administrative structure has undergone and is still undergoing a significant transformation since the end of the 1990s. Turkish Constitution (1982) has been amended 18 times since 1987. Among these, the ones that were realized in 1995, 2001, 2007, 2010, and 2017 have the most significant effects on the Turkish administrative system. Turkish State tradition is based on a unitary-parliamentary structure. Following the constitutional amendments passed by referendum in April 2017 (with the Law No. 6771), Turkey, however, stepped into a completely different administrative era for establishing the new presidential government system. This led to a significant strengthening of executive powers at the centre and excessively concentrated power in the hands of the incumbent President Erdoğan.

Before examining the impacts of the executive presidential shift, it is important first to briefly understand the causes and driving forces of the transformation of the State structures in Turkey by placing it in its socio-political context. In this context, the various reform efforts, to some extent, led to the reallocation of power, authority, and resources to different scales of governance (e.g. spatial, institutional, administrative) which exacerbated the tensions between decentralization and (re)centralization tendencies, by creating a number of new organizations or agencies while merging and removing others. These sporadic and
usually fragmented efforts which have not only been driven by ‘endoge-
nous’ forces but also were initiated through coercive policy transfer or as part of both formal and informal external pressures, felt short of compre-
prehensive and coherent State reform. The restructuring of the State was largely stipulated by the international organizations, such as WB, IMF, and OECD, which were influential—not only but mostly—in the field of economic regulatory reforms, while the EU was involved more directly in design, implementation, and evaluation of the public administration reforms.

This neoliberal-oriented agenda, which was consolidated through various treaties between Turkey and international organizations, brought about the dissolution of a long-lasting centralist tradition in several fields. As expected for all countries having a strong State tradition in the sense of resistive social environment, the neoliberal public sector reform agenda had to deal with, also in Turkey, missing consensus and strong conflicts in economic, political, cultural, social, and behavioural spheres that led to a particular adaptation and synthesis of more general neoliberal norms (Üstüner and Yavuz 2018: 830). New Public Management (NPM) and contemporary administrative reforms, therefore, should be understood through their double-nature, both ideological and praxeological, with it being understood that the latter is a major driving force of diffusion of reforms (Eymeri-Douzans 2011: 14). Hence, paying systematic attention to variegated nature of neo-liberalization processes helps to understand these reforms not only as externally designed and implemented tout court at national and subnational scales but also through their polymorphic spatial morphologies and their contextually specific evolutionary trajectories (Brenner et al. 2014).

The neoliberalization process is the primary and most important topic in State reform. Since 1990 Turkey has undergone a wave of reforms for macroeconomic stabilization and structural adjustments, frequently referred to as first and second-generation reforms, which have redefined the boundaries between public and private. This redefinition process has started with the privatization of public entities in industrial, agricultural, and services sectors and continued with financial liberalization. In this process, combined with the strong political incentives to downsize the State, most of the services and responsibilities originally assumed by the State were transferred to non-State actors or autonomous agencies and this has generated a parallel process of transition from a centralist-planner State to a regulatory State (Oyan 1998; Güler 2005).
The rise to the power of the Justice and Development Party in the wake of the severe financial crisis of 2001 marked a new period in which neoliberal policies became significantly dominant in the State restructuring. The post-crisis environment which has been more open to the involvement of external actors (i.e. IMF, EU) in the restructuring process and the popular perception of the EU conditionality as a democratization impulse empowered the government to implement reforms despite strong social and political opposition (Öniş 2009). Turkey’s candidacy process to join the EU had, for a while, a certain role in the Europeanization of Turkish public administration. However, the comparative researches have revealed that EU conditionality was effective as long as its align with the domestic incentives or survival strategies of ruling elites in Turkey (Börzel et al. 2015) and the reversal of reforms and a process of de-Europeanization and also de-democratization has become even more marked in recent years (Szymański 2017).

The NPM wave, aligned with the ideology of neoliberalism, constituted the theoretical basis of the new policy framework. Although a restructuring policy that aims to transform state territorial administration directly has not been put into practice yet (while enacting new laws related with local authorities and agencies the old law on provincial administration dated back to 1949 still remains unrepealed), the roles and functions of the prefects were altered significantly. One of the most important consequences of the state reform is state territorial administration’s relative weakening against certain public and non-public actors, primarily against local administrations strengthened by the reform due to the fragmentation and horizontalization of the state apparatus and public administration. This resulted in the disappearance of hierarchical lines and created problems of coordination. Nonetheless, the fact remains that the prefects have been playing a vital role at the very centre of this.

