

Essays on the Political Economy of Media and Information Manipulation

by

Fatih Serkant Adiguzel

Department of Political Science
Duke University

Date: _____

Approved:

Erik Wibbels, Supervisor

Pablo Beramendi, Supervisor

Timur Kuran

Scott de Marchi

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Political Science
in the Graduate School of Duke University
2022

ABSTRACT

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Abstract

The last two decades have seen an emergence of a new regime type, called mixed regimes, whose democratically elected leaders have slowly eroded institutions of accountability. Unlike democratic breakdowns, such erosions take place in incremental steps, which create uncertainties about what the cumulative effects of these steps will lead to in the future. This dissertation focuses on media and information manipulation to understand how unconstrained leaders use media to sustain popular support and how they leverage such uncertainties for their benefit. I first analyze how governments in mixed regimes manipulate the informational environment in an era of conglomerate-owned media. I argue that state contracts in non-media sectors represent an essential tool for influencing media coverage. I use machine learning to construct a media bias measure and analyze the universe of all state contracts and a vast corpus of newspaper articles from Turkey. I show that conglomerate-owned newspapers are more pro-government than other newspapers. More importantly, this bias grows with the government's discretion. In return, these conglomerates secure state contracts on favorable terms. Chapter 3 takes the analysis further and analyzes specific information manipulation strategies in captured media. In particular, I answer the following question: how do governments in mixed regimes manipulate economic news in times of economic crisis? Although economic crises may cause regimes to collapse, we see that unconstrained leaders in mixed regimes are resilient even in times of crisis. Using the 2021 currency crisis from Turkey and analyzing the

entire corpora of three media outlets, this chapter examines the prevalence of different information manipulation strategies using various machine learning and dictionary methods. While these two chapters focus on media, Chapter 4 instead focuses on how such information manipulation strategies affect citizens in critical junctures, e.g., when asked about institutional changes that pave the way for unconstrained executives. In this chapter, I argue that aspiring unconstrained leaders are more likely to gain popular support when they present checks and balances as obstacles to getting things done. In doing so, these leaders exploit a critical tension between the possibility of gridlock and the abuse of power, which is inherent in democratic institutions. Using cross-national data and leveraging an original survey experiment from Turkey, I show that effective checks and balances decrease democracy satisfaction and that aspiring unconstrained leaders are more likely to gain popular support when they present these institutions as obstacles to getting things done. More interestingly, respondents perceive their gridlock justification to dismantle checks and balances as a pro-democratic attempt to remove the barriers to a policy-responsive regime. Overall, this dissertation project helps us understand how information manipulation in mixed regimes sustains popular support for unconstrained leaders.

To my mother and Alp Kaan Dönmez. See you down the road.

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1

Introduction

“We all support your actions, the special military operation that is proceeding there,” said one pilot to Putin during a meeting just days after Russia invaded Ukraine (MacFarquhar, 2022). Although this specific dialogue might be staged by Putin’s media team or the pilot might engage in “preference falsification” given the media coverage (Kuran, 1997), recent survey evidence using list experiments found that 53% still support Putin’s actions in Ukraine (Chapkovski and Schaub, 2022). Since he became president in 2000, he continued to be one of the most popular leaders in the world (Frye et al., 2017), despite democratic erosions in the country.

However, having a popular unconstrained leader is not unique to Russia either. The last two decades have seen an emergence of a new regime type, called mixed regimes, which is characterized by no horizontal accountability and unfair but competitive elections (Levitsky and Way, 2010). Such regimes have born out of because democratically elected leaders have been slowly expanding their authority and removing institutional constraints on the executive, a process called *incumbent takeovers* (Svolik, 2020) or *executive aggrandizement* (Bermeo, 2016). As Figure 1.1 shows below, democratic erosions have been widespread in the last two decades. Despite

such erosions, various unconstrained leaders continue to enjoy genuine popular support from their constituencies. Given that unfair but competitive elections provide citizens a mechanism to replace such leaders, this is puzzling. More interestingly, the gradual process of democratic erosion with incremental steps gives citizens ample time and opportunities, e.g., elections, to throw aspiring unconstrained leaders out of office. Yet, they do not take action (Przeworski, 2019). How do these unconstrained leaders keep popular support as they remove checks and balances?

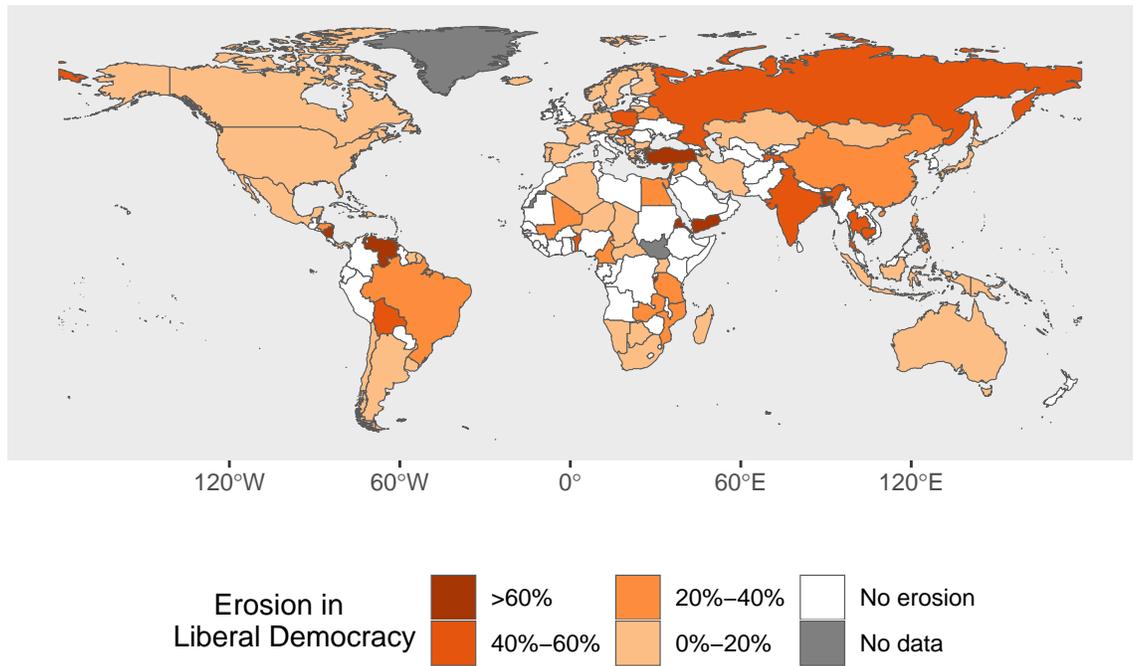


FIGURE 1.1: Reduction in Liberal Democracy Index (2020-2000). Data source: Coppedge et al. (2020).

The literature has various explanations of why democracies turn into authoritarian regimes. While institutional accounts see electoral institutions (Reynolds, 2010), power sharing institutions (Graham et al., 2017), political parties and party systems (Lust and Waldner, 2016; Seawright, 2012; Mainwaring, 1993), and the lack of strong judiciary (Ginsburg, 2003) as the main reasons, political economy approach puts the

blame on the level of income (Przeworski et al., 2000; Boix and Stokes, 2003; Maeda, 2010), the distribution of income (Boix, 2003; Acemoglu and Robinson, 2005), natural resources (Ross, 2001; Mazzuca, 2013), and macroeconomic performance (Tang et al., 2017; Gasiorowski, 1995; Brender and Drazen, 2007; Bernhard et al., 2001). Lastly, external factors such as international leverage and linkage and foreign aid are related to authoritarianism (Levitsky and Way, 2010; Pevehouse, 2002; Djankov et al., 2008).¹

However, most of this evidence aims to explain democratic breakdowns, which is a rapid collapse of democratic institutions, usually by the regime outsiders.² But, one has to distinguish democratic erosions from democratic breakdowns (Schedler, 1998). Democratic breakdowns are significantly different than democratic erosions because, in the former, regime change occurs with easily verifiable institutional changes. For instance, military juntas usually capture the radio station (or the TV station) and announce that they suspend the constitution and arrest elected leaders. On the other hand, democratic erosion is characterized by a series of subtle and incremental institutional changes that are harder to detect than abrupt regime changes (Varol, 2014).

Unlike the literature on democratic breakdowns, the literature on democratic erosions is far less developed (Mainwaring and Bizzarro, 2019; Mukand and Rodrik, 2020). Only recently we see that the focus shifted to the latter. Some scholars argued that polarization increases people's willingness to accept an unconstrained but partisan ruler (Singer, 2018; Svobik, 2020; Şaşmaz et al., 2022). When citizens are polarized, the benefit of having a co-partisan ruler outweighs any democratic alternative challenger. Interestingly, polarization makes citizens willing to accept

¹ See Lust and Waldner (2015) for an extensive review of the literature.

² That being said, sometimes democratically elected leaders are also responsible for democratic breakdowns, which is the case, for instance, when Fujimori suspended the constitution and shut down the congress (Maeda, 2010).

unconstrained rulers even when they oppose authoritarianism because they cannot verify the ruler's real intentions (Nalepa et al., 2019; Waldner and Lust, 2018). This uncertainty around each incremental institutional change is a distinct characteristic of democratic erosion that requires further investigation.

Scholars argue that these incremental changes can be presented as being consistent with democratic norms or innocuous to democratic setting (Ginsburg and Huq, 2018a). For instance, a government can defend a voter ID law by arguing that it would improve election security while they use it to limit suffrage. Similarly, an attempt to pack the constitutional court can be defended on the grounds of providing faster judicial reviews. Although they look harmless for the democratic regime in isolation, the cumulative impact of such changes turns liberal democracies into mixed regimes (Ginsburg and Huq, 2018a). That is why democratic erosion can only be prevented if people anticipate the long-term impacts of each gradual step (Przeworski, 2019; Luo and Przeworski, 2019). The real challenge is then to understand how each incremental step that paves the way to mixed regimes can be justified as consistent with democratic norms (Ginsburg and Huq, 2018b).

This dissertation takes up this challenge and focuses on the media and informational environment to understand how aspiring unconstrained leaders capture media outlets and manipulate information to both sustain their popular support and prevent people from reacting against the gradual decay of democracy.

Figure 1.2 below might give us some hints about the rest of the dissertation. The figure shows the number of countries that witnessed a 20% yearly increase in their media bias against opposition parties and candidates. This figure implies that unconstrained leaders are popular because they are skillful in information manipulation. Indeed, the literature has shown that, unlike their 20th-century counterparts that relied on fear, unconstrained leaders of our era deeply care about their popular legitimacy and engage in information manipulation to keep their legitimacy high

(Guriev and Treisman, 2019).

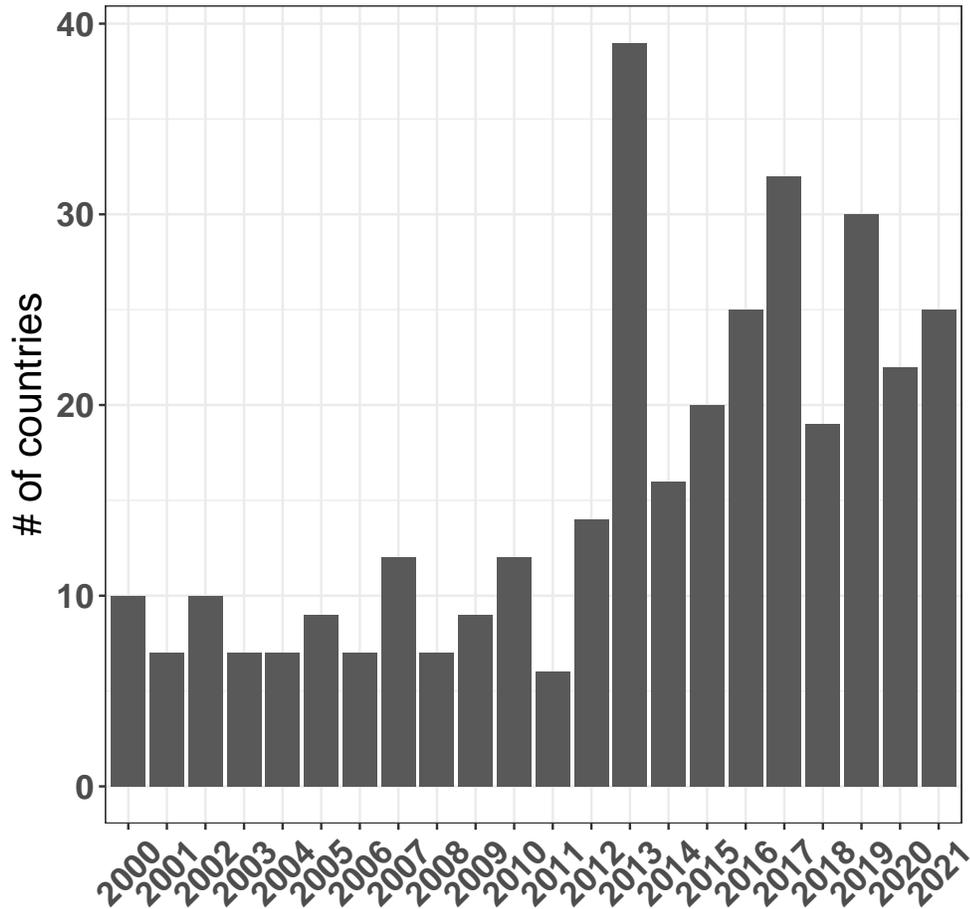


FIGURE 1.2: Number of countries with more than 20% increase in their media bias index. Data source: Coppedge et al. (2020).

The next chapter investigates specific ways through which governments capture media outlets, which are increasingly owned by big conglomerates. Over the last two decades, while the main form of authoritarianism took the form of democratic erosion, another parallel global trend took place in print media. With the spread of the broadband internet, newspapers' advertising revenues declined dramatically. Over time, these failing newspapers are increasingly bought by conglomerates who have stakes in various industries (Reporters without Borders, 2016). Since information

manipulation in privately-owned media outlets requires focusing on both the government and media owners, Chapter 2 brings together these two different global trends and asks the following question: how do governments in mixed regimes manipulate the informational environment in an era of conglomerate-owned media?

In Chapter 2, I focus on a specific type of favor exchanges to understand how governments capture media outlets in an era of conglomerate-owned media. With the transformation of media markets and the widespread conglomerate ownership, as well as the increased prevalence of mixed regimes, I argue that state contracts in non-media sectors are an essential tool for the government to influence media coverage. Capturing media outlets with such subtle tools also fits the essence of democratic erosion, which takes place in subtle and gradual steps. Unlike coercive media strategies such as censorship (Shadmehr and Bernhardt, 2015) and revoking broadcasting licenses (Knight and Tribin, 2019a), capturing media outlets with more subtle methods also makes it more effective for propaganda purposes. It is because people are more likely to discount information if they believe that the source is biased (Gehlbach and Sonin, 2014; Besley and Prat, 2006; Knight and Tribin, 2019b). As a result, governments prefer to engage in a collusive relationship with conglomerate-owned media owners using state contracts in exchange for pro-government coverage.

I test this argument by constructing two sources of original data: newspaper articles and state contracts. I collect around 400,000 newspaper articles from major newspapers in Turkey and the universe of all state contracts distributed by every procuring agency in the country (around 1.5 million). Then, I construct a context-aware bias measure using machine learning, which is a pro-government slant measure for each newspaper at a high-frequency level (daily and weekly). The results show that newspapers whose owners do business primarily in the construction sector are more pro-government than other newspapers. Moreover, the difference between contractor-owned newspapers and others seems to grow after a legal change that gave

the government more discretion in distributing state contracts in the construction sector. Analyzing the terms of state contracts reveals that this favor in the form of a pro-government slant is indeed returned with hefty state contracts. The results show that media-owner contractors secure state contracts on favorable terms. For instance, their subsidiary firms are more likely to be single bidders. Similarly, the procuring agency is more likely to use special clauses and apply non-open auction methods when media owners' subsidiary firms participate in auctions. As a result, state contracts are more expensive, and rebate values are lower when media owners' subsidiary firms win the bid.³

While Chapter 2 proposes a specific method that governments use to capture media, it leaves one important question unanswered: what kind of information manipulation strategies do media outlets publish once they are politically captured? In Chapter 3, I focus on economic news to answer this question for two reasons. First, the popular legitimacy of mixed regimes is mainly driven by the widespread perception that these unconstrained leaders are competent in managing the economy (Guriev and Treisman, 2019). This perception is critical because the failure to convince citizens about their competency during an economic crisis can bring about the collapse of the regime (Geddes, 1999; Haggard and Kaufman, 1995; Tang et al., 2017). Since one of the primary reasons for citizens' inaction against democratic erosion is the widespread belief that unconstrained leaders are more competent in economic affairs, we have to understand how these leaders make citizens form these beliefs.

Second, the economy is a critical domain in which censorship or outright denial are not options since citizens experience the bad economy in their lives anyway and use that information to benchmark against the news (Rozenas and Stukal, 2019).

³ The rebate value is the percentage reduction of the final contract value relative to the estimated cost. A lower rebate value (lower percentage reduction) means a higher contract value than the estimated cost.

This suggests that governments need to engage in complex information manipulation strategies to convince their citizens about the government's competence.

In Chapter 3, I use the 2021 currency crisis in Turkey and analyze the entire corpora of three media outlets (two pro-government and one opposition outlet). Using machine learning and dictionary methods, I analyze the prevalence of three information manipulation strategies: selective attribution, reference manipulation, and agenda-setting. Selective attribution happens when positive economic news is attributed to government actors, and negative economic news is not censored but attributed to external actors (Rozenas and Stukal, 2019). Reference manipulation, on the other hand, aims to change people's reference points which they use to evaluate how the domestic economy performs (Aytaç, 2018; Kayser and Peress, 2012). One critical reference point is cross-country benchmarking: citizens consider how their domestic economy performs relative to foreign economies. This suggests that citizens are less likely to hold their government responsible for a bad economy during a financial crisis. On the other hand, agenda-setting either tries to shift the attention away from the economy toward other topics or from certain economic issues in favor of others.

