

Electoral Manipulations and Political Participation in Backsliding Democracies

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Roadmap:

- 1) Puzzle
- 2) Theoretical Expectations
- 3) Experimental Design
- 4) Empirical Findings

Democratic Backsliding by Elected Executives

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 - **Ex-ante electoral manipulations:** changes in the rules of the game (electoral laws, electorate manipulations, gerrymandering, disenfranchisement, show elections, elections under state of emergency restrictions)
 - **Ex-post electoral fraud:** misconducts in electoral procedures (intimidation, violence, ballot stuffing, misrecording votes, tampering, postal ballot fraud)

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 - ideological polarization (Svolik 2018; Nalepa, Vanberg, and Chiopris 2018)
 - majoritarian attitudes (Grossman et al. 2022).
 - Little systematic knowledge about how opposition supporters react to electoral manipulations.

Opposition Reaction to Electoral Interventions

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 - perceived corruption and trust in electoral systems (Birch 2010; Norris 2014; Martinez i Coma and Trinh 2017).
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 - On the one hand, opposition supporters often failed to mobilize when facing serious electoral manipulations (Haggard and Kaufman 2021; Cleary and Öztürk 2022; Graham and Svobik 2020; Grossman et al. 2022)
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- Mixed empirical findings: While incumbent-led violence and media control are negatively associated with the opposition turnout rates, harassing and banning opposition parties before elections are positively associated (Martinez i Coma and Trinh 2017)

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- How do electoral manipulations affect political participation?
- Through what mechanisms do these manipulations shape political engagement?

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- I argue that the effect of electoral manipulations on political participation depends on the manipulation types.

Electoral Manipulations

- Literature focus on ex-post and ex-ante electoral manipulations.

	Ex-Ante Manipulations	Ex-Post Manipulations
Target	Electoral Process	Voting Outcome
Informational Asymmetry	Low	High
Observability	High	Low

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1) Institutional ex-ante manipulations 2) Extra-Institutional ex-ante manipulations

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Target	Electoral Process	Electoral Process	Voting Outcome
Informational Asymmetry	Low	Low	High
Observability	High	Medium	Low
Agents Involved	Citizens, Parliament	Judiciary, Bureaucracy	Judiciary, Bureaucracy
Implications	Popular Support	Bureaucratic Compliance	Bureaucratic Compliance
Tools	Referendum, Laws	Executive Orders, Criminal Investigations, Judicial Orders, Intimidation	Interference with Machinery, Criminal Investigations, Judicial Orders, Intimidation
Examples	New Constitutions, Change in Electoral System and Rules, Gerrymandering	Extraordinary Executive Orders, Emergency Rule, Arresting Opposition Politicians, Media Manipulation, Vote Suppression, Ballot Stuffing, Court Packing	Tampering with Vote Counting, Election Falsification, Pressure on Election Commission

Table 2: Extended table based on Luo and Rozenas (2018)

1) Legitimacy and Grievance-led mobilization:

- Perceived legitimacy plays a significant role (Birch 2010; Norris 2014; Faller 2015; Martinez i Coma and Trinh 2017; Kostadinova 2009; Stockemer, LaMontagne, and Scruggs 2013; Sundström and Stockemer 2015)

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 - Illegitimate interventions to democratic institutions → grievances among the disadvantaged groups (Birch 2010; Norris 2014; Faller 2015) → the invoked sense of injustice and duty to react to these policies (Riker and Ordeshook 1968) → mobilization ↑

② Informational Theories of Mobilization:

- The strategic choice of manipulation type conveys different signals and shape the beliefs of opposition supporters [Gehlbach and Simpser (2015); Rundlett and Svolik (2016); Rozenas (2016); Luo and Rozenas (2018);]

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 - **Information about Incumbent Strength**
 - Institutional manipulations → conspicuous signals of incumbent strength → less uncertainty about ex-ante incumbent strength → mobilization ↓
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 - **Information about Bureaucratic Compliance**
 - Extra-institutional manipulations → ex-ante bureaucratic compliance → ex-post bureaucratic compliance → mobilization ↑

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- Aversive emotions and anger leading to higher turnout and protests (S. Erdem Aytaç and Stokes 2019)
 - Extra-institutional manipulations → aversive emotions (Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Leach, Iyer, and Pedersen 2006; Pagano and Huo 2007) → the invoked sense of injustice and duty to react to these policies (Gerber, Green, and Larimer 2008) → mobilization ↑

Expectations

Table 3: Expectations

	Ex-Ante Institutional Manipulations	Ex-Ante Institutional Manipulations	Extra-Manipulations
Agents Involved	Parliament, Public	Bureaucracy, Security Forces	Judiciary,
Observability	High	Medium	
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Scope: Regimes experiencing democratic backsliding