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14 Most of the changes stipulated by EU harmonization packages were related to State territorial administration. In addition, through financing comprehensive projects (Local Administration Reform Project 1 and 2), the EU supported local administration reform so as to change Turkey’s administrative structure indirectly. Such changes affected the status of the prefect. Moreover, the EU accession process directly influenced the organization of public administration through Instruments for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA).

15 As above mentioned, STRs perceive this situation as a tendency to push State territorial administration to the background, see TID (2013) and TIAV (2013).
For instance, while a radical reform in public fiscal administration (No. 5018, 2003) was implemented in order to introduce private sector principles into state administration; not only, a serious transformation took place in the country’s fiscal administration but also in general administration. Following the amendment, Revenue Administration, which produced important changes in public administration, was established in 2005 (No. 5345, 2005). Law number 5345 changed tax-related topics formerly regulated by Law number 5442 Article 9/c. With the transfer of tax-related services carried out by provincial fiscal offices to Revenue Administration regional offices, this function was removed from state territorial administration’s jurisdiction. Provincial fiscal offices, who are also members of the provincial administrative board, lost their efficacy. Therefore, both provincial administrative board and its members became obsolete (Apan 2015: 96). 16

The whole ministerial structure and its functioning have been another site of transformation, with major repercussions on the prefects as traditionally being the obligatory intermediaries of line ministries for effective public service delivery at the local level. The fragmentation of state authority has become particularly apparent with large-scale privatization and creation of autonomous agencies providing public services outside the traditional line ministries and of those having regulatory responsibilities. The re-regulation of liberalized markets in the 1990s and the necessity to monitor privatized sectors resulted in the transfer of monitoring and supervising functions of the state to the independent regulatory agencies (IRAs). This transfer of powers to IRAs has involved a fundamental change of the administrative and political structure which led to an anomaly as regard the constitutional framework of controls, checks, and balances set up in a parliamentary system, as well as to a radical change of the governing relations between principals and agents while replacing the centralized and hierarchical ministerial accountability with a complex one (Sosay 2009: 342). However, the issue of autonomy of IRAs remains always highly controversial both in the political debates and in the scholarly literature in Turkey (Sezen 2007), and especially since 2008 this practice has moved even more explicitly towards a recentralization through the redefinition of the links between regulatory agencies and the central government and ministries (Demir 2020: 162–163).

16 Provincial health directors are in a similar situation: with the establishment of Public Hospitals Alliances, their area of jurisdiction has become narrower (Apan 2015).
Especially, governmental decrees issued right before 2011 general elections brought very important changes that affected the executive system as a whole and redefined the limits, actors, and mechanisms of several public policies. The state restructuring process in Turkey has been, and still appears to be, chaotic and dominated by an excessive use of decree-laws and omnibus-laws (torba kanun) which refers to a law-making practice amending several laws and decree-laws with very different topics at the same time by the AKP government, and now through the presidential decrees. The decree-laws issued in 2011 led to the recentralization of some powers (European Commission 2012: 11), increased existing uncertainties and generated a lack of coordination at inter-ministerial level.

The swinging back of the pendulum towards recentralization empowered the prefects while giving more arbitrary power to decisions in this fragmented bureaucratic structure. With the recent shift from a parliamentary to a presidential system, the ministries’ position in the administrative system became more contestable, since in the previous system ministries were responsible to parliament, and prefects were territorial branches, whereas the new system transforms the territorial administration of Turkey in direction of an American type of governance, with policy boards and offices.

The recent history of neoliberal transformations of the State produced a contingent rescaling process: on the one hand, an excessive municipalization of the country; on the other hand, a cautious regionalization, put into practice since 2004. A number of policies are implemented by the government in the name of efficiency and local democracy.