The results show that pro-government outlets are more likely to selectively attribute positive economic news to government actors and negative news to external actors. However, as the crisis intensifies, this selective attribution mechanism is not used more intensively. Instead, I find evidence for reference manipulation strategy: the results show that pro-government outlets negatively portray foreign economies as the crisis deepens. Last, I find that while pro-government outlets are not likely to publish fewer economic news stories as the crisis intensifies. However, there is evidence that they publish significantly fewer currency stories during the crisis, which is primarily driven by the massive depreciation of the currency. These two results give partial evidence for agenda-setting mechanism. These results shed light on specific

strategies unconstrained leaders use for information manipulation.

This chapter shows a clear mechanism for citizens' inaction against democratic erosions, even when economic conditions are not favorable. The results imply that the government manipulates how citizens perceive its economic competence by using different manipulation strategies.

These two chapters analyze the methods unconstrained leaders use to capture media outlets and the specific information manipulation strategies published by these outlets once they are captured. However, they do not tell us how such information manipulation strategies work in critical junctures, e.g., when they are asked about institutional changes that pave the way for the erosion of liberal democracy. It is in these critical junctures that Przeworski (2019) argues citizens should anticipate the danger before it is too late. I argue in Chapter 4 that people face a tradeoff between the possibility of gridlock and abuse of power, which is inherent in every democratic institution (McCubbins, 2001). Aspiring unconstrained leaders exploit this tension and use it for their benefit by leveraging their control of information channels. After showing this tradeoff using cross-national data, I present results from a survey experiment in which half of the respondents are shown an informational treatment. Similar to what citizens read in the media, informational treatment aims to reframe the costs of having extensive checks and balances on the executive by emphasizing the possibility of institutional gridlock.

The results show that respondents are more likely to support hypothetical presidential candidates when they present checks and balances as obstacles to getting things done. More interestingly, presenting these institutions as obstacles also makes respondents see their dismantling as less threatening to democracy. These results imply that some of the institutional changes that pave the way for unconstrained executives may not even be perceived as threats to democracy by the citizens, confirming the previous insights (Nalepa et al., 2019; Waldner and Lust, 2018).

In short, this dissertation aims to understand how aspiring unconstrained leaders manage to capture media, what they do once they capture it, and whether their information manipulation strategies prevent people from reacting in critical junctures.

Favor Exchanges and Pro-Government Media Bias

2.1 Introduction

Media freedom is one of the basic tenets of democracy. However, in our era of democratic backsliding, aspiring autocrats increasingly erode press freedom and capture media outlets to consolidate their power. These autocrats employ various methods to control the media, some of which are more subtle than others and harder to detect by the public. As a result of their success in manipulating the informational environment, scholars call the autocrats of our era as “informational autocrats” (Guriev and Treisman, 2019).

Leaders in democratically backsliding regimes, like any other regimes, need some support from elites and non-elites to stay in power, who are part of the winning coalition (De Mesquita et al., 2005). The regime’s stability depends on the coalitions supporting the leader (Svolik, 2012; Pepinsky, 2009) and the regimes lacking the support of business elites are more fragile (Rhee, 2002). That is why leaders share the spoils of the regime with actors within their coalitions in return for favors. These spoils can take different forms depending on the actor. While business elites within

the coalition enjoy favors such as access to cheap credits, tax breaks, or public contracts, non-elites enjoy access to privileged jobs, social assistance, or public goods. In return, while non-elites support the government in elections, elites' support for the government takes different forms, such as campaign donations, pro-government media coverage, or charity. One has to pay more attention to such favor exchanges because they are the mechanisms that drive democratic backsliding because of their impact on the cost of suppression and toleration (Esen and Gumuscu, 2021).

This paper focuses on a specific type of favor exchange between the government and its business elites. On the one hand, I study the terms of state contracts granted to media-owner conglomerates and compare these terms with the terms of other state contracts. While governments provide different types of favors, the sheer financial size of state contracts makes them the most attractive favors for conglomerates. Indeed, state contracts have become the key component of the competitive authoritarian regimes such as Turkey (Esen and Gumuscu, 2018; Emek and Acar, 2015) and Hungary (Dávid-Barrett and Fazekas, 2020). On the other hand, I look at how conglomerates reciprocate such favors in their media outlets with pro-government coverage. Similarly, while conglomerates return favors in various forms, the pro-government coverage in media is critical to sustaining popular support for informational autocrats of our era (Guriev and Treisman, 2019).

Governments can employ various methods to capture and control media outlets. Previous literature has focused chiefly on coercive media capture strategies such as censorship (Shadmehr and Bernhardt, 2015), revoking broadcasting licenses (Knight and Tribin, 2019a), or state advertising, which requires a collusive relationship between the government and the media owner (Di Tella and Franceschelli, 2011; Szeidl and Szucs, 2021). However, scant attention has been paid to empirically study state contracts, which are awarded to media owners' non-media businesses in return for media bias. Although formal models of media capture see state contracts as another

significant collusion channel (Gehlbach and Sonin, 2014; Besley and Prat, 2006), we do not have any systemic evidence on how these non-media opportunities affect media bias. This lack of attention becomes an even more severe problem in the face of an increasing conglomerate ownership in the media (Reporters without Borders, 2016). These conglomerates operate in various industries and have business stakes in non-media sectors. Therefore, any government favor to non-media businesses can have significant implications for the media industry.

Therefore, to understand both the transformation of the media markets across the world, which is dominated by conglomerates, as well as the attacks to media freedom, we have to shift our attention to conglomerates' non-media businesses and study the extent to which government favors to these non-media businesses affect resulting media bias.

Among different media capture strategies, I argue that state contracts are more important tools to capture media than media laws or regulations because they are politically more desirable for the government than other tools. These contracts are also financially more attractive for conglomerates than state advertising. Therefore, collusive relationships between conglomerates and government emerge, in which media outlets display significant pro-government biases while the government grants state contracts on favorable terms to conglomerates' non-media businesses.

State contracts are a politically more desirable strategy from the government's perspective. Unlike direct attacks such as censorship laws or broadcasting licenses, which are widely publicized, state contracts provide a less visible form of political media capture. This is because affected media outlets have no incentive to publicize such favors. Therefore, such subtle forms of media capture become a more effective strategy from the perspective of the government and "the fundamental constraint of propaganda" becomes less binding. This fundamental constraint posits that propaganda is less effective when governments explicitly attack and control the sources of

information (Gehlbach and Sonin, 2014; Besley and Prat, 2006; Knight and Tribin, 2019b), since people realize that the media outlets are biased and discount information coming from these biased sources. When governments explicitly attack the media outlets through media laws or regulatory institutions, people will be more likely to update their beliefs about the bias. However, subtle capture strategies, such as state contracts, can be more effective for propaganda purposes, and they help form a collusive relationship between government and media owners.

Moreover, state contracts are also financially very attractive for conglomerates than other subtler forms of media capture strategies, such as state advertising. These contracts involve much more significant sums of money than government advertising, which has been the focus of previous studies. In many countries, advertising markets, a tiny fraction of which belong to state advertising, are not financially attractive enough to incentivize conglomerate media owners who run a vast network of businesses in various industries. However, state purchases of goods and services constitute a sizeable portion of the national economies, which is around 15% of countries' GDP.¹

The primary reason why scant attention has been paid to empirically study state contracts and their effects on media bias is that testing any argument about media bias is difficult. The pro-government bias can take subtle forms and can be difficult to detect with automated methods. Constructing high-frequency media bias measures with human coders is time-consuming and costly, making any long-term analysis infeasible. In cases where automated methods were developed, certain words, such as partisan phrases (Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2010; Groseclose and Milyo, 2005) or corruption-relevant keywords (Szeidl and Szucs, 2021; Di Tella and Franceschelli, 2011), are used to construct media bias measures. However, these word-based ap-

¹ Source: <https://www.piie.com/blogs/realtime-economic-issues-watch/how-large-public-procurement-developing-countries>

proaches lack context, miss the dynamic nature of the bias, and ignore bias in cases where these words do not appear. In the absence of context-aware measures of media bias, the causal evidence on how state contracts affect media bias has been limited.

Testing the argument that state contracts affect media bias is even more difficult because it requires identifying media owners' non-media businesses and finding state contracts they have been awarded. In many settings, data availability on state contracts or business favors can be limited. Even when data on state contracts are publicly available, opaque media ownership relations can make it extremely difficult to track media owners' non-media businesses in various contexts.

I overcome these challenges in the context of Turkey and present compelling evidence that the government awards state contracts to media owners' non-media businesses on favorable terms while conglomerate-owned media is significantly more pro-government than others. I conduct two empirical analyses. First, I use a vast corpus of newspaper articles (around 400,000) published between 2007 and 2009 to analyze the pro-government bias in the conglomerate-owned media. To do so, I construct a context-aware bias measure using a state-of-the-art neural network model, which is an improvement over the commonly employed word-based and contextless bias measures. I also leverage a legal change in the procurement law in 2008, which gave the government more discretion in distributing state contracts in the construction sector, to estimate the effect of favor exchanges on media bias. In the second empirical analysis, I focus on the government's favors in the form of favorable terms in state contracts. I leverage another original data and use the universe of all contracts distributed by the state between 2010 and 2020 (around 1.5 million contracts) to analyze the terms under which media owners' non-media businesses receive state contracts. To do so, I identify every state contract given to the media owners' non-media businesses and compare their terms with other state contracts.

In the first analysis, I show that conglomerate-owned newspapers are significantly

more pro-government than other newspapers. Moreover, conglomerates operating in construction, a high-rent sector, have even higher pro-government biases than other conglomerates. This bias grows with the government's discretion in awarding state contracts. Leveraging a legal change announcement in May 2008 that gave the government more discretion in distributing state contracts in the construction sector and using a difference-in-differences analysis, I show that contractor-owned newspapers display higher pro-government bias than others after this legal change.

In the second analysis, I demonstrate that the government reciprocates conglomerates' pro-government coverage favor. The results show that conglomerates' non-media businesses are more likely to participate in non-open auctions, be single bidders and enjoy higher contract prices and lower rebate values.²

To show that the novel context-aware bias measure does not drive the results, I repeat the analyses with a more conventional word-based approach used in the literature (Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2010). In particular, I identify major partisan phrases used by the incumbent and opposition parties by analyzing all parliamentary speeches during the Twenty-Fourth Parliamentary Sessions of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey to create another bias measure. The results from this alternative bias measure also support the main findings.

This chapter provides several contributions to democratic backsliding literature by showing a clear channel through which governments maintain collusive relationships with the conglomerates. Therefore, it sheds light on aspiring autocrats' playbooks by uncovering an underappreciated but huge lever that governments can use to influence press coverage in an era of conglomerate-owned media. It also contributes to the political economy of media literature, since the previous contributions focused on more explicit attacks, such as censorship (Shadmehr and Bernhardt, 2015; Knight

² The rebate value is the percentage reduction of the final contract value relative to the estimated cost. A lower rebate value (lower percentage reduction) means a higher contract value than the estimated cost.

and Tribin, 2019a) or subtle but not financially attractive capture strategies (at least for conglomerates), such as state advertising (Di Tella and Franceschelli, 2011; Szeidl and Szucs, 2021). Last, this chapter uses a context-aware media bias measure that directly incorporates evidence from the sentences in which pro-government bias is embedded by relying on the latest innovations in natural language processing. This context-aware measure of bias is widely applicable, and offers an improved alternative to commonly employed contextless word-based approaches to measuring media bias (Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2010; Groseclose and Milyo, 2005). I provide resources on how it can be easily adapted for different country contexts.

2.2 Theory

Governments have a menu of media capture strategies. Some of these capture strategies are explicit, such as censorship laws, regulatory institutions, or direct takeovers of media outlets. Other capture strategies, such as state advertising, state contracts, or business favors are more subtle, since they require a collusive relationship between media owners and governments, which can only happen when they exchange favors.

The previous literature has shown that there are limits to propaganda. When governments explicitly attack media freedom, people can detect bias and discount information. They can even stop consuming the media outlet completely and switch to more objective outlets (Besley and Prat, 2006; Gehlbach and Sonin, 2014; Knight and Tribin, 2019b). In Turkey, for instance, newspapers bought by groups close to the government lost around 13% of their circulation after the sales (Yıldırım et al., 2020).

Therefore, more subtle forms of media capture strategies are politically more desirable for the government, although they can be economically expensive. When governments and media owners enter into a collusive relationship, both sides have to provide favors to each other. While media owners' favors are to provide pro-

government coverage in their outlets, government favors can take many forms, such as state advertising or state contracts. The previous literature on favors primarily studied the effects of state advertising. Szeidl and Szucs (2021) provide evidence from Hungary and show that newspapers that benefit from state advertising are less likely to cover corruption scandals. In a similar spirit, Di Tella and Franceschelli (2011) show a negative correlation between government advertising and the coverage of corruption scandals.

Although these studies give substantial evidence on state advertising effects, we still lack evidence on a more critical type of government favor, namely the state contracts, which are granted to media owners' non-media businesses. A recent critical development in the media industry increasingly makes state advertising less attractive for media owners. Many media outlets are now owned by conglomerates, who have stakes in various non-media industries (Reporters without Borders, 2016). For most of the conglomerates, their interests in journalism are "secondary to the defence of their personal interests" (Reporters without Borders, 2016, 9).

Most of the time, conglomerates' media shares constitute a tiny fraction of their overall holdings, making stakes in other sectors relatively more important. Although adding a media outlet to a business empire can bring prestige, some of these conglomerates merely see their media outlets as a political investment to push for their personal stakes (Grossman et al., 2020). In the absence of any non-media favors to conglomerates, however, their interests in media outlets, especially in print media, can seem puzzling given the overall financial problems in the print media industry due to the spread of the internet and the tiny volume of state advertising in print media.

The media industry itself does not offer a bright future to conglomerates who have invested billions of dollars in other sectors. Newspaper revenues have been declining with the spread of the internet. Revenues from online advertising could

not match the success of revenues that used to come from offline advertising in print media, stirring discussions about the decline of newspapers (Rosenwald, 2016). As a result, the media industry itself does not offer a solid stream of revenues to attract big conglomerates. State advertising could generate extra revenues for pro-government conglomerates and assuage the declining trend; however, the size of the state advertising market itself is not financially attractive, especially in developing countries with small advertising markets. Even in the U.S., where the advertising market is by far the largest globally, the total advertising expenditures in newspapers, magazines, TV, radio, and online are only 0.92% of GDP (Nakamura and Soloveichik, 2015). However, only a tiny fraction of these advertising expenditures belong to state advertising.

In contrast, state contracts are financially very attractive compared to state advertising since state purchases constitute a sizeable portion of every major economy in the world. In Turkey, for instance, where the data on state advertising exists for 2017, the total market for government notices and advertisements was around 172 million Turkish lira in 2017³ (0.00005% of GDP). However, the total value of state contracts was around 230 billion Turkish lira (about 60 billion USD) in the same year (7% of GDP).⁴

As a result, using media outlets to secure state contracts for non-media businesses becomes an attractive strategy for conglomerates, since media operations cannot sustain solid revenues while states regularly offer hefty contracts. Given their non-media business stakes, media outlets turn into operational expenses to secure state contracts from the government.⁵

³ Source: <https://odatv4.com/yeni-safak-yandas-olmasin-da-kim-olsun-13012015.html>

⁴ Source: http://dosyalar.kik.gov.tr/gene1/Raporlar/2017_kamu_al\0T1\imlar\0T1\i_izleme_raporu_rev3.pdf

⁵ Indeed, leaked tapes from an investigation in Turkey indicated that some conglomerates are not so keen on owning media outlets but do so anyway to secure state contracts in other sectors. Some

Ignoring non-media opportunities also misrepresents how conglomerates maximize their revenues and use media outlets for their benefits. When we focus on state advertising as the only possible collusion channel, we ignore the fact that government compensation can take place outside the media industry and assume that a collusive relationship is possible only when government compensations in the media industry are high enough. Accordingly, the regulatory institutions focus solely on the media industry and take measures to regulate state advertising and cross-media ownership while ignoring favors in non-media. However, conglomerates can incur some losses in specific sectors to create even higher profits in others, since they maximize returns from their overall portfolio instead of maximizing revenues from a particular sector. When we adopt this portfolio maximization logic of the conglomerate, we better understand how media outlets can be useful tools in securing government favors.

Conglomerates, of course, are not uniform in terms of their portfolio allocations. While some conglomerates operate in sectors in which states play more dominant roles in terms of both regulations and purchases, others could be in sectors with minimal state presence. Such heterogeneity ultimately affects conglomerates' incentives to enter into collusive relationships with the government. To the extent that the sectors in which they operate offer more political rents from such collusive behavior, the conglomerates will face different incentive structures for exchanging favors with the government.

The size of the sector and the size of the state purchases within that sector determine how much rent is going to be distributed by the government. After all, governments cannot maintain a collusive relationship if there is no state contract to distribute. State presence is heavier in certain sectors. One critical sector in which state contracts are lucrative is construction because the most expensive state

of these conglomerates even lose money on media operations. Source: <http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/havuzda-paralar-boyle-depolandi-103021>

contracts tend to be infrastructure projects.

Moreover, conglomerates can self-select themselves into certain sectors with the hope of benefiting from political rents. Specific sectors are more likely to attract cronies because of low barriers. For instance, sectors such as service and construction require less high-capital investment, research and development (R&D) costs, and skilled labor compared to sectors such as manufacturing,⁶ which returns investment only over the long term (Gürakar, 2016).

As a result, conglomerates operating in construction and service sectors will be more willing to enter into collusive relationships with the government because their expected political rents are higher. They will also be more willing to tolerate losses in the media, as they expect higher returns in non-media sectors as a result of favor exchanges with the government. This means that they can afford to have even higher pro-government bias in their outlets.

How does the government benefit from such collusive relationships? After all, bias causes media outlets to lose customers and this undermines the success of the propaganda, which is known as the “fundamental constraint” (Gehlbach and Sonin, 2014; Besley and Prat, 2006). However, not all media capture strategies equally suffer from this fundamental constraint.

