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Applying Rentier Strategies onto Oil-poor Erdogan's Turkey from 2016

Shaun Loh

Duke University, United States

Abstract

This paper examines how Turkey under President Erdogan has employed rentier state strategies typically associated with oil-rich authoritarian regimes, despite lacking substantial oil resources, particularly after 2016. Drawing on Michael Ross's rentier state framework, this study argues that Erdogan's regime constructed alternative sources of rent to implement traditional rentier strategies for authoritarian consolidation.

The analysis identifies three primary alternative rent sources: real estate and construction projects, the Turkey Wealth Fund established in 2016, and systematic asset confiscation following the coup attempt. These mechanisms function as "quasi-rent" sources, providing regime-controlled economic benefits similar to oil revenues in traditional rentier states.

Applying Ross's framework, the paper demonstrates how Erdogan implemented key authoritarian mechanisms: reducing taxation dependence, expanding patronage networks, dismantling civil society, enhancing security apparatus, and directing modernization toward regime allies. The findings reveal that oil wealth absence does not immunize countries against authoritarian consolidation. This "constructed resource curse" demonstrates how authoritarian regimes can emerge in resource-poor states by creating functional equivalents to traditional rents.

Keywords: Political Economy, Authoritarian Regimes, Rentierism, Real Estate, Sovereign Wealth Funds, Asset Confiscation