As a first step of this territorial recomposition, the ruling party built a new municipal system by giving priority to local administration during administrative reorganization. A metropolitan municipality law (No. 5216, 2004), a municipality law (No. 5393, 2005) and Special Provincial Administration Law (No. 5302, 2005) were enacted; thus the division of labour between the centre and local was significantly changed. The power of administrative tutelage of central administration over local administrations had been diminished; municipalities were strengthened in

\[17\] Within six months, AKP government made 35 decree-laws that affected 488 laws or decrees. 25 of these decree-laws directly dealt with the organization of the ministries.
fiscal and administrative terms. One of the important factors in prefect’s relative weakening against local administration is the changing position of the prefect in special provincial administration.

Turkey has a system in which the provincial administration and special provincial administration merge into the prefect’s authority as a person and institution. Special Provincial Administration Law revoked prefect’s status as the chair of general provincial council, which is the decision-making body of special provincial administration, and limited prefect’s functions to executive.

In the process of local administration reform, the government implemented different and sometimes contradictory and divergent policies simultaneously. First, the closing down policy was implemented for small municipalities and villages located near city municipalities. The Municipal Law (art.8) regulated the voluntary consolidation and annexation of smaller municipalities and villages. Metropolitan Municipalities Law (art 11) implemented the extension of boundaries and annexation policy in various cities with various joint decree-laws.

As a result municipality borders were expanded and town municipalities were abolished mostly with an economic justification. The ‘metropolisation’ process brought about the dissolution or merger of several small local administration units and generated a dual administrative structure and a significant scale change. With Metropolisation Law (No. 6360, 2012) many provinces with questionable metropolitan qualifications were turned into metropolitan cities, the public legal personality of the villages, which were local administration units, was revoked. The number of metropolitan municipalities was increased to 30. In 14 metropolitan municipalities, which already existed and in newly established metropolises, the provincial borders and metropolitan municipality

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18 Nevertheless, some missions ascribed to prefects continued to include a severe administrative tutelage. Since the beginning, the process continued very ambivalently: the Constitutional Court repealed legal provisions authorizing prefects to take municipal council’s decisions that are inconsistent with law to administrative courts (2005, No. 5393/23) on the basis of inconsistency with administrative tutelage defined in the constitution (AYM Ruling, 2008/27 E., 2010/29 K., 04.02.2010 T.).

19 While a two-tier local administration structure composed of district municipalities and metropolitan municipalities emerged in 30 metropolises; in 51 provinces, a three-tier structure composed of special provincial administration, municipalities and villages are in place.
borders were made even.\textsuperscript{20} The legal personality of village and town municipalities within the provincial borders was revoked and they were included in the jurisdiction of district municipalities they were formerly linked to, with the status of neighbourhood administration. In addition, special provincial administrations, which were made stronger with great controversy, were abolished in 30 metropoles.

However, the strengthening of special provincial administration did not reinforce weakening prefects, since one source of prefect’s power was their chairing of special provincial administration, which was a local administration unit in the province. In other words, prefects used to govern a legal personality with financial resources, which they were able to mobilize. Also, the fact that prefects were the head of all public institutions in a province as the general provincial authority used to help them to maintain their influence against special provincial administration’s elected bodies.

Special provincial administration (SPA) in Turkey has a dual function of local and general services. While prefects provide special provincial administration with functions of central administration, they also embed themselves into local interests and politics. Namely, including the local administration reform carried out after 2005, state reform in Turkey on the one hand, centralizes special provincial administration but on the other hand, localizes the central administration, i.e. the prefects. While this mutual relationship creates an equilibrium and harmony between local interests and national policies, the regulation about metropolization tilts this balance towards the centre.

With Metropolisation Law, Investment Monitoring and Coordination Presidencies (IMCP) were established in place of the SPAs in metropolises. The dissolution of SPAs and villages marks an important scale change and means ‘municipalisation’ and the termination of rural area administration; it also terminates the authority of prefects and sub-prefects to use resources and retain a budget. Instead of the latter, prefects were assigned with duties of IMCP. At the beginning, between 2014 and 2016, as a head of the IMCP, the prefect lost his/her power.