Forming collusive relationships to capture the media becomes more effective than explicit attacks on media outlets for a couple of reasons. When government and media owners enter into collusive relationships willingly, they have no incentive to publicize their favor exchanges. In contrast, coercive media capture strategies are more likely to be publicized by media outlets, since such strategies, such as a new censorship law, force media outlets to change their content. When such capture strategies are

⁶ Although construction sector also requires some capital, it does not require any R&D, and return on investment takes place in a shorter time span. Moreover, sub-contracting is widespread in the construction sector, meaning that cronies can simply delegate the job to other construction companies and still enjoy the rents.

more publicized, citizens are more likely to believe that the media outlets are biased, making them discount information even more.⁷ Hence, the government’s overall propaganda attempts become less effective when they employ explicit capture strategies. As a result, subtle forms of political media capture, such as state contracts, are politically more desirable for the government, since fewer people are likely to update their beliefs about the bias of the outlets after these favor exchanges.

Although some consumers can stop consuming biased outlets, having partisan media is still helpful for the government because partisan media affects the electorate (DellaVigna and Kaplan, 2007) and causes further polarization (De Benedictis-Kessner et al., 2019). Since polarization helps autocrats stay in power (Graham and Svulik, 2020; Svulik, 2020), having partisan media is helpful to keep partisan loyalists in line, even though some politically moderate people stop consuming partisan media outlets.

As a result, I expect that pro-government coverage in conglomerates’ media outlets are reciprocated by state contracts on favorable terms. While conglomerates’ outlets should be more pro-government due to the possibility of access to state contracts with favorable terms, pro-government bias should increase as the government’s discretion to distribute rents increases. Similarly, newspapers whose owners operate in high-rent sectors should be even more pro-government than other conglomerates’ newspapers.

2.2.1 Favor exchanges in Turkey

I use data from Turkey to test the implications of this theory for a couple of reasons. First, Turkey’s democracy deteriorated significantly over the last decade. Esen

⁷ To give an example, Hungarian daily, Népszabadság, put only one sentence on its front page in 22 official EU languages: “The freedom of the press in Hungary ceased to exist”. Many other outlets also published empty front pages to protest Hungary’s media law. See <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/jan/14/hungary-media-law-protest>

and Gumuscu (2021) see the cross-class coalition between the government, economic elite, and urban poor as the main reason for democratic backsliding. In particular, they argue that the inter-dependencies between these three groups decrease the cost of suppression and increase the cost of toleration. The government relies on economic elites for media support and private resources such as campaign donations or donations to pro-government charities. Similarly, it depends on the urban poor for electoral support. On the other hand, economic elites rely on the government for capital accumulation while they use the urban poor as the source of cheap labor. Urban poor, in return, are dependent on the government for social services and on the business elites for charity (Esen and Gumuscu, 2021, 1080). Among these inter-dependent relationships between the government, economic elites, and the urban poor, the symbiotic relationship between the government and business elites became the fundamental block of the competitive authoritarian regime in Turkey (Esen and Gumuscu, 2021, 2018; Buğra and Savaşkan, 2014). And the key components that form this fundamental block are state contracts (Esen and Gumuscu, 2018) and pro-government media coverage. Such a reward mechanism for pro-government businesses is also complemented by a punishment system for those outside the coalition, such as the opposition businesses or defectors (Esen and Gumuscu, 2018).

Second, Turkey's media market is dominated by various conglomerates, operating in different sectors. As a result, there are significant portfolio differences across conglomerates since only some of the conglomerates operate in mainly high-rent sectors, such as construction and service. This allows us to see how much the opportunities to collude in high-rent sectors, such as construction, affect media bias.

In addition to unavoidable state presence in construction due to infrastructural projects, the government also adopted a construction-led economic growth since it came to power. This strategy created a lot of opportunities to distribute political rents by increasing state demand. For instance, the election promise of building a

15,000-kilometer-long highway network not only increased votes for him (Akbulut-Yuksel et al., 2020), but it also helped him to distribute rents to connected firms. The government also revived a once defunct institution, Mass Housing Agency (*Toplu Konut İdaresi* (TOKİ)), to provide mass housing and expanded state’s participation in housing at an unprecedented scale (Arslanalp, 2018).

As a result, rent distribution to politically connected firms in the construction sector is much more prevalent (Gürakar, 2016). Although the public procurement law was initially designed in line with the EU regulations, the government has frequently made amendments to increase its discretion and facilitate rent distribution. In 2003, for instance, procurements within the scope of Mass Housing Agency had been granted certain exemptions, increasing discretion in housing projects (Gürakar, 2016). As a result, almost 80% of all TOKİ contracts go to firms connected to the government (Gürakar, 2016, 97).

Similarly, in 2008, another legal change, which I also leverage in this chapter, allowed the government to use restricted auctions in construction projects with an estimated cost above a certain threshold. This significantly increased the government’s discretion in high-stake construction auctions. Unsurprisingly, this legal change increased costs in construction procurements and increased the probability of winning firms being politically connected to the government (Gürakar and Meyersson, 2016).

2.3 Research Design

I test the implications of this theory in two steps: In the first step, I compare pro-government bias at the newspaper article level between 2007 and 2009 for conglomerate-owned and other newspapers, as well as comparing only conglomerate-owned newspapers among themselves by differentiating contractor-owned newspapers and others. To do so, I develop a high-frequency bias measure (daily) to track each newspaper over the analyzed time period. In the second step, I use state contract data to analyze

the terms by which conglomerates' non-media businesses secure state deals.

Isolating the effects of state contracts on media bias is difficult for two reasons: First, the government has a menu of media capture strategies to choose from and can employ multiple strategies at the same time. Second, the media coverage can be affected by other unobserved confounders at the newspaper level, such as reader preferences. To overcome these challenges, I restrict my attention to the period between May 2007 and January 2009. I leverage a major change in the procurement law that was announced in May 2008, which gave the government more discretion in distributing state contracts in the construction sector. With the legal change, the government gained the discretion to hold non-open auctions for construction contracts, if the estimated cost was above a certain threshold. Since the discretion over distributing state contracts in non-open auctions is higher, this increased the conglomerates' expected gains of forming collusive relationships with the government. I started collecting data one year before this legal change announcement, so the start date for the sample is May 2007.

I ended the sample in January 2009, since the government started more explicit attacks in 2009, making it more difficult to isolate the effect of favor exchanges. Between the years between 2007 and 2009, Turkey has its best ranking in press freedom based on Reporters without Borders' World Press Freedom Index (Yıldırım et al., 2020). Although its best ranking (98 out of 180 countries) shows that the media was far from being fully independent, what is critical for our analysis is that the government did not take a significantly coercive media capture action, such as censorship laws or legal fines, to target a specific outlet or an owner. In 2009, however, the government started using more coercive measures,⁸ which makes it

⁸ In 2009, Dogan Media, owned by the Dogan group, which is one of the biggest conglomerates in the country, was fined a tax penalty amounting to 2.53 billion USD, the most significant tax penalty in the country's history. Source: <https://www.reuters.com/article/turkey-dogan/update-3-turkey-govt-hits-media-group-dogan-with-tax-fine-idUKL815352620090908?>

more challenging to estimate the effect of state contracts. Extending the analysis post-2009 introduces the problem that the differences we see across newspapers could also be driven by these explicit attacks on media freedom. Therefore, I restricted the sample between 2007 and 2009, since coercive media capture strategies were not at play during this period.

Once I compare conglomerate-owned newspapers with others, as well as compare conglomerate-owned newspapers within themselves over time, I move to the second step of the argument—to analyze whether the government grants favors to these conglomerates in the form of state contracts with favorable terms. To do so, I identify all of the newspaper-owning conglomerates' non-media businesses. I then search these identified company names in the entire universe of all state contracts distributed by every procuring agency in Turkey, which is scraped from the public procurement authority's website. Then, I compare the terms on which these state contracts are granted with the state contracts secured by other firms. This analysis allows us to see whether conglomerates' non-media businesses enjoy certain privileges in getting these contracts.

The electronic platform, from which we can see the details about every procurement, was set up only in 2010. Therefore, the sample covers all state contracts between 2010 and 2020. Although the time window for this analysis does not overlap with the first analysis on media bias, these two analyses together tell us a coherent story. The first analysis focuses on media content and shows how newspapers' content changes in response to the government's discretion in distributing state contracts. The second analysis then shows how this discretion to distribute state contracts translates into favorable terms for newspaper-owning conglomerates. Any media bias analysis after 2009 could be affected by the other explicit attacks on media free-

edition-redirect=uk and <https://www.cnnturk.com/2009/ekonomi/sirketler/02/18/dogan.holdinge.rekor.ceza/514295.0/index.html>

dom. However, these explicit attacks primarily targeted media outlets that were not in collusive relationships with the government in the first place. Therefore, for those in a collusive relationship, the reason to have a pro-government coverage is still to have access to state contracts with favorable terms.

2.4 Data

I use extensive original data from three different domains to investigate favor exchanges between conglomerates and the government. First, I scraped newspaper articles from major national newspapers in Turkey. For some newspapers, digital archives were available, and I used custom scrapers to download all published articles within the analyzed period. Digital archives were not available for some newspapers, but they still hosted old articles from the analyzed period. In these cases, I used the website’s search tool and scraped every published article that included certain keywords about domestic politics and the economy. Last, some newspapers had neither digital archives nor did they host old articles. Therefore, it was not possible to scrape articles from the newspapers’ websites. Instead, I used the internet archive⁹ and common crawlers database¹⁰ and downloaded their entire database for the analyzed period.^{11 12}

⁹ <https://archive.org>

¹⁰ <https://commoncrawl.org>

¹¹ However, both internet archive crawlers and common crawlers do not crawl websites every day, creating gaps in certain newspapers’ data. Since we have no reason to expect that such gaps are correlated with our bias measures, we can treat this missingness as random. It could be correlated if the government shut down the internet or blocked certain newspaper websites at the times when the media was more critical. However, during the analyzed period, Turkey did not impose restrictions on access to the newspaper’s websites.

¹² Two problems about the database are worth mentioning: One major newspaper missing from the database is *Posta*, owned by Dogan Group within the analyzed period. The newspaper does not have a digital archive, nor does it host old articles on its servers. Moreover, neither the internet archive nor the common crawlers database has coverage for this newspaper within our period. The good thing is that the sample already includes three newspapers from the Dogan Group, and these newspapers, just like *Posta*, are considered mainstream, which presumably have similar coverage. Second, two newspaper’s—*Zaman* and *Cumhuriyet*—coverage is bad, making it

The second source of data comes from the Public Procurement Agency’s website, which publishes state contracts conducted by every procuring agency in Turkey. This data allows us to see, among other details, the type of service/good purchased, the auction type, the winning bid, the estimated cost, and the winning company. I use the winning company names to identify the contracts secured by the conglomerates’ non-media businesses.

Last, as an alternative to the novel media bias measure (more on this below), I analyze deputy speech data scraped from the Grand National Assembly of Turkey’s website,¹³ to identify the partisan phrases, which I employ to create a bias measure similar to the previous literature (Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2010; Grossman et al., 2020). In particular, using these parliamentary speeches, I identify the most common phrases used by the incumbent party (Justice and Development Party, *AKP* henceforth) and the main opposition party deputies (People’s Republican Party, *CHP* henceforth). There were 18,274 speeches in total from both parties.

2.4.1 Contractor-owned newspapers and others

The resulting database consists of 16 newspapers, 10 of which were conglomerate-owned during the analyzed period (2007-2009) (see Table 2.1 below). Six different conglomerate groups own these 10 newspapers. To identify these conglomerates’ main business areas between 2007-2009, I use data from the conglomerates’ websites, company and government reports. Once I identify the conglomerates’ non-media businesses through these reports, I use publicly available trade registries to find when they were founded, as well as how much capital was invested in each of these

impossible to track bias over time for these newspapers. Zaman’s coverage is bad because this newspaper was the mouthpiece of the Gulenists, the government’s former allies turned enemy after 2013. The government took control of the newspaper and destroyed all of its digital archives, making it impossible to recover articles from this newspaper. Cumhuriyet’s coverage is also inadequate because their archive is not publicly available, and they do not provide news articles in a machine-readable format within the analyzed period.

¹³ <https://www.tbmm.gov.tr>

Table 2.1: The list of newspapers in the sample (2007-2009)

Newspaper name	Owner	Conglomerate	Construction	Type
Hurriyet	Dogan	Yes	No	Mainstream
Sabah	State/Calik	Yes	Yes	Mainstream
Turkiye	Ihlas	Yes	Yes	Conservative
Gunes	Cukurova	Yes	No	Mainstream
Aksam	Cukurova	Yes	No	Mainstream
Vatan	Dogan	Yes	No	Mainstream
Cumhuriyet	Cumhuriyet Foundation	No	No	Left
Milli Gazete	Yeni Nesriyat	No	No	Conservative
Sol	Gelenek	No	No	Left
Milliyet	Dogan	Yes	No	Mainstream
Yeni Safak	Albayrak	Yes	Yes	Conservative
Zaman	Feza Gazetecilik	No	No	Conservative
Takvim	State/Calik	Yes	Yes	Conservative
Birgun	Birgun Yayıncılık	No	No	Left
Evrensel	Bulten Basın	No	No	Left
Haberturk	Ciner	Yes	No	Mainstream

companies.¹⁴

The portfolio allocation of these six conglomerates differs markedly and, among these six conglomerates, construction is the main activity only for Albayrak, Calik, and Ihlas groups.¹⁵ The remaining three groups—Dogan, Cukurova and Ciner—mainly operate in manufacturing and energy.¹⁶

The three conglomerates operating in the construction sector all secure state contracts through their construction companies during the analyzed period or before. For instance, through its construction company, Calik Group secured four big contracts in only the first half of 2007, two of which are giant urban transformation

¹⁴ <https://www.ticaretsicil.gov.tr>

¹⁵ Albayrak Group: <https://www.albayrak.com.tr/en/sectors-and-companies/>, Calik Group: <https://www.calik.com/en/homepage>, and Ihlas Group: <https://www.ihlas.com.tr/home>

¹⁶ Although these groups also have construction companies, they are not central to their operations. On their websites, they do not list construction as a sector in which they operate.

projects in the middle of Istanbul, worth around 750 million USD.¹⁷ Similarly, while the Albayrak group secured a housing project worth around 131 million USD, which was completed in 2008,¹⁸ the Ihlas group completed two giant residential projects that they secured from the Mass Housing Agency between 2007 and 2009.¹⁹

As a result, my main independent variable, *Contractor-owned newspaper*, takes the value 1, if the newspaper belongs to one of the three conglomerates whose primary business activity is construction. These newspapers are *Sabah*, *Türkiye*, *Yeni Safak*, and *Takvim*. Similarly, *Conglomerate-owned newspaper* is 1 whenever a newspaper is owned by one of the six conglomerate groups in the sample.

2.4.2 Measuring media bias

To track pro-government coverage over time, I constructed two different bias measures: The preferred media bias measure uses machine learning to construct a context-aware bias measure. The second measure is more conventional in the literature and searches for partisan phrases in the newspaper articles to construct a bias measure. However, the latter approach has specific problems, which makes it only an alternative measure.

To create the main media bias measure, I use a neural network model. In particular, I rely on a state-of-the-art language model called Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers (BERT) developed by Google scientists (Devlin et al., 2018). I use a BERT model pre-trained explicitly for the Turkish language (Schweter, 2020). The model is bidirectionally trained, allowing it to learn the context of a word. The model is pre-trained using a vast corpus of raw text.²⁰ Since the BERT model is

¹⁷ Source: <http://www.gazetevatan.com/-damat-in-ihale-bereketi-129739-ekonomi/>

¹⁸ Source: <http://www.emlakkonut.com.tr/PDFs/Faaliyet/2008-Emlak-Konut-GYO-Faaliyet-Raporu.pdf>

¹⁹ Source: <http://ihlasyapi.com.tr/assets/images/ekatalog.pdf>

²⁰ BERTurk, BERT model for Turkish, is trained using a corpus 35GB in size. See <https://github.com/stefan-it/turkish-bert>

pre-trained using large amounts of text, we can use the pre-trained model’s parameters and fine-tune the model on downstream tasks by adding only one task-specific layer on top of the pre-trained layers (Dodge et al., 2020). Hence, rather than training a neural network model from scratch, we can use a highly complex pre-trained model (for instance, the original large BERT model has 340 million parameters) and fine-tune it for our specific purpose. Since my purpose is to classify news articles based on their bias, I used a training data designed specifically for this task.

To fine-tune the Turkish BERT model, I created training data consisting of three labels: pro-government, anti-government, and neutral. I randomly selected newspaper articles from the database and labeled them based on their bias. I coded an article as anti-government when it directly criticized an existing policy, law, government members’ statements, or the government itself. This included criticisms to the government because of bad economic policies or covering government critiques (such as a statement from the opposition party) without any government input. Similarly, I also coded a news article as “anti-government” when it explicitly praised opposition parties, officials, or local governments run by the opposition parties, since these pieces help the opposition and indirectly harm the government.²¹ Covering protests and strikes were also coded as “anti-government” as they reflect the public’s discontent. Last, I coded news as “anti-government” when the article covered scandals, resignations, or internal disagreements within the AKP. Since internal party discipline is high in Turkey, not covering such disagreements could suggest that the media outlet is biased towards the government.²²

²¹ I changed the labels for news articles mentioning a local government without giving the party affiliation after I classified all articles with the fine-tuned model. For instance, if the article was labeled as “anti-government” because it criticized a local government’s latest policy, I converted this into “pro-government” if the local government mentioned is run by the opposition, not the government.

²² We saw one extreme example of such bias when pro-AKP media outlets went completely silent about the resignation of the Treasury and Finance minister, who is also Erdoğan’s son-in-law. Source: <https://bianet.org/english/media/234084-silence-on-albayrak-s-resignation->

I labeled a news article as “pro-government” when it directly criticized the opposition party or party officials. This also included news articles that cover statements criticizing the opposition party without any input from the opposition. This suggests that any article that has an anti-opposition language is coded as “pro-government” since such language indirectly favors the government. The news articles were also coded as “pro-government” when they explicitly promoted/praised government policies, actions, or government members. Similarly, scandals/resignations and covering disagreements within the opposition parties were coded as “pro-government” since they indirectly help the government.