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 - Turkey is a great laboratory since there is an upcoming election in May-June 2023

Research Design: Recruitment

- **Meta ads** on Facebook and Instagram
 - across the country between August 24 and August 30
 - two different advertisement sets that target Turkish citizens
 - between 18 and 34 years old and
 - over 35 years old
 - offering a raffle of earning digital discount coupons as an incentive (either 100 or 200 Turkish Lira) with 1 in 20 chances
 - conversion campaign to increase sample collection efficiency without causing any observable imbalance in sample demographics (Neundorf and Öztürk 2021)

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- **Logistics**

- Intentionally avoided “New York University” to prevent partisan self-selection into survey.
- Through a new page called “Istanbul Social Sciences Research Center (ISBAM)” with an original logo.

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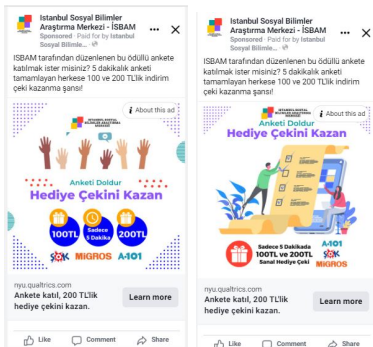
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- The recruitment ads prompted the following text to the target population:
 - “Do you want to participate in ISBAM’s survey? Everybody who completes the survey will get a chance to win 100 or 200 Turkish Lira discount coupons!”¹.->100 Turkish Lira is approximately \$5.5 by September 6, 2022.
 - The advertisement body also included the logos of three major market chains

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- August 24-5, 2022: The Meta ads directed to the Pilot experiment
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- August 26-30, 2022: The Meta ads directed to a pre-registered and IRB-approved Qualtrics survey
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 - Mediators: emotions and perceptions questions
 - Outcomes: political participation questions, and donation allocation questions

Research Design: Experimental Design

Treatment Groups		
Group 1: Institutional Electoral Interventions	Group 2: Extra-Institutional Electoral Interventions	Group 3: Control Group
Attention please! Read the hypothetical, short news article below carefully! After you finish, we will ask some questions about this text.		
<p>"Recently, the government has prepared a new legislative proposal for a law change regarding the electoral system. If this proposal is approved by the parliamentary majority, it will authorize the government to change the laws. If the parliamentary majority supports this proposal, there will be significant changes in the electoral districts.</p> <p>According to this change, some existing constituencies will be merged, and new electoral districts will be created. Experts argue that with this new regional system, the government can gain 15 more seats in the parliament. Therefore, experts suggest that this change could significantly affect the upcoming general elections."</p>	<p>"Recently, the government has prepared a new extraordinary Decree-Law proposal for a law change regarding the election system. If this Decree-Law proposal is carried out under the extraordinary powers, it will empower the government to change the laws unilaterally. If the government unilaterally implements this decree without the majority of the parliament, there will be significant changes in the electoral districts.</p> <p>According to this change, some existing constituencies will be merged, and new electoral districts will be created. Experts argue that with this new regional system, the government can gain 15 more seats in the parliament. Therefore, experts suggest that this change could significantly affect the upcoming general elections."</p>	<p>"Recently, the government has prepared a new legislative proposal for a law change regarding the electoral system. This change is one of the prerequisites of the European Union Harmonization Process and will positively affect Turkey's accession to the European Union. If the parliamentary majority supports this proposal, there will be significant changes in the electoral districts.</p> <p>According to this change, some existing constituencies will be merged, and new electoral districts will be created. Experts argue that with this new regional system, the government can gain 15 more seats in the parliament. Therefore, experts suggest that this change could significantly affect the upcoming general elections."</p>
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Research Design: Experimental Design

- **Outcome Operationalization**

“Suppose you have 500 Turkish Lira to donate. Please allocate your 500 TL among the following four Non-Governmental Organizations as you wish. Donations should amount to 500 TL in total.”

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- Four NGOs in a randomized order:

- ① *"Non-Governmental Organizations Against Violence Against Women,"*
- ② *"Non-Governmental Organizations for the Protection of Stray Animals,"*
- ③ *"Non-Governmental Organizations Against Poverty." and*
- ④ *"Independent Election Monitoring Non-Governmental Organizations."*

Sample Description

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	Mean	Std.Dev.	Min	Max
Woman	0.54	0.50	0	1
College Graduate	0.46	0.50	0	1
18-34	0.47	0.50	0	1
35-54	0.40	0.49	0	1
+55	0.13	0.33	0	1
Turkish Ethnicity	0.85	0.36	0	1
Minority	0.31	0.46	0	1
Previously Voted	0.80	0.40	0	1
Voted for AKP	0.38	0.49	0	1
Extra-Institutional Group	0.31	0.46	0	1
Institutional Group	0.35	0.48	0	1
Control Group	0.34	0.47	0	1

Sample Description

	Sample Proportion	Population Proportion
Woman, 18-34	27.06	17.66
Woman, 35-54	22.54	18.31
Woman, +55	4.43	14.38
Man, 18-34	19.72	18.36
Man, 35-54	17.91	18.58
Man, +55	8.35	12.70

Note:

Source: Address Based Population Registration System, 2021.