\textsuperscript{20}While the borders of Istanbul and Kocaeli are the same since 2004, other metropolitan municipalities’ borders were drawn in the following way: taking the prefects’ office building as a centre and State territorial borders as the maximum stretch, borders of a circle with a radius of twenty kilometres were the borders of metropolitan municipalities with a population up to one million; for those with a population between one million and two million, the radius was thirty kilometres; for populations over two million, the radius was fifty kilometres (No. 5216/G.M.2, 2004).
Because SPA’s were an administrative autonomous local government unit. With the complaints of the prefects (inefficiency in tender process and ineffective service provision) in 2016, the government decided to transform IMCP’s status with public legal personality (Decree-law No. 674), which means soft centralization and empowerment of the prefect in the implementation process of public policies.

Traditionally, prefects are strong political and administrative actors in Turkey; however, with the termination of their status as executive organ of local administrations in metropolises, they are reduced to a status of technical public official who is at risk of being limited to a number of functions such as security and coordination of bureaucratic protocol. Nevertheless, we should keep in mind that the central administration always keeps prefects, on whom it can rely more than elected local bodies, at a privileged and distinctive status when it comes to the provision of certain public services, such as the contested creation of regional development agencies\textsuperscript{21} and the role given to prefects and sub-prefects through Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations (SASF).

\textbf{19.5 Resilience of Turkish Prefects}

An interesting discussion about the process of comprehensive reforms in government and bureaucracy is the perception held by the members of the prefectoral profession and the society in general on state territorial administration. According to TID survey in 2013, the members of the profession strongly believe that the STR system has a place in state government tradition (86\%) and is still a necessary part of state mechanism in nowadays Turkey (75\%). Nevertheless, the proportion of participants who think that state territorial representation maintains its full function (58\%) and the necessity for its services is not diminished (57\%) is significantly lower, which indicates a negative perception on behalf of state territorial administration about the process of change widely associated with ‘decentralization’ (78\%) (TID 2013). The TIAV Study in 2013 also reveals that, among the members of the profession, a widespread

\textsuperscript{21} Establishment law of development agencies, which are designed as governance organs operated by public, private, and civil actors at NUTS 2 level, states that the chairman of the executive committee represents the agencies. Prefect is the chairman of the executive committee (No. 5449/10).
Table 19.5  Main missions of State Territorial Administration in Turkey

| Missions                          | 2002 Study (n = 882) | % | Missions                          | 2013 TID Survey (n = 741) | % |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|---|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Security                          | 66.4                 |   | State representation              | 83.7                     |   |
| Administrative tasks              | 66.0                 |   | Security                          | 77.3                     |   |
| Investment                        | 55.1                 |   | Coordination                      | 76.4                     |   |
| Education, health, environment    | 49.3                 |   | Monitoring                        | 65.9                     |   |
| General government tasks          | 33.1                 |   | Social policies                   | 55.9                     |   |
| Public relations                  | 32.4                 |   | Vision-building                   | 41.6                     |   |
| Representation                     | 24.7                 |   | Education                         | 39.1                     |   |
| Social assistance, fighting poverty | 15.6                |   | Development and investment        | 30.5                     |   |
| Foundation, company/project, resource creation | 9.0               |   | Rural area works                  | 15.7                     |   |
| Culture, tourism                  | 8.3                  |   | Urban area works                  | 2.7                      |   |
| Other                             | 8.9                  |   | Other                             | 2.2                      |   |

*S. Surveys are based on multiple response analysis

The self-perception of the prefect under the influence of the decentralization process is also worth analysing. According to the findings of 2002 Study and 2013 TID Survey, STRs perceive security, coordination, and monitoring as the primary part of traditional responsibilities of administration (Table 19.5). An interesting result, however, is the turnaround of STRs in terms of their relative preference of investment over social

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22 Since the categorization systems in two studies are different, one should be cautious in drawing comparisons. In 2002 Study, answers to open-ended questions are grouped as in Table 19.5. Whereas in 2014 Study topics related both with functions and value judgements are asked in the same questions, making it impossible to summarize them in the same table.
policies, from 2002 to 2013. This is a striking result, especially for a time period in which the notions of local and regional development, development agencies and prefects as central actors that coordinate investments at the local level, are in ascendance.\textsuperscript{23} In 2014 TIAV Study, leadership role in economic development ranked at the bottom of STRs’ priority list (TIAV 2014: 65–66). The research report’s emphasis on this function as a higher priority for participants above 50 years old indicates that younger cadres are gradually moving away from this role perception. Considered as a whole, previous research findings reveal that state territorial representatives are defining their tasks increasingly as a restricted role of coordination and provision of public order rather than service provision.