Any news article that did not fit any of the categories defined above was coded as “neutral”. In total, I coded 578 “pro-government” and 537 “anti-government” articles. Since the sample includes many more neutral articles than the biased articles, it resulted in an imbalanced training sample, a common problem in text classification. I undersampled neutral news to have a more balanced training sample since this improves the predictive accuracy (Sebők and Kacsuk, 2021). As a result, the training data has 1744 observations and a fairly balanced class distribution (31%, 33%, and 36% of the training data were anti-government, pro-government, and neutral articles, respectively). Using this training data, I fine-tuned the model on the Google Colab platform, since it provides free GPU power.²³ The overall predictive accuracy was 77%, which was achieved with only around 550 labels for each class. Since 80% accuracy is considered acceptable for many human coding-based projects (Sebők and Kacsuk, 2021), the model’s predictive accuracy achieves almost human-coding quality with a small training data and free computing power. Since the costs of coding around 400,000 articles with human coders would be insurmountable, such a semi-automated method provides a superior solution without giving up on the predictive

`greatest-media-crisis-in-turkey-s-recent-history`

²³ See Appendix A.2 for details on the training of the model.

accuracy too much.

Using the fine-tuned model, I then classified every news article in the database. Then, using these labels, I constructed the following relative bias measure for each newspaper in the sample:

$$RelativeBias = \log\left(\frac{ProGovArticles}{AntiGovArticles}\right)$$

where *ProGovArticles* and *AntiGovArticles* are the numbers of pro-government and anti-government articles within a newspaper for each day or week, depending on the specification.

In addition to this context-aware bias measure, I also constructed another bias measure using partisan phrases, following Gentzkow and Shapiro (2010), which has been used in recent studies as well (e.g., Grossman et al., 2020). The underlying logic of this approach is that newspapers adopt the language of the political party they feel close to. Therefore, the expectation is that pro-government newspapers adopt language closer to the one adopted by the members of the incumbent party.

To construct “partisan phrases”, I scraped all parliamentary speeches by the incumbent (AKP) and the main opposition party (CHP) deputies during the Twenty-Fourth Parliamentary Sessions (2011-2015).²⁴ The overall data includes 18274 speeches (7145 from AKP deputies and 11129 from CHP deputies).

After I cleaned the speech data by removing stop words and lemmatizing words, I ranked the phrases (a bigram) based on how likely that specific phrase would be used

²⁴ Parliamentary speeches from previous periods are not available online. Although 24th Parliamentary sessions took place after our analyzed period (2007-2009), this approach uses a fixed set of partisan phrases in the first place. That is, we look at specific phrases in the news articles, despite the fact that the biased coverage can change depending on the country’s daily agenda. However, the same critic would apply if I used parliamentary speeches from the previous period (2007-2011), since partisan phrases identified from this period do not necessarily reflect the day-to-day political agenda. This approach misses the dynamic nature of the bias, which is indeed one of its main weaknesses and one of the main reasons I use another bias measure as well.

by one party over the other.²⁵ Then, I searched for these phrases in every newspaper article in the sample and constructed a similar bias measure to the previous one.

One problem with this approach is that it lacks contextual information and relies only on a fixed set of phrases. This is significantly problematic when biased content can change depending on the country’s political agenda. Moreover, using partisan phrases in an article does not always mean that the content is biased towards that party, since the article could use the phrase to criticize it. This is a general problem when we take the words out of their context and this critique applies to all word-based measures of media bias. For instance, we see in Table A.3 in the Appendix that one of the most used AKP phrases is “education [and] health,” since AKP deputies use this phrase more frequently than their CHP counterparts. However, once these phrases are stripped from their context, it is impossible to understand the context in which these phrases are used. For instance, a news story about the health of a politician will be treated as pro-government based on this measure, although in this case, health is not about public services but someone’s personal health status.

In addition to creating these false positives, counting partisan phrases without their contexts can also give conflicting results. Consider the first two sentences from the following actual news story pulled from the database: “The AKP government does not lose pace in privatization. The government, which sold the country’s strategic institutions one by one, has now set its sights on the forests.”²⁶ The story then continues by covering some statement from the then Minister of Finance about privatization. Although the tone and the content is clearly anti-government, this story has a high pro-government bias score when we use the partisan phrase approach because it includes 18 AKP phrases, while there are 0 CHP phrases. It is 9.6 times

²⁵ See Appendix Section A.3 for details.

²⁶ “Ormanları da özelleştirecekler”, Milli Gazete, July 9, 2008: <https://www.milligazete.com.tr/haber/829494/ormanlari-da-ozellestirecekler>

more pro-government than the average article in the database based on the partisan-phrase approach. In contrast, the BERT-based measure rightly labels this article as anti-government.

Despite these weaknesses and with these caveats, I repeated the main analyses using this alternative bias measure in the Appendix to show that the results are not driven by the particular choice of media bias measure and they are substantively similar with this conventional measure as well. Moreover, although this measure has its problems as a bias measure, it is an appropriate measure if one wants to see the level of partisan language in the media since the measure is constructed by counting partisan phrases in the first place. Therefore, analyzing results with the partisan phrase approach can give further insights about the prevalence of partisan language in the media.

We can also look at how the two relative bias measures compare on average. Although Gentzkow and Shapiro (2010)'s method is used extensively in the literature and is a conventional measure of media bias, it has its problems, as already outlined. Although my original bias measure overcomes these problems, no study in political science literature, to my knowledge, has so far used a BERT model to construct a bias measure. Therefore, we can have a better sense of how they perform by comparing these two measures.

I averaged both bias measures for each newspaper in the sample and rescaled them to 0-1 for a more straightforward interpretation in Figure 2.1 below. As can be seen, they perform very similarly to each other for the majority of newspapers, as they are aligned in the 45-degree axis. However, we also see some problematic newspapers, such as *Gunes*, *Takvim*, *Turkiye*, *Birgun*, and *Evrensel*, which are more pro-government according to the BERT-based bias measure compared to the partisan-word based approach. Note that when we use weekly or daily bias av-

erages, we see that the agreement between these measures is much worse.²⁷ This shows that the partisan phrase approach is not appropriate for high-frequency bias measurement, although it can be used as a summary measure of newspaper bias.

The reassuring thing is that newspapers' rankings in both measures align with the qualitative information about these newspapers. The newspapers that are known to be more pro-government have higher relative bias scores than those known as opposition newspapers. For instance, both measures rank *Sol* (left, in Turkish) newspaper as one of the least pro-government newspapers. While *Sol* is the mouthpiece of the Turkish Communist Party, *Cumhuriyet*, which is ranked as one of the least pro-government newspapers as well, is another left-leaning newspaper whose journalists are put into prison for being a member of a terrorist organization, a common accusation for the government's opponents. Similarly, the most pro-government newspapers are *Zaman*, *Yenisafak*, *Turkiye*, and *Sabah*, all known for their pro-government agenda.²⁸ More mainstream newspapers follow them, which is the cluster in the middle of the 45-degree line.

²⁷ The figure A.2 in the Appendix presents the weekly relationship between these two measures.

²⁸ Since the government and Gulenists were allies during this period, *Zaman's* coverage was mostly pro-government.

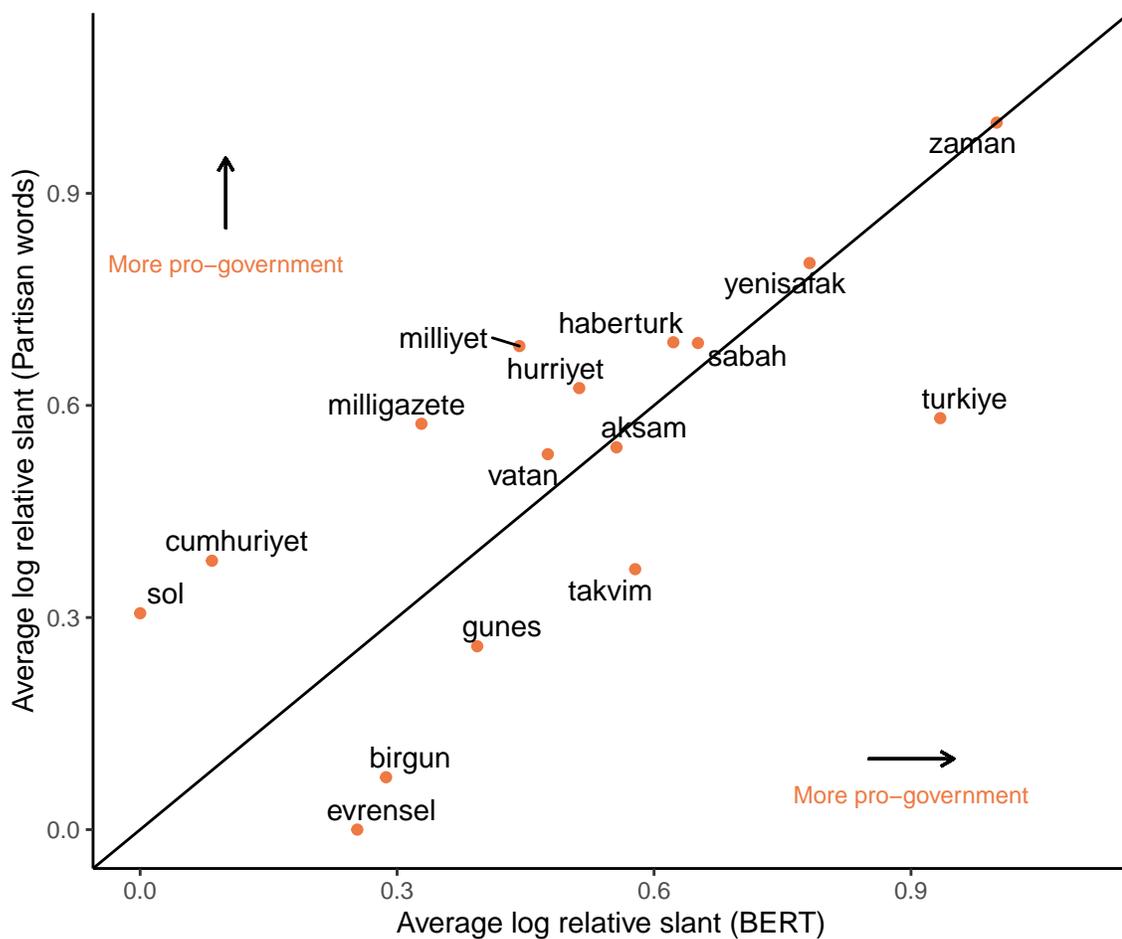


FIGURE 2.1: Relative bias averages across two different methods

2.5 Pro-Government Bias as Favors

2.5.1 Empirical specification

I first compare how much contractor-owned newspapers differ from others in terms of relative bias. Since newspapers could also bias their content because of their consumers (Mullainathan and Shleifer, 2005; Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2006; Anand et al., 2007; Hamilton, 2004; Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2010), I also control whether the newspaper is conservative or not based on Yıldırım et al. (2020)’s classification. Moreover, since lengthy articles have been presumed to be of higher quality because they can include diverse views and sources (Arapakis et al., 2016; Choi et al., 2021),

I control the daily average length of articles for each newspaper (logged). I use the following linear model:

$$RelativeBias_{ij} = \beta_1 ContractorOwned_i + \beta_2 Conservative_i + \beta_3 LogDailyAveLength_{ij} + \gamma_j + \epsilon_{ij}$$

where $RelativeBias_{ij}$ is the daily average relative bias score (BERT) for each newspaper i at day j , $ContractorOwned_i$ takes the value 1 if the newspaper is owned by a contractor, $Conservative_i$ is 1 if the newspaper is conservative, and $LogDailyAveLength_{ij}$ is the average length of the articles (in logged word counts) in a newspaper i in day j . Last, γ_j is the time-fixed effect (day, week or month), and ϵ_{ij} is the error term.

I also leverage the legal change that was announced in May 2008, giving us the opportunity to compare contractor-owned and other newspapers in a difference-in-differences style. In particular, I run the following model:

$$RelativeBias_{ij} = \beta_1 ContractorOwned_i + \beta_2 AfterLegalChange + \alpha ContractorOwned_i \times AfterLegalChange + \beta_3 LogDailyAveLength_{ij} + \gamma_j + \theta_i + \epsilon_{ij}$$

where $AfterLegalChange$ takes the value 1 for all observations after the legal change announcement, and θ_i is the newspaper (or ownership) fixed effect, and the rest are as defined above. Our main parameter of interest here is α , which estimates the legal change announcement's impact on the relative bias.

2.5.2 Results

I first present results about the relationship between contractor-owned newspapers and pro-government bias. Then, I leverage the procurement law change to see how

increased discretion affects pro-government coverage both in contractor-owned newspapers and others and how it affects the relative bias in general.

In Table 2.2, I present the relationship between relative bias and contractor-owned newspapers. As expected, contractor-owned newspapers have significantly more relative bias, and the results are robust when we include a conservative newspaper dummy-variable. The positive correlation remains when we focus on within month, week, or day variation. In column 4, the results show that contractor-owned newspapers have a higher relative bias by around 1.9 log points even within the same day. This is equal to a 0.9 standard deviation increase ($sd = 2.18$), which is substantive. The fact that results stay statistically significant even when we have a control variable for conservative newspapers suggests that the results are not driven because of the newspaper’s audience, as this would mean that conservative newspapers should have higher relative bias scores.

Table 2.2: The relationship between relative bias and contractor-owned newspapers

	Log Relative Bias (BERT) (daily averages)				
	Full	Full	Full	Full	Conglomerates only
Contractor-owned newspaper	1.892*** (0.730)	1.978*** (0.583)	1.984*** (0.580)	1.991*** (0.586)	1.622*** (0.413)
Conservative newspaper	0.714 (0.614)	0.379 (0.524)	0.379 (0.523)	0.351 (0.516)	0.272 (0.746)
Daily average length of articles (log)		-1.282*** (0.364)	-1.272*** (0.373)	-1.336*** (0.411)	-0.913** (0.402)
Num.Obs.	7958	7958	7958	7958	5497
R2	0.114	0.160	0.171	0.230	0.226
R2 Adj.	0.113	0.158	0.162	0.165	0.129
Month FE	No	Yes	No	No	No
Week FE	No	No	Yes	No	No
Day FE	No	No	No	Yes	Yes

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Standard errors are clustered at the newspaper level

Suppose conglomerate-owned newspapers have a pro-government bias because of the state contracts their owners secure for their non-media businesses, as theorized in this chapter. In that case, we should expect that they react more to the government’s

increased discretion in allocating state contracts. With the government becoming more flexible in granting state contracts, we should expect that the conglomerates who have high stakes in the construction sector can afford to have even higher bias, even though this means that they might lose money from media operations. As the conglomerates' expected gains from state contracts increase, they will be more willing to skew the content of their newspapers' coverage towards the government.

Before presenting the results, we can visually track relative bias in both contractor-owned newspapers and other newspapers, which also serves as a test for the parallel-trend assumption. As we see in Figure 2.2, the contractor-owned newspapers are significantly more pro-government as they have higher relative bias scores, which was already shown in Table 2.2 above. Moreover, while the relative bias trends are mostly parallel before the procurement law announcement, this changes after the legal change announcement. While the overall decline in relative bias reverses for contractor-owned newspapers, other newspapers seem to have the same declining trend, at least up to the last two months of 2008. This shows that the bias gap between the two groups (contractor-owned newspapers and others) increased after the legal change announcement.²⁹

²⁹ In the Appendix, I do a more formal analysis of parallel testing by interacting “*contractor-owned newspapers*” with three-month periods before and after the legal change announcement. As expected, the interactions before the announcement are statistically insignificant. See Figure A.4 in the Appendix.