Figure 2: Sample Population Comparison

Sample Description

	All Sample	Control	Institutional	Extra-Institutional	p-value from F-test
Woman	0.54	0.56	0.55	0.51	0.206
College Graduate	0.46	0.44	0.46	0.48	0.307
18-34	0.47	0.49	0.44	0.48	0.767
35-54	0.40	0.38	0.42	0.41	0.538
+55	0.13	0.13	0.14	0.12	0.644
Turk Ethnicity	0.85	0.83	0.85	0.86	0.306
Minority	0.31	0.31	0.30	0.33	0.523
Previously Voted	0.80	0.82	0.80	0.78	0.209
Voted for AKP	0.38	0.37	0.39	0.38	0.804

Figure 3: Balance Table

Model

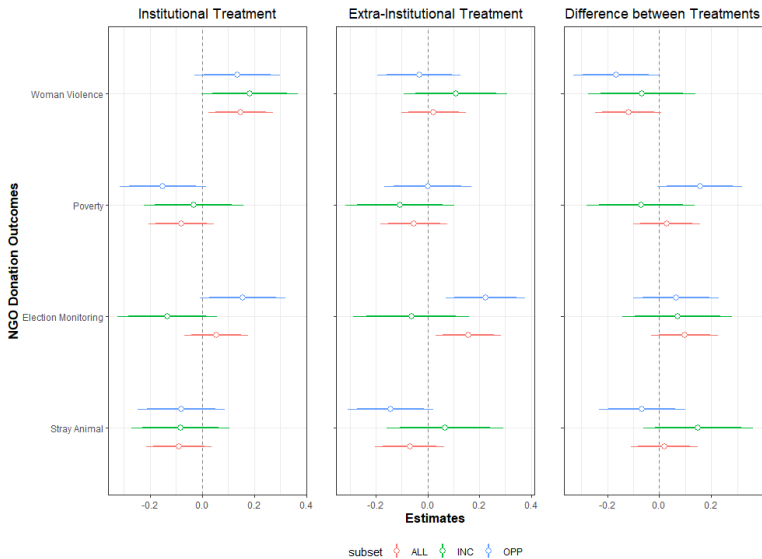
- To measure the treatments' effect on donation behavior, I regressed the donation amount allocated to election monitoring NGOs on treatment indicators:

$$Donation_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 T_Institutional_i + \beta_2 T_ExtraInstitutional_i + \epsilon_i$$

for each participant i .

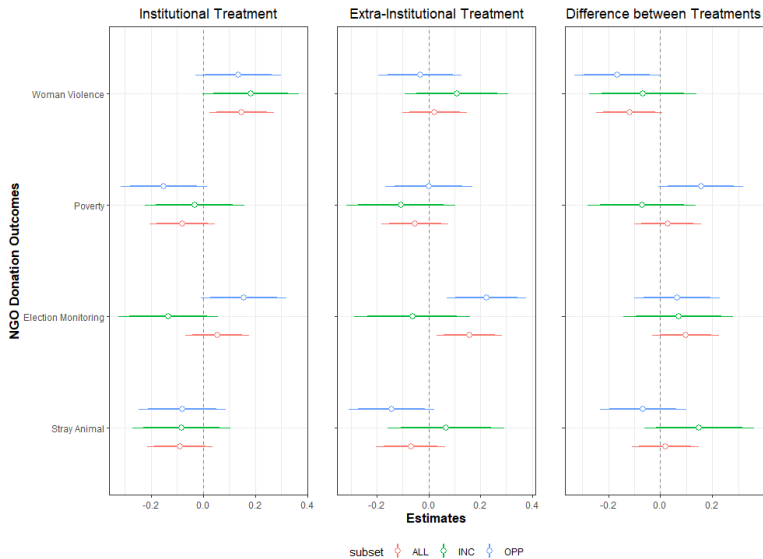
- all models with Holm-Bonferroni corrected standard errors

Results:



Data Source: Researcher's Original Survey Experiment

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Table 4: Donation Behavior for Monitoring NGO (Logistic Regression)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	Donation for Monitoring (Binary)		
	(Opposition Supporters)	(Incumbent Supporters)	(All Sample)
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Extra-Institutional	0.487** (0.206)	-0.194 (0.260)	0.239 (0.160)
Institutional	0.021 (0.202)	-0.108 (0.239)	-0.040 (0.154)
Constant	0.236* (0.141)	0.121 (0.175)	0.191 (0.110)
Observations	601	393	994
Log Likelihood	-401.175	-272.088	-679.451
Akaike Inf. Crit.	808.351	550.176	1,364.901