There is a general process of prefects and STRs moving away from public service work and obtaining a status of an arbitrator or a mere executive device for governmental politics. We observe that prefects also encounter several new responsibilities and tasks throughout the multi-layered structure of the reform process. In addition, analysing their perceptions and attitudes, we can conclude that the STRs are very willing to retrieve traditional functions brushed aside by reforms and changing conditions and reluctant towards assuming new functions (Emre 2002: 250)—a condition especially valid for the post-2000 period.

Moreover, the blinking presence of prefects in very different public policy areas is a consequence of a turbulent public administration reform process. Since the level of nodality enjoyed by prefects amidst various social domains and a complex workflow is still high, the changes concerning other actors and institutions that are part of the same action system affect the prefect as well. However, the fact remains that this also fosters its resilience, as the nodal status of prefects allows them to survive as an actor and even permits them to gain strength in certain points.

The restructuring of the state (governmental and central) and recomposition of local levels is one of the fields in which the tension between decentralization, centralization, and recentralization is most visible in

\textsuperscript{23}State Planning Organisation was an expert institution based on a national-level planning approach. Its replacement with the Ministry of Development and recently Presidency of Turkey, Presidency of Strategy and Budget which prepares sector and region-based development plans and functions as an umbrella organization of Development Agencies, in 2011 is an outcome of this process. See: Decree-law No. 641 (Official Gazette, 08.06.2011, 27958-Mükerrer).
contemporary Turkey. Unfortunately we don’t have any recent survey about STR’s role in presidential Turkey. But we can argue that the executive president’s position empowered the prefects.

On the one hand, prefects are forced to adapt into new conditions resulting from decentralization and transformations in local administration, but on the other hand they played an important role in the creation of new institutions and implementation of public policies. With considerable experience in state administration and credibility among other actors, prefects served as ‘wildcards’ in transition periods and assumed an important ‘facilitating function’ (Apan 2015). Prefect’s wildcard role can be observed in Village Service Unions (VSU) and projects for supporting the infrastructure of villages (KÖYDES) implemented by these unions, in development agencies, in the establishment of the Directorate General of Migration Management and in SASFs. Another example of prefect’s ‘vacancy-filling’ role is the appointment of a ‘coordinator prefect’ responsible for Turkey’s Syrian affairs.24 This prefect is responsible for the administration of refugees from Syria and solution of their various problems.

As a result of the decentralization and metropolization reforms like turning expansive rural areas into municipalities or termination of special provincial administrations in metropolises, prefect’s local functions concerning public service provision are considerably weakened and in metropolises almost abolished. Therefore, an authority transfer from centre to local is a salient aspect of the reform process.

A decentralization (re)centralization tension was powerful at every stage of the reform process and prefects became prominent agents of centralization at the service of central administration. In this regard, we must also mention ‘the omnibus law’ (No. 6638, 2015), which is popularly known as domestic security package, that gives extraordinary authority related to security issues to prefects. The prefect’s responsibility is prevention of a crime and to give necessary orders for criminal’s arrest. The period until a crime is committed is considered under the state territorial jurisdiction of prefects; after a crime is committed the judicial authority of public prosecutors takes over. The biggest change Law number 6638 brings is to involve prefect into the stage after the

24 A Circular Letter of the Prime Minister (20 September 2012) appointed a Coordinator Prefect, to be located in Gaziantep, ‘in charge of the coordination between public institutions about all kinds of issues concerning Syrian refugees in Turkey’.
prevention of a crime. In addition, the hierarchical authority of prefects over security forces and the capacity of prefects for intervening in judicial police functions are increased. However, with the amendments in Law of Provincial Administration number 5442, prefect’s functions related to judicial organization were terminated with such justifications as ‘judicial autonomy’ and ‘separation of powers’ by the very same government.\textsuperscript{25} The assignment of STRs with monitoring functions over judicial police by Law number 6638 can only be explained with the ‘political context’.