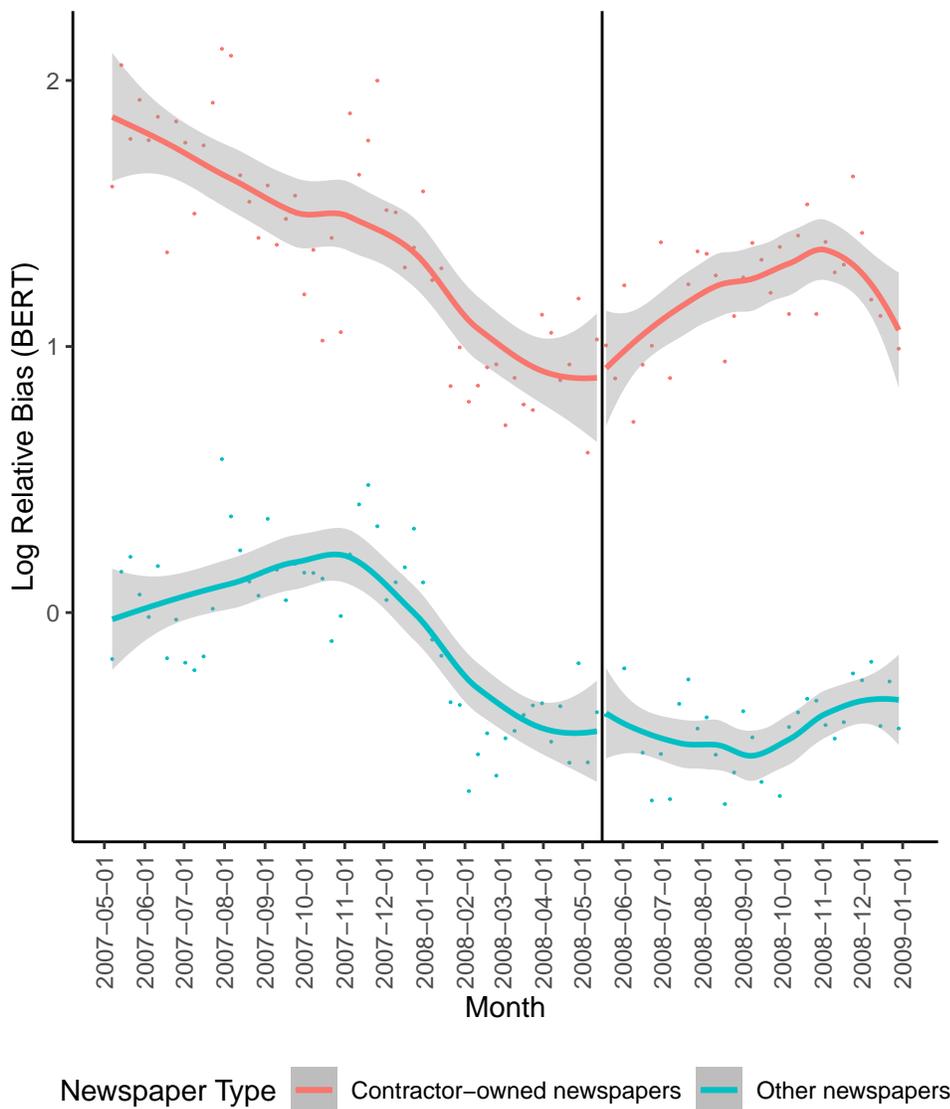


FIGURE 2.2: Relative bias overtime (weekly averages)

I present the difference-in-differences result in Table 2.3 below. Our main parameter of interest is the coefficient on the interaction between *After legal change* and *Contractor-owned newspaper*, since it gives the effect of the legal change announcement on the content. As expected, more discretion over state contracts in the construction sector positively affects the pro-government coverage in the contractor-owned newspapers relative to others. The coefficient is stable over different specifi-

cations. In model 6, which includes newspaper and week fixed effects, the effect is around a 0.6 point increase in relative bias. Given that the contractor-owned newspapers already have a higher relative bias even before the legal change, this increase (around 1/3 of the standard deviation) is substantive.³⁰

Table 2.3: The effect of legal change announcement in procurement law on relative bias (daily averages)

	Log Relative Bias (BERT) (daily averages)					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Contractor-owned newspaper	2.151** (0.837)	-0.360*** (0.134)	0.138 (0.151)	-0.360*** (0.133)	0.150 (0.152)	0.167 (0.163)
After legal change	-0.761*** (0.215)	-0.500*** (0.168)	-0.232 (0.239)	-0.493*** (0.169)	-0.238 (0.237)	0.469 (0.507)
Daily average length of articles (log)		-0.561*** (0.132)	-0.580*** (0.129)	-0.493*** (0.144)	-0.523*** (0.145)	-0.506*** (0.135)
After legal change x Contractor-owned newspaper	0.611** (0.261)	0.751*** (0.230)	0.617*** (0.179)	0.740*** (0.231)	0.601*** (0.179)	0.603*** (0.182)
Num.Obs.	7958	7958	7958	7958	7958	7958
R2	0.116	0.266	0.279	0.281	0.293	0.304
R2 Adj.	0.116	0.265	0.276	0.279	0.290	0.294
Ownership FE	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Newspaper FE	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month FE	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Week FE	No	No	No	No	No	Yes

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01
Standard errors are clustered at the newspaper level

Although these results suggest that contractor-owned newspapers increase their relative bias after the legal change announcement, they do not tell why we see this increase. Since our measure is the ratio of pro-government articles over anti-government articles, it could be either driven by increases in the share of pro-government articles (contractor-owned newspapers having more pro-government articles), decreases in the percentage of anti-government articles (contractor-owned newspapers having fewer anti-government articles), or both. To investigate this in more detail, I use pro-government or anti-government variables as the outcome variable in the next two tables. I no longer need to aggregate news articles daily to create a bias mea-

³⁰ I also present the results with bootstrap wild-cluster standard errors in Table A.8 in the Appendix.

sure; therefore, my unit of analysis is a newspaper article in these specifications.

The results in Table 2.4 suggest that contractor-owned newspapers increased their pro-government articles relative to other newspapers after the legal change announcement. In particular, the coefficient in model 6 indicates that the legal change announcement resulted in a 2.5% increase in the probability that an article is pro-government for contractor-owned newspapers. Since the median number of daily articles aggregated across two groups (contractor-owned newspapers and others) is 245 in our sample, this translates into around six more pro-government articles in contractor-owned newspapers after the legal change announcement each day.

Table 2.4: The effect of legal change announcement in procurement law on pro-government coverage

	Pro-government article					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Contractor-owned newspaper	0.055*	-0.024***	-0.012	-0.024***	-0.011	-0.011
	(0.032)	(0.008)	(0.011)	(0.008)	(0.011)	(0.011)
After legal change	-0.021***	-0.016***	0.002	-0.016***	0.002	0.004
	(0.007)	(0.004)	(0.008)	(0.004)	(0.008)	(0.011)
Word counts (log)		0.020*	0.019*	0.020*	0.019*	0.019*
		(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)
After legal change x Contractor-owned newspaper	0.036**	0.029***	0.025**	0.029***	0.025***	0.025***
	(0.016)	(0.008)	(0.010)	(0.008)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Num.Obs.	388578	388578	388578	388578	388578	388578
R2	0.008	0.020	0.023	0.022	0.024	0.026
R2 Adj.	0.008	0.020	0.023	0.022	0.024	0.026
Ownership FE	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Newspaper FE	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month FE	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Week FE	No	No	No	No	No	Yes

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Standard errors are clustered at the newspaper level

When we return to the anti-government coverage, the results in Table 2.5 suggest that there has been no significant difference between contractor-owned newspapers and others after the legal change announcement. These null results make sense for two reasons: First, we could see a significant negative effect if contractor-owned newspapers decreased their anti-government coverage after the announcement. However, the share of daily anti-government articles was already low in contractor-owned news-

papers, to begin with (4.72% in contractor-owned newspapers vs. 11.3% in other newspapers). Second, a negative and statistically significant effect could also be driven by an increase in anti-government coverage from other newspapers. However, the legal change necessarily concerns the contractor media owners. Other newspapers have no incentive to change their news content unless the government tries to capture them with other tools. Therefore, no reason exists to expect an increase in their anti-government coverage for newspapers in the “control group.”

Table 2.5: The effect of legal change announcement in procurement law on anti-government coverage

	Anti-government article					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Contractor-owned newspaper	-0.097*** (0.028)	0.014** (0.006)	-0.005 (0.010)	0.015*** (0.005)	-0.004 (0.010)	-0.004 (0.010)
After legal change	0.035 (0.024)	0.019 (0.013)	0.001 (0.006)	0.021 (0.014)	0.002 (0.006)	0.004 (0.009)
Word counts (log)		0.022*** (0.005)	0.022*** (0.005)	0.022*** (0.004)	0.022*** (0.004)	0.022*** (0.004)
After legal change x Contractor-owned newspaper	-0.026 (0.026)	-0.021 (0.015)	-0.021 (0.013)	-0.021 (0.015)	-0.021 (0.013)	-0.021 (0.013)
Num.Obs.	388578	388578	388578	388578	388578	388578
R2	0.024	0.073	0.076	0.076	0.080	0.081
R2 Adj.	0.024	0.073	0.076	0.076	0.080	0.081
Ownership FE	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Newspaper FE	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month FE	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Week FE	No	No	No	No	No	Yes

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Standard errors are clustered at the newspaper level

In the Appendix, I present results with the other bias measure constructed from the partisan words. Although this measure has its limitations, it is an excellent measure of partisan language in the news media. Although newspapers can bias their content without using partisan language, which makes it problematic for a media bias measure, the particular usage of partisan language has potential implications since partisan media can affect voters (De Benedictis-Kessner et al., 2019; DellaVigna and Kaplan, 2007; Peisakhin and Rozenas, 2018). The results in the Appendix (Table A.9) show that contractor-owned newspapers have more pro-government partisan

language after the legal change announcement (around 1 sd increase).

I also conducted a series of robustness analyses, which are presented in the Appendix. First, I repeated the analyses by excluding the Calik Group since they bought the two newspapers (*Sabah* and *Takvim*) during the analyzed period. The ownership did not change for the rest of the newspapers in the sample. Table A.7 and Figure A.3 in Section A.4 show that the results are substantively similar when we exclude Calik Group from the analyses (see also Table A.10 in Section A.5 that excludes Calik Group and uses the bias measure from the partisan phrases).

In section A.6, I present an alternative functional specification for BERT-based bias measure. Instead of dividing the number of pro-government articles by the number of anti-government articles, I computed the daily difference between pro-government and anti-government articles for each newspaper, and repeated the main analyses. These results show that the substantive argument is not dependent on the bias measure's particular operationalization, since they show substantively similar results as presented in the main text.

2.6 State Contracts as Favors

2.6.1 Empirical specification

The previous analyses showed that conglomerate-owned newspapers, and contractor-owned newspapers in particular, are more likely to be pro-government. The argument in this chapter posits that this is the result of a favor exchange: pro-government coverage is a favor, and it needs to be reciprocated by the government with some kind of favor. In this section, I empirically show that the government indeed reciprocates the favor by granting state contracts to these conglomerates on favorable terms.

Using data on all state contracts procured by the government (central and local), I estimate the following model:

$$y_{itjk} = \beta_1 \text{ConglomerateMediaOwner}_{ijt} + \beta_2 \text{LocalGovernment}_{ijt} + \gamma_i + \theta_j + \psi_t + \alpha_t + \omega_k + \epsilon_{itjk}$$

where y is one of the following outcome variables for each auction awarded in province i , at year t , in procurement sector j , and the procurement type k : the dummy variables that take the value 1 if there is only one bidder in the auction (*SingleBidder*), whenever the contract is awarded in a non-open auction (*NonOpen*) or whenever exceptional causes are applied to the contract to increase the procuring agency's discretion (*ExceptionalAuctions*). While all these three variables increase the discretionary power of the procuring agency, they do not say anything about the actual outcome of the auction. To see how these discretionary mechanisms translate into actual outcomes, I use another two outcome variables: contract prices (real prices and logged) and rebate values.

The main independent variable in the model is *ConglomerateMediaOwner*_{ijt}, which takes the value 1 if the contract is awarded to one of the subsidiary firms of the six newspaper-owner conglomerates. I also repeated the analysis for newspaper-owner contractors since I expect that they enjoy even better terms than other conglomerates when they are awarded a state contract. All models include province fixed effects (γ_i), procurement sector fixed effects (θ_j), year fixed effects (ψ_t) and procurement type (goods, services, construction, and consultancy) fixed effects (ω_k). Although these fixed effects make sure that we compare similar state contracts, I also restrict my attention only to high-stake state contracts (with contract prices exceeding one million Turkish lira). This makes sure that we are comparing firms with similar characteristics since firms competing for major contracts should be significantly different than other firms that compete for small or medium scale state contracts. Last, I added a control variable for auctions implemented by the local

governments since the contracts awarded by the central government agencies can significantly differ from the ones awarded by the local governments.

2.6.2 Results

How much do these conglomerates get in return for biasing their newspaper's coverage? Although they get significant state contracts within the analyzed period, we do not know whether these contracts are awarded because conglomerates' subsidiaries are the most efficient firms or because they are granted on favorable terms. The government should grant these state contracts with special terms for them to be counted as favors.

The results in Table 2.6 show that newspaper-owner conglomerates' subsidiaries are more likely to enjoy certain privileges that are known to increase contract prices. These subsidiaries are more likely to be single bidders in auctions. Having a newspaper increases the probability of being a single bidder by 12.2% for contractors. Similarly, the procuring agency is more likely to hold non-open auctions (3.7% more) and use exceptional clauses (3.5% more) in procurements awarded to these subsidiaries.

Table 2.6: Newspaper-owner conglomerates and state contracts (mechanisms)

	Single Bidder		Non-open auctions		Exceptional auctions	
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Conglomerate media-owner		0.089*** (0.029)		0.043*** (0.016)		0.044*** (0.016)
Contractor media-owner	0.122*** (0.032)		0.037** (0.017)		0.035** (0.017)	
Local government	0.120*** (0.008)	0.120*** (0.008)	0.010* (0.005)	0.010* (0.005)	0.010** (0.004)	0.010** (0.004)
Num.Obs.	126419	126419	126850	126850	127056	127056
R2	0.162	0.162	0.151	0.151	0.059	0.059
R2 Adj.	0.161	0.161	0.150	0.150	0.058	0.058
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Province FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Procurement sector FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Procurement type FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Standard errors are clustered at the procuring agency level

As expected, these discretionary mechanisms also affect the final contract price and rebate values. The results in Table 2.7 show that conglomerates' subsidiaries are awarded contracts with higher prices and lower rebate values. In particular, newspaper-owner conglomerates enjoy lower rebate values by 1.6%.³¹ Similarly, newspaper-owner conglomerates enjoy higher contract prices by around 0.8 log points. This is around 40% of the standard deviation of the outcome variable, which is a sizeable effect.

³¹ The standard deviation for rebate values in major state contracts is 0.15.

Table 2.7: Newspaper-owner conglomerates and state contracts (outcomes)

	Rebate value		Real price (log)	
	1	2	3	4
Conglomerate media-owner		-0.016** (0.007)		0.790*** (0.126)
Contractor media-owner	-0.017** (0.007)		0.616*** (0.141)	
Local government	-0.005 (0.003)	-0.005 (0.003)	-0.042 (0.029)	-0.042 (0.029)
Num.Obs.	126389	126389	127056	127056
R2	0.223	0.223	0.144	0.145
R2 Adj.	0.222	0.222	0.143	0.144
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Province FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Procurement sector FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Procurement type FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Standard errors are clustered at the procuring agency level

2.7 Conclusion

Previous literature focused mainly on the effects of coercive media capture strategies, such as censorship or favor exchanges such as state advertising. While the latter is politically more desirable for the governments, most of the developing world's advertising markets are tiny. As the media outlets are increasingly bought by conglomerates with stakes in various non-media sectors, state advertising becomes less attractive. However, states are the most significant economic players whose demand for goods and services constitute a substantial portion of their respective national economies.

This chapter provides systemic empirical evidence on favor exchanges, in which the government reciprocates pro-government coverage by distributing state contracts to media-owner conglomerates on favorable terms.

The paper also makes a methodological contribution by constructing a semi-automated context-aware bias measure using a state-of-the-art language model. It offers a superior alternative to the existing measures in the literature. The previous studies either use a fixed set of words to determine the general bias (Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2010; Grossman et al., 2020) or employ some keywords, such as “corruption” (Szeidl and Szucs, 2021; Di Tella and Franceschelli, 2011), which could be a proxy for anti-government coverage. However, these approaches lack context. They also miss the biased context when the news article does not use partisan language or does not cover a particular scandal. Using a context-aware bias measure from a language model offers a better measure with high accuracy rates. Employing these pre-trained models for downstream tasks, such as bias detection, could possibly open new avenues for research by drastically reducing the costs of human-coding process. Such an automated measure can also provide real-time media bias measures, giving a considerable advantage to non-government organizations, policymakers, and researchers whose works aim to prevent media bias.

As conglomerates are increasingly buying news outlets, their non-media businesses should come under closer scrutiny. This chapter shows that conglomerates’ non-media businesses can offer another channel for collusion between the media owners and the government. The regulatory institutions on media markets mostly pay close attention to cross-market media ownerships and devise rules to regulate it. The results in this chapter show that we also need to pay close attention to media owners’ non-media holdings if we want to protect independent media.

Mixed Regimes and Economic Crises: Information Manipulation Strategies in Media Outlets

3.1 Introduction

In our era of democratic backsliding, information manipulation has been the central feature of mixed regimes (Guriev and Treisman, 2019). Unlike the authoritarian regimes of the previous century, the authoritarian regimes of our era are best characterized as “mixed regimes” as they mostly allow competitive (though unfair) elections with no horizontal accountability (Levitsky and Way, 2010). One area in which information manipulation is critical for the stability of mixed regimes is the economy. It is well known that economic crises cause authoritarian regimes to collapse (Geddes, 1999; Haggard and Kaufman, 1995; Tang et al., 2017). However, autocrats in mixed regimes proved to be resilient even in times of economic crises. This resiliency is puzzling given that there are limits to propaganda (Di Tella and Franceschelli, 2011; Knight and Tribin, 2019b,a; Szeidl and Szucs, 2021), especially when the propaganda is about the domestic economy in which citizens can use their real-life experience to verify the economic news (Rozenas and Stukal, 2019). How do

rulers in mixed regimes manipulate economic news in times of economic crises?

The literature has shown that autocrats capture media outlets and manipulate the informational environment (Di Tella and Franceschelli, 2011; Knight and Tribin, 2019b,a; Rozenas and Stukal, 2019; Szeidl and Szucs, 2021). During economic crises, the need to control information becomes more pressing because economic crises are important triggers for regime changes (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2001; Przeworski and Limongi, 1997) and failure to do so can bring about their end (Geddes, 1999; Haggard and Kaufman, 1995; Tang et al., 2017). However, blunt censoring or denial of economic crisis cannot convince citizens since they can verify how the economy is doing based on their actual experiences (Rozenas and Stukal, 2019). This suggests that authoritarian governments use more complex information manipulation strategies to manipulate news about the domestic economy.

However, despite the prevalence of mixed regimes and their continued popular support in times of economic crises, the literature has paid scant attention to empirically studying the propaganda strategies such governments pursue during economic problems. Although certain exceptions, such as Rozenas and Stukal (2019), study certain information manipulation strategies, no study has so far conducted a systemic analysis of information manipulation strategies that authoritarian governments employ during economic crises. As a result, we do not know which strategies are more likely to be utilized during economic problems, making citizens vulnerable to such information manipulation strategies.

Given that denying the economic crisis is not an option, I argue that governments can use different strategies 1) to change citizens' perception of the responsible actors of the crisis, 2) to manipulate how citizens evaluate the bad economy, and 3) to shift the salience away from economic problems.

Rozenas and Stukal (2019) focus on the selective attribution mechanism, which aims to change citizens' perception of the responsible actors. They show that posi-

tive economic news is attributed to the government actors. In contrast, the negative economic news is not censored but presented in a tone that blames actors other than the government. However, authoritarian governments can find it increasingly infeasible to use this information manipulation mechanism as the regime becomes more authoritarian and centralizes power. Because shifting blame to other actors becomes increasingly tricky for autocratic countries as centralization of power facilitates the attribution of responsibility for the citizens (Aytaç, 2021; Beazer and Reuter, 2019). Secondly, the selective attribution mechanism is less likely to be effective when a severe economic crisis hits because finding positive economic news to attribute to the government will be hard in the first place. After all, if there is no single positive economic news, how could media outlets find a piece of positive news to attribute to the government actors? Indeed, the experimental evidence from Turkey shows that selective attribution is not an effective strategy in swaying citizens' views (Aytaç, 2021).