Note:

* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

Figure 6: Binary Outcome

Robustness Checks:

- I ran all models with various pre-registered and political participation-related covariates
 - Political knowledge covariates
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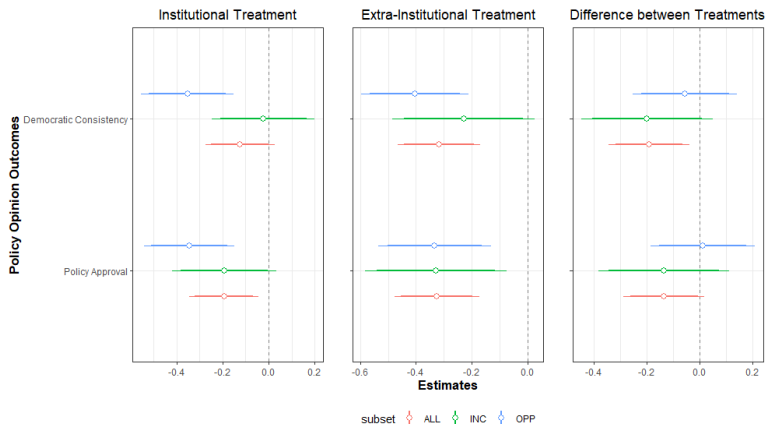
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- Robustness checks with alternative outcomes variables of self-reported political participation.

Causal Mechanisms

Legitimacy

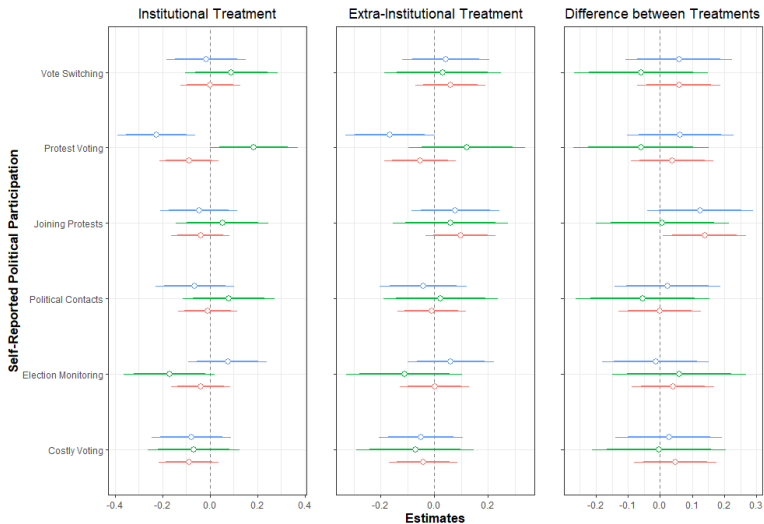


Data Source: Researcher's Original Survey Experiment

Figure 7: Legitimacy

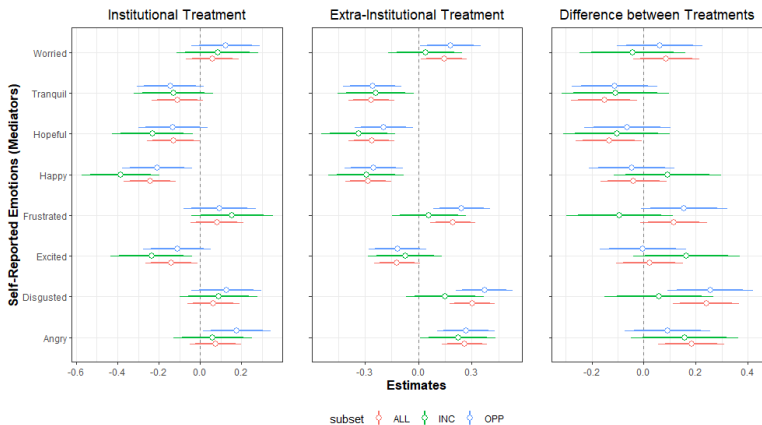
Causal Mechanisms

2) Informational Channels



Causal Mechanisms

9) Aversive Emotions



Data Source: Researcher's Original Survey Experiment

Figure 9: Aversive Emotion

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"Electoral Manipulations and Political Participation"

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- An original survey experiment in Turkey with Meta convenience sample
- Results:
 - ① Extra-institutional manipulations are more likely to lead to political participation
 - ② Political affiliation moderates this relationship
 - ③ Informational channels and aversive emotions might be responsible for this phenomenon

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