It is not surprising that the prefects in Turkey, similar to counterparts in other countries, mainly assume functions centred on security. However, the increasing role of prefects in other public policy fields with the reform process is a novelty. For instance, prefects serve important functions in social assistance, military-civilian relations and right to information through the support of international organizations and with a project-basis approach. Prefects are used as facilitators for the implementation of new public policies concerning the formulation of regional development policies and migration management. In the meantime, prefects started to share their jurisdiction in VSUs, SASFs, and development agencies with other governance actors like private sector and civil society representatives and became a governance agent at the local level.

After 2015, the ways and incentives of the government to deal with the kurdish question changed significantly, that’s why a decentralist and regionalist pressure to change the state structure and policy style started to be in the opposite direction. The security and unity of the state became the major priority of the government. That’s why, STR’s and especially prefects returned to an historical trajectory of the centralist public administration and values. But after 2016 another wave of recentralization occurred in a changing times. The attempted coup, state of emergencies, economic turbulence and recent pandemic crises, the government reminded and enforced the territorial administrators in order to deal with the problems. From 2016, the prefects were at the heart of all governmental responses.

The prefects became more prominent in all crisis situations after 2016, especially as seen in the Covid-19 pandemic period of 2020. During the

\textsuperscript{25} One of the most important clauses that were revoked was: “If necessary, the prefect can give orders to superior and inferior officers of judicial police to use powers stated by the Law of Criminal Procedure, Article 156” (No. 5442/10 (E), Revoked: 2008, 5728/578).
management of the coronavirus crisis at the central government level, the prefect became particularly important through provincial pandemic boards as the Chair of them by making decisions on many social and administrative issues. The most important actor that emerged in the pandemic was the prefect. The health policy priorities, especially from the formulation of supports through social assistance and solidarity foundations, to the coordination and management of aids via fidelity support groups, and from the administration of the filiation teams through law enforcement, were realized with the assurance of the prefect. In addition to financial support to the poor people, economically, tools such as short-time working allowance are organized directly by prefects. As can be seen, the prefect is one of the only actors in the crisis period to whom the government is most confident and sure of their implementation of different public responses and policies. In other words, the government’s main interlocutor throughout the design and implementation of policies at the local level to exit from the post-2016 storm is the prefect.

19.6 Conclusion

Turkey’s new governmental system dates back only about two years, and metropolization reforms six years. Throughout the local government reforms implemented after 2004, the bottom-up decentralization movements seem to have ended up with various counter-reforms. In this context, it is worth to be mentioned that the territorial recomposition and metropolization of the country produced also another bottom-up centralization. Thus, the prefect has found himself/herself in the midst of various storms, which have seemed, firstly, to weakened his/her agency and forced him/her to share his/her authority with other actors at the various stages of the decentralization and regionalization processes, and thereafter, to empowered him/her in every crisis to deal with its political, social, economic, and even health consequences in a climate of uncertainty and conflict.

With the Presidential system legal amendments have been made to enable prefects to make quicker decisions about ensuring public order and security. Likewise, the sanctions of the STRs’, namely of the prefects, over the other administrative entities have been increased and the hand of the prefects has been strengthened even in terms of directly providing municipal services and other public services despite the severe criticism of the massive dismissals of local politicians with the excessive use of
legal proceedings and the arbitrary nature of the appointment of trustees (European Commission 2019; Keleş and Özgül 2017). The presidential government system and the strengthening of the prefects will *ipsa facto* make the executive power more active in the field, and the territorial administrators will consolidate their roles in the provincial services, to be able to ask for an account on behalf of the president.

Without a doubt, the capacity of prefects to survive this huge storm will depend on their ability to adapt. The non-elite social origins of prefects are often emphasized as an advantage in terms of communicating and relating to the public by the members of the profession. As we have discussed in this article, opening of entrance examination for sub-prefect career to graduates of any faculty of economics and administrative sciences in Turkey reinforces this phenomenon. Leaving this important democratization in career entrance aside, whether the training and formation of prefects and sub-prefects would be enough for this new type of cooperation, collective decision-making and leadership functions that involve collaboration with local actors is an important question mark.

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*26 The number of trustees appointed to municipalities, including three metropolitan municipalities, reached 45 on 15 May, 2020. According to this, 6 prefects were appointed as trustees in Kurdish-majority cities.*
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