Drawing on the insights from economic voting (Aytaç, 2018; Fiorina, 1978; Kayser and Peress, 2012; Kramer, 1971; Roberts and Wibbels, 1999) and agenda-setting literature (McCombs, 2005; Riker, 1988), I identify two more information manipulation strategies that manipulate citizen's evaluation of the bad economy and their perceived salience of economic and non-economic topics, respectively. First, governments can use the reference manipulation strategy to change how citizens evaluate bad economic governance. Second, they can apply an agenda-setting strategy to change the salience of particular topics or specific issues within a topic.

Reference point manipulation strategy does not distort the information about the domestic economy but instead manipulates information about foreign economies since citizens consider the relative performance of the domestic economy vis-à-vis other economies rather than the absolute performance (Kayser and Peress, 2012; Aytaç, 2018). Agenda-setting strategy, however, tries to shift the attention away

from the economy by increasing the salience of another topic (McCombs, 2005) or specific issues within the economy (McCombs et al., 2000) by covering certain news more than others.

Using machine learning for topic classification and sentiment as well as various dictionary methods to identify actors and countries, I systematically analyze the prevalence of these economic news manipulation strategies. I use the recent currency crisis of 2021 in Turkey and analyze the *entire* online corpora of three media outlets: *TRT* (state-affiliated outlet), *Sabah* (pro-government outlet), and *Sözcü* (opposition outlet).

The results show that pro-government outlets, *Sabah* and *TRT*, are more likely to be positive in tone in economic news whenever they mention government actors than the opposition outlet. Similarly, they are more likely to be negative in tone when they talk about external actors. This result gives evidence for the selective attribution mechanism and confirms Rozenas and Stukal (2019)'s findings from Russia. However, the results show that there are limits to selective attribution strategy since pro-government outlets do not use it more intensively as the economic crisis deepens. In particular, pro-government outlets do not increase their positive economic news with government actors as the crisis intensifies. Similarly, they are not more likely to attribute negative news to external actors in the worst days of economic crisis.

I also find evidence for reference point manipulation: pro-government outlets are more likely to use a negative tone when covering foreign economies. Interestingly, this negative tone towards foreign economies increases as the domestic economic crisis intensifies while the opposition outlet keeps a similar tone during the whole year. I argue that this difference in coverage stems from the desire to manipulate how citizens evaluate the government's economic performance relative to other economies. By portraying foreign economies negatively, pro-government outlets try to change people's reference points about how these economies are doing vis-à-vis the domestic

economy.

Lastly, I find partial evidence for the agenda-setting mechanism. While pro-government outlets are less likely to publish domestic economy stories than the opposition outlet in 2021, they actually increase their coverage of the domestic economy as the crisis intensifies. Hence, the share of domestic economic news does not decline. However, the currency/exchange news percentage within the economic news seems to fall as the crisis intensifies. These results show that outlets do not shift the attention away from the economy because citizens experience the bad economy in their lives anyway. Instead, given the increased salience of the economy, they focus on other areas within the economy, such as trade or specific industries.

This paper makes various substantial contributions to authoritarian politics and media literature by shedding light on specific mechanisms authoritarian governments employ during economic crises. Since democratic backsliding has been the main form of reaching towards authoritarianism over the last two decades (Svolik, 2020; Bermeo, 2016), it is critical to understand how they do it. By analyzing various information manipulation strategies about the economy, this paper tries to analyze leaders' playbooks in regimes witnessing democratic erosions. Secondly, this paper contributes to empirical media bias literature. Although many studies have previously shown that authoritarian governments employ various media capture strategies (Di Tella and Franceschelli, 2011; Knight and Tribin, 2019b,a; Rozenas and Stukal, 2019; Szeidl and Szucs, 2021) (also see Chapter 2), not much empirical evidence exists on specific information manipulation strategies in different domains such as politics and economy. By providing empirical evidence from a particular domain, this paper helps our understanding of how information manipulation happens when censorship is not feasible.

3.2 Theory

Authoritarian governments use various methods to capture media outlets to manipulate the informational environment such as revoking broadcasting licenses (Knight and Tribin, 2019a), direct takeovers (Gehlbach, 2010), censorship laws (Shadmehr and Bernhardt, 2015), state advertising (Di Tella and Franceschelli, 2011; Szeidl and Szucs, 2021) or state contracts (Chapter 2). In our era of democratic backsliding, rulers in mixed regimes proved to be so capable of information manipulation that they are called as “informational autocrats” (Guriev and Treisman, 2019).

Information manipulation becomes extremely important in times of economic crises because economic crises are important triggers for regime changes (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2001; Przeworski and Limongi, 1997). One crucial characteristic of authoritarian regimes in our era is that informational autocrats successfully portray themselves as competent in managing the economy (Guriev and Treisman, 2019). Since the failure to convince citizens about the government’s competence can bring about regime collapse (Geddes, 1999; Haggard and Kaufman, 1995; Tang et al., 2017), it is crucial to understand how these autocrats present themselves as competent in managing the economy. That is why analyzing information manipulation during economic hardships, during which the need for such information manipulation is the most pressing, sheds light on mixed regimes’ strategies in such critical junctures.

There are several reasons why propaganda about the domestic economy may not work during economic crises. Firstly, the previous literature has shown that propaganda has its limits. While some studies show that propaganda is effective (Carter and Carter, 2021; Yanagizawa-Drott, 2014), others find that this is not always the case (Bleck and Michelitch, 2017; Knight and Tribin, 2019b). The primary reason for conflicting results from the literature is that people are not passive information takers. When governments are explicitly involved in information manipulation, peo-

ple can detect bias and discount information. They can even stop consuming biased media outlets entirely and switch to more objective outlets (Besley and Prat, 2006; Gehlbach and Sonin, 2014). For instance, Knight and Tribin (2019b) show that Venezuelans switch channels when they see unannounced government propaganda on TV. In a similar vein, various studies show that people react to changing media content by either completely stopping or changing their media consumption (Durante and Knight, 2012; Yıldırım et al., 2020).

As a result, some argue that explicit propaganda, such as outright censorship or indoctrination, tends to be less effective, which is a fundamental constraint (Besley and Prat, 2006; Gehlbach and Sonin, 2014) while others claim that such explicit propaganda serves to signal government's strength and capacity (Huang, 2015). These results imply that propaganda can be effective only with complex and subtle information manipulation strategies.

The domain in which propaganda takes place is also important. Propaganda can be more effective in domains where people cannot verify the information and/or need orientation, which happens when they are less knowledgeable about the topic. That is why propaganda about the domestic economy is tricky because citizens can rely on their private information and then use this information to verify the official economic news (Rozenas and Stukal, 2019). For instance, any news about how inflation is under control is not likely to convince citizens that the government is telling the truth when the bill for weekly grocery shopping doubles each month.

Despite the difficulty in propaganda about the domestic economy, informational autocrats managed to present themselves as competent and legitimate (Guriev and Treisman, 2019), and proved resilient in times of economic crises. To explain how they engage in information manipulation during economic problems, I identify three possible information manipulation mechanisms: selective attribution, reference point manipulation, and agenda-setting.

Selective attribution occurs when positive economic news is attributed to government actors, while negative economic news is not censored but presented in a tone that blames actors other than the government. This strategy aims to manipulate the responsible actors. It gives government actors credit for positive economic developments and blames external actors for bad ones. For instance, these external actors can be major foreign economies such as the US or China, whose domestic economic problems can have a global impact. Although this strategy has been the focus of previous empirical studies (e.g., Rozenas and Stukal (2019)), it cannot be the only manipulation strategy available to the autocrat during an economic crisis for at least three reasons.

First, the centralization of power makes it difficult to shift the blame to non-government actors for the bad economy. Second, alternative sources of information such as the internet increase the likelihood of seeing alternative news about the government's role in economic affairs. Last, it can be challenging to find good economic news to attribute to government actors during economic crises.

The previous literature has shown that centralization of power facilitates the attribution of responsibility because citizens have difficulty in attributing responsibility when multiple levels of government exist (Beazer and Reuter, 2019). When multiple veto players and decision-makers exist in a polity, it can be difficult for citizens to attribute responsibility. The selective attribution mechanism manipulates this confusion about the clarity of responsibility by blaming non-governmental actors for negative economic news and crediting government actors for the positive ones. However, autocratization clarifies this attribution problem since amassing power in one person makes people more likely to attribute responsibility to that person. Indeed, the survey evidence from Turkey shows that almost 80% of the respondents see the president as responsible for the recent bad economic outcomes.¹ Moreover, using a

¹ See: <https://twitter.com/avrasyaanket/status/1461626778087211008>

nationally representative survey experiment, Aytaç (2021) shows that shifting blame to external actors is not an effective strategy in changing government approvals although blaming external actors seems to change people's beliefs about the responsible actors for the economic crisis.

Therefore, even though media outlets try to distort the responsible actors for the domestic economy by using the selective attribution mechanism, the clarity of responsibility in one-man rule regimes necessitates other manipulation strategies.

Moreover, manipulating the responsible actors for the economy may backfire, especially when citizens have access to alternative sources of information such as independent media outlets or the internet. Since citizens in mixed regimes are not entirely blocked from accessing alternative sources of information (Gehlbach, 2010), some citizens can learn about the real protagonists behind bad economic governance. Hence, complementing selective attribution with other manipulation strategies can be helpful for autocrats.

Last, while selective attribution can be an effective strategy during regular times characterized by both good and bad economic news, finding good economic news to attribute to government actors becomes difficult during economic crises. That is, selective attribution can suffer from a ceiling effect: there could be only a certain number of good economic news to attribute to the government, which is likely to decrease in times of economic distress. If this is the case, other information strategies can be more helpful in impacting citizens' beliefs about the domestic economy.

The observable implication of this discussion is that we should see a positive tone whenever pro-government outlets mention government actors and a negative tone whenever they mention external actors in economic news, in line with Rozenas and Stukal (2019)'s theory. However, I also expect this strategy to be harder to sustain in times of economic crisis. Therefore, I expect that pro-government outlets cannot keep the same positive tone when they mention government actors because it gets

harder to find and attribute good economic news to government actors. Similarly, they cannot always blame external actors during economic crises, especially when the government actors are primarily responsible for the crisis.

Yet, selective attribution is not the only strategy available to governments. I argue that autocrats can employ other strategies as well. Using insights from the economic voting and agenda-setting literature, I argue that two more strategies could be at work in times of economic distress: reference point manipulation and agenda-setting. While the former aims to change people's perceptions about foreign economies, the latter tries to shift the attention away from the domestic economy. These strategies could be helpful, especially during economic crises; however, they were not empirically analyzed as part of autocrats' information manipulation strategies during economic crises. This is surprising, given the extensive literature on agenda-setting from advanced democracies (e.g., (McCombs, 2005)) and the comprehensive studies on economic voting that show the importance of reference points in citizens' evaluations of the economy (Aytaç, 2018).

Reference manipulation strategy does not explicitly target the domestic economy but tries to change people's perception of foreign economies. It aims to make citizens believe that they are not the only ones suffering from an economic crisis. Unlike the selective attribution mechanism, the reference point manipulation focuses on foreign economies.

The theoretical insights for the reference manipulation strategy come from the economic voting literature. Previous contributions focused on macroeconomic indicators (Kramer, 1971; Roberts and Wibbels, 1999) or individual-level economic measures (Fiorina, 1978; Lewis-Beck and Nadeau, 2011) to show evidence for economic voting. More recent contributions further refined these results by pointing out that the international economic context also matters for economic voting. In particular, recent studies have shown that citizens do not consider the absolute economic per-

formance but use reference points to evaluate the government's competence (Aytaç, 2018; Kayser and Peress, 2012). One crucial reference point for citizens is other countries' economic performance, which they use as a benchmark. Cross-country benchmarking suggests that citizens consider how other countries perform relative to their own country in evaluating the government's competence.²

From the authoritarian governments' perspective, manipulating people's reference points about foreign economies is more effortless than influencing people's perception of how the domestic economy is doing. Citizens experience the problems in the domestic economy directly in their lives while they mostly rely on media outlets to learn about other economies. Therefore manipulating information about foreign economies could be helpful and more straightforward during economic hardships since beliefs about the domestic economy could be harder to control.

The observable implication of reference point manipulation is that we should see a negative tone in the news published by the pro-government outlets about foreign economies relative to other economic news.³ Moreover, this negative tone should be more severe during economic crises.

These two strategies, selective attribution and reference point manipulation, focus on economic news strategies but do not say much about the overall volume of economic news. It could be that government tries to shift attention away from the economy in times of economic distress. Although the literature has paid scant attention to economic news manipulation strategies in authoritarian regimes, the rich

² This literature also identifies another reference point that citizens use: past-government benchmarking. This suggests that citizens compare the current government with previous governments' economic performances (Aytaç, 2018; Kayser and Peress, 2012). Since Erdoğan's government has been in power since 2002, it has been a sufficiently long time for citizens who are likely to suffer from recall bias as time erodes memories (Sarafidis, 2007; Mullainathan, 2002). Therefore, I only analyze cross-country benchmarking in this paper.

³ I also compare foreign economy news with all other news in the analyses. But note that this could underestimate the impact of a negative tone towards foreign economies if pro-government outlets also adopt more hostile attitudes towards other countries in other news, such as politics. Focusing only on economic news makes sure that we exclude such possibilities from the analyses.

agenda-setting literature from advanced democracies has shown that the media can increase the salience of a topic (McCombs, 2005).

The agenda-setting literature has identified two levels of agenda-setting (Wanta and Alkazemi, 2018). The first-level agenda setting focuses on topics. Agenda control in voting bodies such as legislatures is “ancient and universal” (Riker, 1988, 173). However, it was not until McCombs and Shaw (1972)’s seminal work on the US presidential elections that we see how mass media engages in agenda-setting. Even since McCombs and Shaw (1972), many studies have shown that media outlets can change people’s perception of the most salient issues. Although this does not necessarily suggest an attitudinal change, covering certain issues can change what citizens perceive to be the most important issues (Wanta and Alkazemi, 2018). Since increasing the saliency of the economy during an economic crisis is not politically desirable from the government’s perspective, the media outlets can try to increase the salience of other topics such as politics or apolitical themes such as sports or entertainment.

The second level of agenda-setting instead focuses on attributes within a topic. Studies have shown that media outlets can focus on certain attributes within a topic to shift the salience of specific attributes rather than shifting the salience of an issue (McCombs et al., 2000). For instance, during an economic crisis, ignoring the economy may not be a feasible strategy for pro-government outlets since citizens experience the economic crisis anyway. Instead, media outlets may focus on more positive issues than others. To give a concrete example, consider the currency crisis. The dramatic depreciation of the Turkish lira suggests that pro-government outlets might refrain from covering economic stories about currency and foreign exchanges. However, the cheap Turkish lira also provides opportunities for trade balance. Therefore, rather than covering news about the currency, pro-government outlets can choose to focus on trade stories during an economic crisis driven by the collapse of the currency.

The observable implication of the first-level agenda-setting mechanism is straightforward: pro-government outlets should publish fewer domestic economic news in times of economic distress in favor of other topics to decrease the saliency of the economy. The second-level agenda-setting mechanism instead focuses on attributes: pro-government outlets should publish fewer stories about the currency/foreign exchange in times of economic distress and focus on other attributes of the economy.

Given the impacts of partisan media on citizen behavior (see, for instance, DellaVigna and Kaplan, 2007; De Benedictis-Kessner et al., 2019; Chiang and Knight, 2011; Levendusky, 2013; Martin and Yurukoglu, 2017) and the pro-government attitude in various newspapers in Turkey (Yıldırım et al., 2020) (also see Chapter 2), information manipulation about economic news ultimately shapes who citizens see as responsible from bad economic governance; how they evaluate the government, and what they think the most salience topics/issues are during economic crises. Indeed, survey evidence from Turkey shows that pro-government media consumers are more likely to see the government competent in the economy than the opposition (Yagci and Oyvatt, 2020). Similarly, experimental evidence from different settings, Denmark and Turkey, suggests that citizens react to new information about the economy (Alt et al., 2016; Aytaç, 2021). That is why the variation in coverage across pro-government and opposition outlets ultimately impacts people's beliefs about the domestic economy.

3.3 Institutional setting: 2021 Economic crisis in Turkey

I use data from Turkey to test the observable implications of each information manipulation strategy for three reasons. First, Turkey's democracy can be classified as a mixed regime (Esen and Gumuscu, 2016). Second, the government captured various major media outlets either through favor exchanges or ownership changes (Chapter 2). Lastly, the recent economic crisis in 2021 provides a critical juncture to analyze the prevalence of each information manipulation strategy since the need

for information manipulation is more pressing than in regular times.

The crisis was driven by Erdoğan's insistence on low-interest rates, which became publicly known when he fired the head of the Central Bank for increasing the interest rates in March 2021. It was the first time that it became clear that Erdoğan personally did not want high interest rates. Although 2021 was a bad year for the Turkish economy, the economic crisis intensified in the second half of the year. With July 2021 inflation figures, the difference between interest rates and inflation became essentially zero, leaving no space for further interest rate cuts based on the conventional understanding of economics. Indeed, economists did not expect interest rate cuts since it would cause negative real interest rates. However, on August 5, 2021, Erdoğan explicitly said that the Central Bank would decrease the interest rates in the months ahead. "I am giving my signal to certain places", he said, meaning interest rate cuts in the future.⁴ As a result of his statement, markets got his signal, and the Turkish lira depreciated by 1% within 24 hours. The Central Bank then was forced to decrease interest rates.

Erdoğan signaled that the interest rates would go down in August 2021. This was when the financial markets started expecting a downward trend in official interest rates. The official interest rate cuts began taking place in September 2021. As a result, the Turkish lira depreciated massively, bringing high inflation.

One can see the currency's performance against the USD in the last four years in Figure 3.1 below. As one can see, the decision to decrease interest rates brought about massive depreciation of the currency (compare the left and right sides of the dashed black line).

⁴ Source: <https://www.bloomberght.com/dolart1-de-faiz-indirimi-endisesi-2285267>

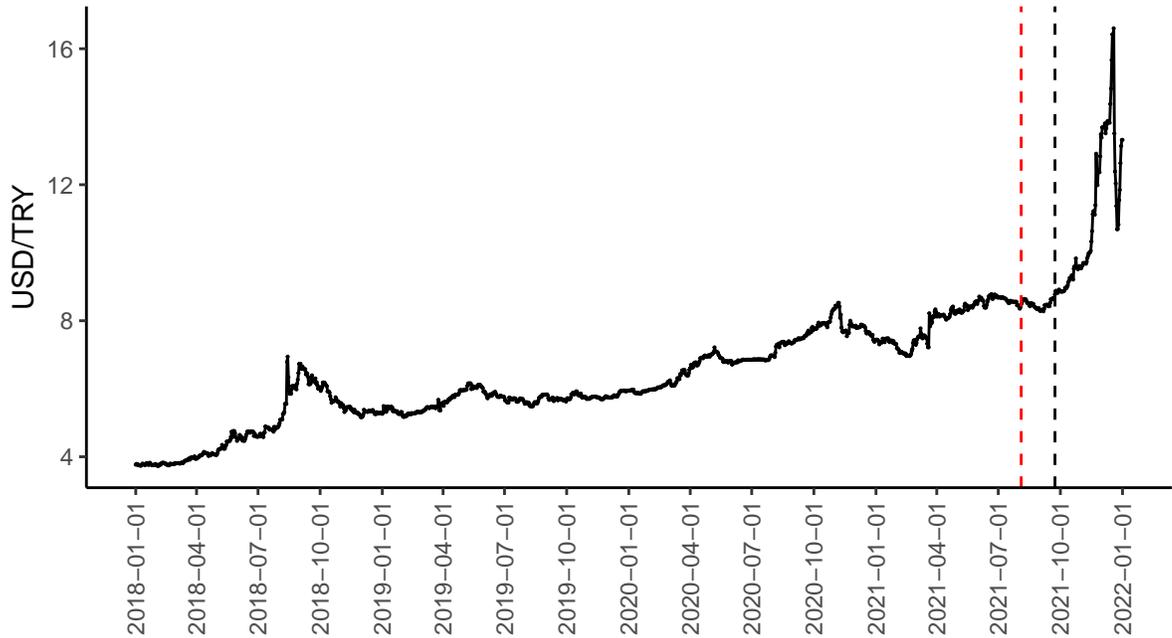


FIGURE 3.1: The USD/TRY exchange rate in the last four years. The red dashed line is the first time Erdoğan signaled that the interest rates would decrease. The dashed black line is the day when the Central Bank officially decreased the interest rates.

3.4 Research Design

I test the observable implications of each information manipulation strategy separately in two steps. In the first step, I compare how pro-government outlets differ from the opposition outlet by analyzing their entire online corpora using article-level data. This gives us average differences across pro-government and opposition outlets in 2021. Estimating models that only leverage within-day variation makes sure that I compare daily differences between pro-government and opposition outlets.

In the second step, I conduct a more dynamic analysis to see how media outlets' editorial policy has changed over time. For each media outlet, I analyze how they respond to the deepening of the economic crisis in the second half of 2021.

If pro-government outlets use the selective attribution strategy, then they should

have much positive tone in economic news with government actors but adopt a negative tone when they mention external actors. Hence I first compare how pro-government outlets differ from the opposition outlet in tone whenever they mention government and external actors. In the second step, I track each media outlet's average tone whenever they mention these actors. This dynamic analysis allows us to see whether pro-government outlets change their editorial stance with the deepening economic crisis.

On the other hand, the reference manipulation strategy implies that pro-government outlets should adopt a significantly more negative tone towards foreign economies to change people's reference points about these economies. To see whether this is the case, I first compare the overall negative tone towards foreign economies in pro-government and opposition outlets. In the absence of the reference manipulation strategy, we should not observe any difference between these groups. Then, in the second step, similar to the analyses in the selective attribution strategy, I track how each outlet changes its negative attitude toward foreign economies as the economic crisis deepens.

While these two strategies focus on how media outlets cover specific news, agenda-setting focuses on what to cover. To the extent that the first-level agenda-setting mechanism is at work, we should see that pro-government outlets shift the attention away from the domestic economy by publishing fewer stories about it. Therefore, I first analyze whether pro-government outlets publish less economic news during 2021 than the opposition outlet. After analyzing average differences in economic news volumes across pro-government and opposition outlets, I track the volume of economic news over time for each outlet to see whether there has been a change in each media outlet's topic distribution.

To see whether pro-government outlets engage in second-level agenda-setting, I also analyze issues covered in economic news. Since the currency depreciation drives

the economic crisis, pro-government outlets may publish fewer stories about the currency while covering other economic issues more, which might leave the volume of economic news unchanged. Therefore, analyzing the topic distribution of economic news for each media outlet allows us to see the prevalence of the second-level agenda-setting mechanism.

3.5 Data

I use article-level data from three media outlets in Turkey. These outlets are Sabah, TRT, and Sözcü. TRT is a state-owned media outlet, while Sabah and Sözcü are privately owned. While the constitution states that TRT has to operate independently and impartially, the evidence suggests that its content is mostly pro-government.⁵ Sabah is well-known for its pro-government coverage, and Sözcü is the primary opposition newspaper in the country. Sabah is owned by Kalyon Group, a conglomerate with significant interests in construction. Since state contracts are one of the main tools that the government uses to control the media (Chapter 2), Sabah's content is biased towards the government as its owners secure state contracts from the government in the construction sector with favorable terms. Sözcü, on the other hand, has attracted a wide readership in the country due to its critical content towards the government.

Two major factors affected my choice of these media outlets. First, Sabah and Sözcü are the two most read newspapers in the country based on the circulation figures with opposing editorial stances towards the government.⁶ Sabah is known to be pro-government, while Sözcü is an opposition newspaper. Since they are privately owned, the government does not directly control its editorial policies. Although the

⁵ See: <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/trt-tarafli-yayin-rekoru-kirdi-369043>.

⁶ The circulation figures comes from Reporters without Border's Media Ownership monitor. See <https://turkey.mom-rsf.org/tr/medya/gazete/>.

government does not interfere in every editorial decision for pro-government outlets, it makes sure that these outlets publish within the boundaries. This indirect control logic is similar to the formal models of media control (Gehlbach and Sonin, 2014) and bargaining models in which the government and media outlets implicitly agree on what to cover and what not to cover (Besley and Prat, 2006). In our case, the indirect control over Sabah is attained through favor exchanges (see Chapter 2), while the government directly controls TRT. That is why I also added TRT to my sample since it is a pro-government outlet directly controlled by the government. As a result, I have two pro-government outlets in my sample, and only one of them is directly controlled by the government.

I collected the *entire* online collections of all these three media outlets. Since all these three media outlets keep daily sitemaps, I was able to collect all of the articles they published in 2021, the year of the crisis. In total, the sample consists of 354933 articles.

Testing all information manipulation strategies first requires identifying economic news. Moreover, testing the agenda-setting mechanism also requires identifying other topics covered in the news. I use a machine learning approach to classify news articles based on their topics. In particular, I rely on a language model called Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers (BERT) (Devlin et al., 2018). It became one of the state-of-the-art language models performing the highest accuracies in various natural language processing applications such as text classification. Its state-of-the-art performance is because the model is bidirectionally trained using large amounts of raw text, allowing it to learn the contextual information for words. One can then take this large pre-trained model, which has around 340 million parameters, and fine-tune it for downstream tasks (Dodge et al., 2020).

I used a pre-trained Turkish language model known as BERTurk (Schweter, 2020). I used training data on news articles on different topics to fine-tune this model. The

topics are as follows: culture, economy, health, politics, sport, technology, and world. The overall accuracy of the fine-tuned model is 94%.⁷ The general distribution of topics across three media outlets can be found in Figure 3.2.

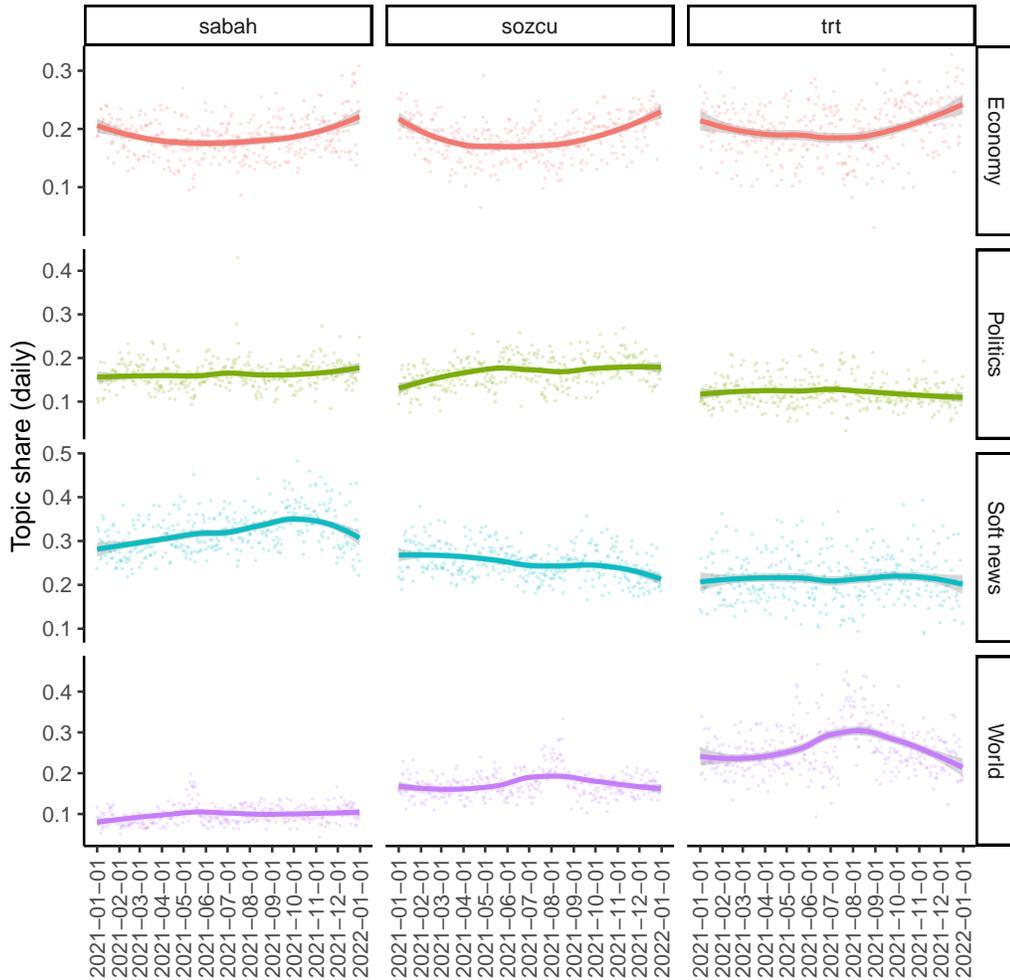


FIGURE 3.2: The distribution of articles across three outlets. Soft news is the combination of culture, sports, and tech news.

To identify international economy news, I also benefited from the fact that each news is published under a specific section for all three outlets. Since newspaper articles covering other economies are found either as world news or economic news,

⁷ See Section B.6 in the Appendix for further details about fine-tuning.

I developed multiple conditions to classify them correctly. I use information from both the BERT classifier and the section information and apply extra filters below to minimize false positives (labeling news stories as “international economy news” while they are not) and negatives (missing some “international economy news” by not labeling them as such). I accepted all stories as “international economy news” as long as one of the following conditions were satisfied:

- Either the BERT classifier classifies the news as “world news,” or it is published in the “world news” section AND the article mentions any foreign country, AND it does not mention any Turkey relevant words (the country name, its provinces, companies, government actors, etc.). It also includes economy-relevant keywords.
- The article is labeled as “economy” according to both BERT classifier and section information, AND the article mentions a foreign country but does not mention any Turkey-relevant words (the country name, its provinces, companies, government actors, etc.)

In the first condition, either the BERT classifier or the section information labels the story as world news. However, since there is a disagreement between the two, I also added three conditions to prevent false positives (labeling news stories as “international” while they are not). These conditions ensure that I flag international news about other countries’ economies. To be counted as international news, stories should mention any foreign country but should not include any Turkey relevant words. Excluding any Turkey-relevant words makes sure that I do not have any international trade stories between any foreign country and Turkey or Turkish companies’ foreign investments since the purpose is to find all economic stories about foreign economies rather than Turkey’s international economic relations. Lastly,

adding economy-relevant keywords makes sure that I restrict my attention to economic news but not other topics within international news. Note that when both the BERT classifier and the section information agree that the story is “world news”, these stories exclusively focus on non-economy topics such as politics, culture, or sports from other countries and, therefore, are not counted as “international economy news”.

The second condition focuses on news stories within the economic news. In this case, the BERT classifier and section information label the story as “economy”. However, these stories include both international and domestic economic stories. To find and flag international economic stories, I used the same extra two criteria (foreign country should be mentioned but not Turkey relevant words) as in the first condition. Since both the BERT classifier and the section information agrees that the story is about the economy, there is no need to filter these stories further using economy-relevant keywords as in the first condition, so I did not use the third filter here.

By following these decision rules, I find that 7.3% of all economic news is strictly about foreign economies.

To find the articles that mention government actors, I created an actor dictionary that includes ministers and prime ministers (or the president himself) of all governments since Erdoğan came to power in 2002. Although not all ministers held their seats until 2021, some continued to keep key seats within the state apparatus as mayors or consultants to Erdoğan himself. The total number of government actors turned out to be 121. I flagged any news article that mentions any of these 121 government actors.

Flagging articles for mentioning external actors is much more tricky because there is not a specific set of external actors from which we can check. I built up a custom list of external actors using an inductive approach. External actors include

multinational organizations such as IMF and World bank. But, the list also includes more vague “actors” mentioned in economic news, such as global markets, or more conspiratorial actors, such as the interest rate lobby or foreign powers. I also included cases where no specific actor exists, although the article mentions an external threat to the economy. Similar to directly attributing bad economic news to external actors, citing external threats to the economy also serves to get the responsibility away from the government. In these cases, I look for external threats, such as “economic cold war” and “economic war”. This list does not include any specific country names in order not to conflate domestic stories that mention external actors with stories specifically about foreign economies, which I use to test the reference manipulation strategy.⁸

Testing both selective attribution and reference point manipulation requires identifying the overall tone of each article. That is why I used another fine-tuned BERT model for the sentiment that classifies input text based on whether the sentiment is positive or negative. The overall accuracy of this fine-tuned model is 95.4%.⁹

Lastly, second-level agenda setting requires the identification of issues within the economic news. To do that, I used contextualized topic modeling. Topic models allow us to identify topics within documents. The traditional topic modeling method uses a bag-of-words approach which ignores the semantic relationships among the words, making it harder to identify coherent topics across documents (Grootendorst, 2022; Bianchi et al., 2020). However, recent approaches add contextual information to topic models by bringing word embeddings from large language models such as

⁸ See Appendix for the complete list of external actors.

⁹ This model is already fine-tuned and available here: <https://huggingface.co/savasy/bert-base-turkish-sentiment-cased>. Since this model was fine-tuned on movie review and tweet datasets, I used higher thresholds to flag articles as negative or positive. During my validation checks, I realized that the pieces are more neutral when the classifier selects positive or negative labels with lower probability. Applying higher thresholds makes sure that I get articles written with a strong positive or negative tone.

BERT (Devlin et al., 2018). As a result, contextualized topic models provide more coherent topics. In particular, I use Bianchi et al. (2020)’s contextualized topic model to extract ten topics from all economy stories published in 2021 across three media outlets I analyze.

In the following sections, I first present the empirical models and separately show the results for each information manipulation strategy.

3.6 Selective Attribution

The selective attribution mechanism implies that news, particularly economic news, should be more positive in tone than other economic news when government actors are mentioned and more negative when external actors are mentioned. As outlined above, I first test whether this is indeed the case by comparing pro-government outlets with the opposition outlet. Second, I analyze whether they used selective attribution more intensively as the crisis deepened.

3.6.1 Empirical specification

To test the first part of the selective attribution mechanism, I used the following linear model:

$$\begin{aligned}
 PositiveSentiment_{it} = & \beta_1 [GovActors_{it} * ProGovOutlet_{it}] + \\
 & \beta_2 [ExternalActors_{it} * ProGovOutlet_{it}] + \quad (3.1) \\
 & \gamma X_{it} + \theta_t + \epsilon_{it}
 \end{aligned}$$

where $PositiveSentiment_{it} = 1$ if sentiment is positive, and $GovActors_{it} = 1$ if government actors are mentioned, and $ExternalActors_{it} = 1$ if external actors are mentioned in article i at day t . $ProGovOutlet_{it}$ takes the value 1 for all articles published in either Sabah or TRT. X_{it} is a vector of article-level controls (a dummy

variable for opinion pieces and the log number of words in the article), and θ_t represent the day fixed effects. I also estimated the same model with the outcome being $NegativeSentiment_{it}$ since I also have neutral as the third category.

Although one may expect that pro-government outlets adopt a more positive tone when they mention government actors, such a positive tone towards the government could be more challenging to sustain in an economic crisis in which most news on the domestic economy is negative. On the other hand, it is much easier to have a positive tone towards government actors in other domains such as politics. That is why I estimate models using both all news and economic news only.

I employed a more flexible empirical design to see whether the selective attribution mechanism was used more intensively as the economic crisis deepened. The crisis deepened in the second half of 2021 (see Figure 3.1 above) after Erdoğan signaled on August 5, 2021, that interest rate cuts would come soon. To see how this decision impacted the selective attribution mechanism, I estimated the following model for each media outlet in the sample separately:

$$PositiveSentiment_{it} = \sum_{M=-M_0}^{M_1} \beta_M 1[M_{i,t} = M] * GovActors_{it} + \gamma X_{it} + \theta_t + \epsilon_{it}$$

where $M \in [-M_0, M_1]$ is the time window around the event. $M_{i,t}$ denotes the month dummies relative to the time when Erdoğan announced that interest rates would decrease (August 2021). $\left\{ \beta_M \right\}_{-M_0}^{M_1}$ then give us a vector of coefficients that estimate the dynamic effect of mentioning government actors in articles on positive sentiment. The estimate gives us the average difference in positive sentiment between articles that mention government actors and others (all other news or all economic news, depending on the specification) for each newspaper. The remaining terms are defined as above.

3.6.2 Selective attribution: results

The results in Table 3.1 provide interesting insights into the prevalence of the selective attribution mechanism across different outlets. First, in line with Rozenas and Stukal (2019)'s findings, pro-government outlets are more likely to be positive whenever government actors are mentioned in economic news. On average, in economic news, pro-government outlets are more likely to be positive in tone during 2021 (by 14%). However, their positive tone increases even further when government actors are mentioned (by 2.9%). Given that 17% of all economic news is positive in tone, these effects are sizeable. Moreover, the results unsurprisingly show that these findings can be generalized to non-economy news as well since we see that pro-government outlets tend to be much more positive in all news whenever government actors are mentioned (as we see in the first column in Table 3.1). The striking thing is that the additional positive tone in economic news with government actors is much less than the overall positive tone boost government actors enjoy in all news (2.9% vs. 7.2%), showing the fact that it becomes much more difficult to find positive economic news with government actors in 2021. On the other hand, mentioning external actors decreases the positive tone in economic news by 8.8% in pro-government outlets.

We see a similar trend when we focus on negative news. While pro-government outlets are less likely to be negative, they become more negative in tone whenever they mention external actors.

Table 3.1: Pro-government outlets and the selective attribution mechanism

	Positive news		Negative news	
	All news	Economy news	All news	Economy news
Pro-gov outlet	0.062*** (0.002)	0.140*** (0.004)	-0.080*** (0.002)	-0.185*** (0.005)
Government actors mentioned	-0.016*** (0.005)	0.013 (0.009)	-0.041*** (0.006)	-0.075*** (0.013)
External actors mentioned	-0.076*** (0.009)	0.005 (0.011)	-0.064*** (0.012)	-0.143*** (0.014)
Pro-gov outlet x Government actors mentioned	0.072*** (0.005)	0.029** (0.011)	-0.073*** (0.006)	-0.013 (0.013)
Pro-gov outlet x External actors mentioned	-0.012 (0.011)	-0.088*** (0.013)	0.021 (0.013)	0.119*** (0.015)
Day FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Article-level Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Num.Obs.	354933	53267	354933	53267
R2	0.031	0.048	0.019	0.065
R2 Adj.	0.030	0.042	0.018	0.059

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01
Standard errors are clustered at the day level

In figures 3.3 and 3.4, I plotted the predicted positive sentiment across both outlet types when government and external actors are mentioned and not mentioned in economy news (using model 2 in Table 3.1). While the predicted probability of an article having a positive tone is 19.5% [19.2, 19.9] when no government actors are mentioned, the probability of a positive tone increases to 23.8% [22.3, 25.2] when government actors are mentioned, amounting to 20% increase. On the other hand, the opposition outlet, Sözcü, is less positive in tone in general. While their predicted positive tone is 5.5% [5, 6.1], mentioning government actors slightly improves the positive tone (6.8% [5.2, 8.5]), although the overall tone seems to stay negative anyway.

When we look at how mentioning external actors change the overall positive tone, we also see different trends across pro-government and opposition outlets. While the opposition outlet is not much different in positive tone whenever they mention external actors or not (5.6% [5, 6.1] vs. 6% [4, 8.1]), a dramatic difference exists for pro-government outlets (11.2% [9.7, 12.8] vs. 19.5% [19.2, 19.9]).

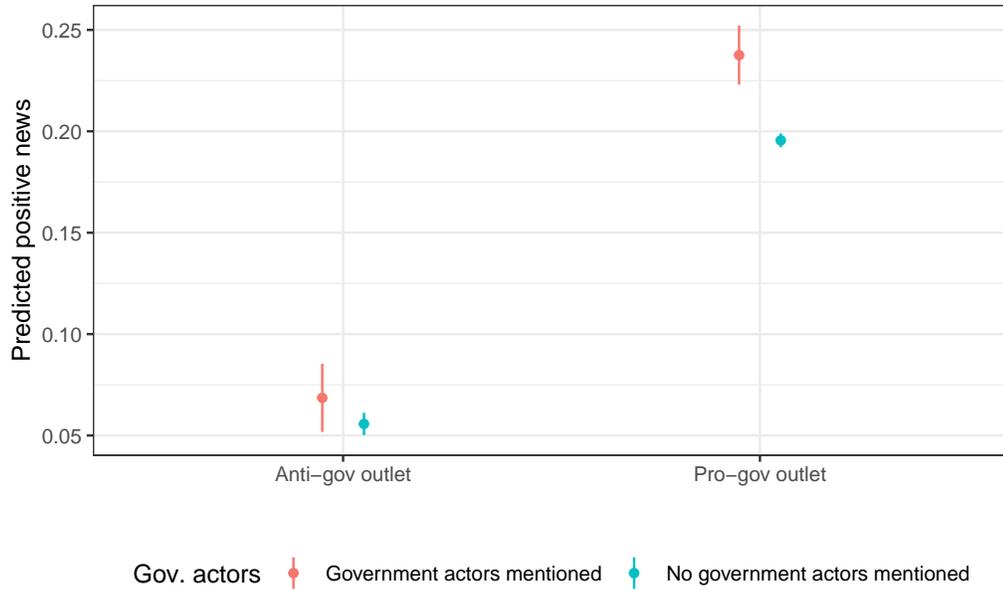


FIGURE 3.3: Predicted positive news when government actors are mentioned or not among economy articles

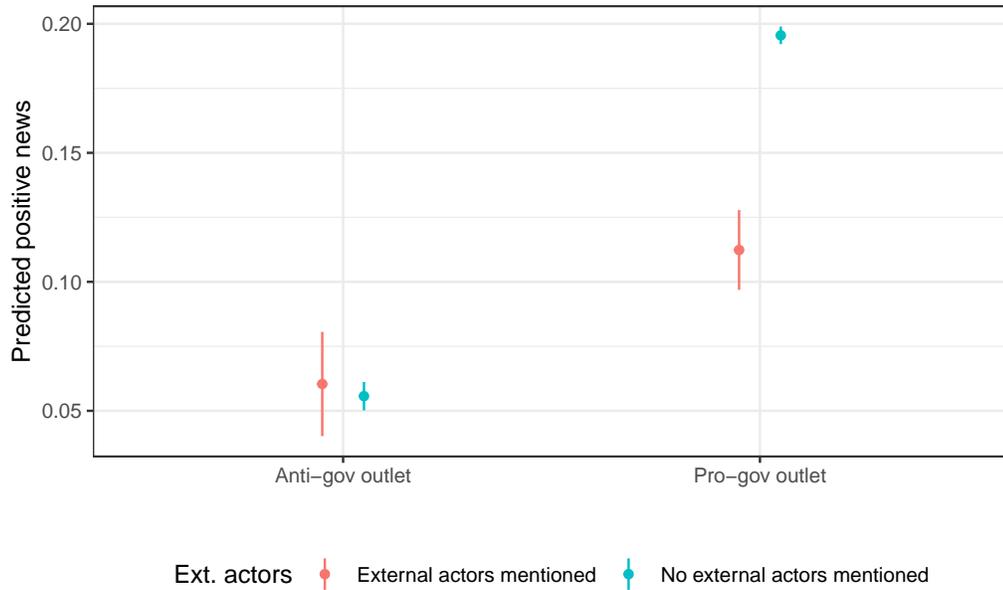


FIGURE 3.4: Predicted positive news when external actors are mentioned or not among economy articles

Although these results show that pro-government outlets are significantly more

positive in tone when government actors are mentioned in the economic news and less when external actors are mentioned, it does not tell us whether they used this strategy more intensively as the crisis deepens. In Figures 3.5 and 3.6, I plotted the coefficients for each month by taking July 2021 as the baseline for Sabah and TRT, respectively. These results show that economic news articles did not become more positive when government actors were mentioned in both outlets. As the crisis deepened in August 2021, pro-government outlets did not become more positive in tone. This result makes sense since it probably gets increasingly challenging to find positive domestic economic news to attribute to the government as the crisis hits the economy. Similarly, when we analyze whether pro-government outlets became more negative in tone when they mention external actors in the second half of 2021, we see that they are not significantly different from our baseline month (see Appendix for figures). This, I believe, shows the limitations of the selective attribution mechanism in times of economic crisis. While the shortage of positive economic news makes it challenging to increase the positive attribution to government actors, the one-man rule makes negative attribution to external actors less credible.

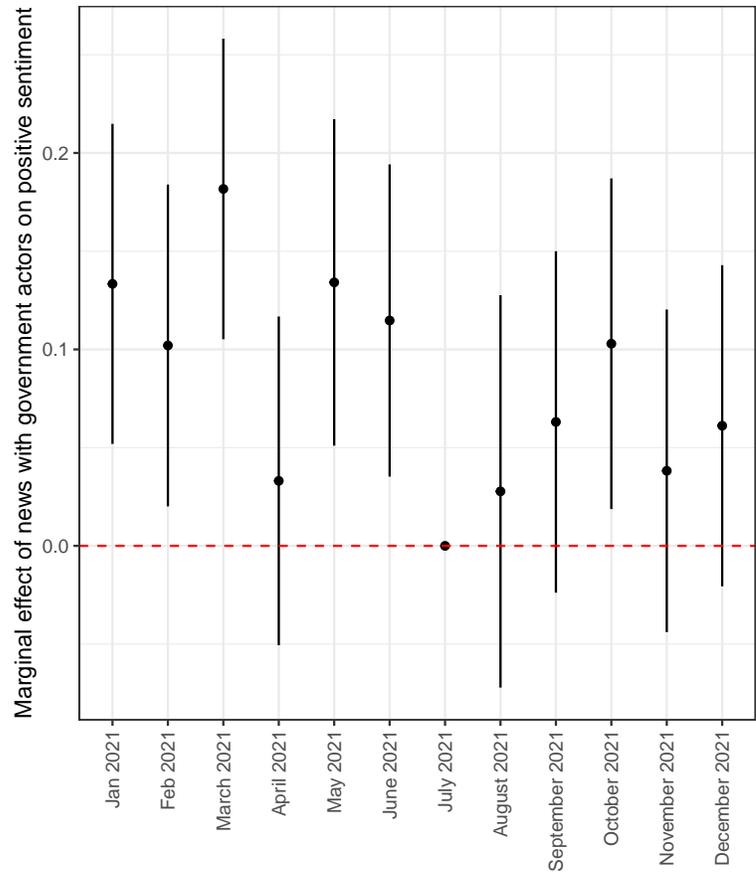


FIGURE 3.5: News with government actors and positive sentiment in Sabah

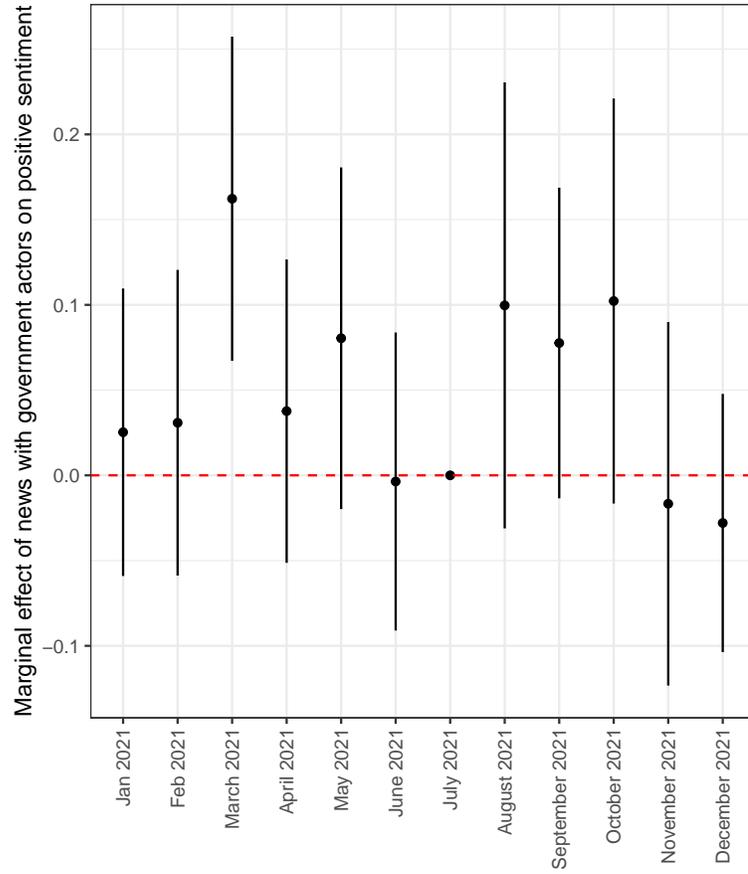


FIGURE 3.6: News with government actors and positive sentiment in TRT

Similarly, Figure 3.7 shows that Sözcü, the anti-government outlet, does not change its editorial policy about selective attribution as expected.

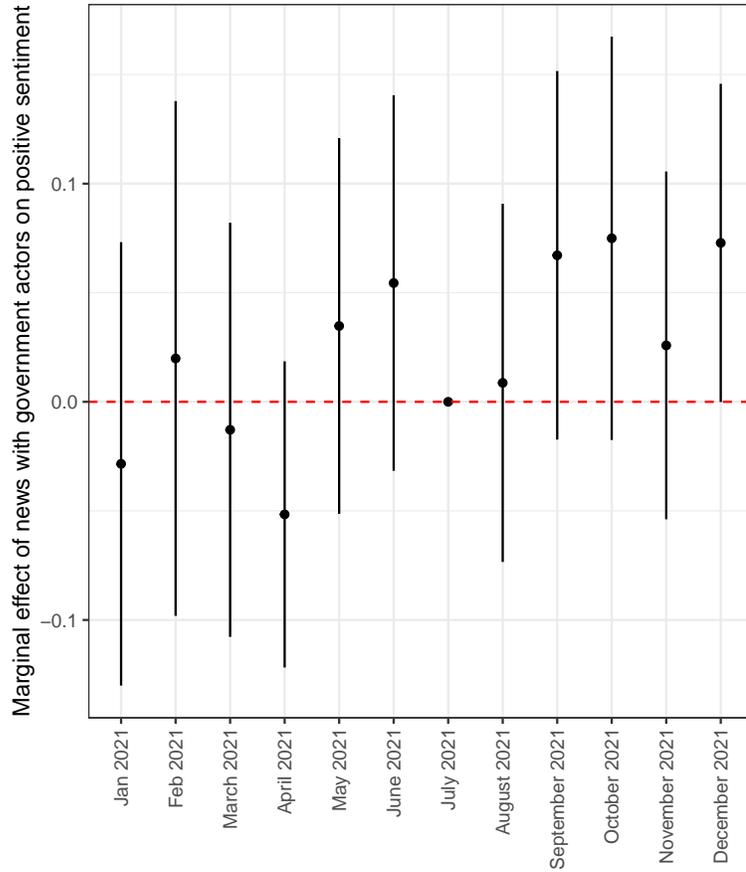


FIGURE 3.7: News with government actors and positive sentiment in Sozcu

3.7 Reference point manipulation

3.7.1 Empirical specification

To test the prevalence of the reference point manipulation strategy, I followed a similar empirical design as in the selective attribution strategy. First, I compare pro-government outlets with the anti-government newspaper to see whether they differ in their coverage of foreign economies. Then, I analyze each outlet separately to see whether their editorial policy has changed with the deepening economic crisis. The following model compares pro-government outlets with the opposition outlet (Sözcü):

$$NegativeSentiment_{it} = \beta[GovActors_{it} * IntEconomyNews_{it}] + \gamma X_{it} + \theta_t + \epsilon_{it}$$

where $NegativeSentiment_{it} = 1$ if sentiment is negative in article i at day t and $IntEconomyNews_{it} = 1$ if the article i at day t is about a foreign economy. The rest is the same as in previous models.

Similar to the dynamic effect of selective attribution mechanism, the second model analyzes whether there has been any editorial policy change about the reference point manipulation as the crisis intensifies:

$$NegativeSentiment_{it} = \sum_{M=-M_0}^{M_1} \beta_M 1[M_{i,t} = M] * IntEconomyNews_{it} + \gamma X_{it} + \theta_t + \epsilon_{it}$$

where $\left\{ \beta_M \right\}_{-M_0}^{M_1}$ gives us a vector of coefficients that estimate the dynamic effect of articles about international economies on negative sentiment. Here, the estimate gives us the average difference in negative sentiment between international economy news and other news (all other news or other economic news, depending on the specification). The remaining terms are defined as above.

3.7.2 Reference point manipulation: results

The results in Table 3.2 show that pro-government outlets are significantly more negative towards foreign economies. When we restrict our attention to economic news only, pro-government outlets are more negative in tone by around 20% when they cover foreign economies. The effect is sizeable since 20% translates into half of the standard deviation of the outcome variable.

Table 3.2: Pro-government outlets and the reference point manipulation mechanism

	Negative news	
	All news	Economy news
Pro-gov outlet	-0.088*** (0.002)	-0.197*** (0.005)
International economy news	-0.057*** (0.013)	-0.120*** (0.014)
Pro-gov outlet x International economy news	0.089*** (0.015)	0.202*** (0.016)
Day FE	Yes	Yes
Article-level Controls	Yes	Yes
Num.Obs.	354933	53267
R2	0.014	0.062
R2 Adj.	0.013	0.056

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Standard errors are clustered at the day level

To better interpret the interaction term, I used the second model in Table 3.2, which only focuses on economic news, and visualize these results in Figure 3.8. These results support the argument that media outlets engage in reference point manipulation in Turkey. While pro-government outlets portray the domestic economy significantly less negatively than foreign economies, this flips in the opposition outlet. While the predicted negative tone about foreign economies are similar across outlets (27.9% [25.4%, 30.4%] vs. 28.4% [26.7%, 30%] in anti-government and pro-government outlets, respectively), they significantly differ in their tone about the domestic economy news (39.9% [39.2%, 40.5%] vs. 20.1% [19.9%, 20.4%] in anti-government and pro-government outlets, respectively).

These results imply that while pro-government outlets portray other economies negatively to update citizens' reference points downwards, opposition outlets try the opposite: Sozcu tends to cover more positive news from other countries to change citizens' reference points upward.

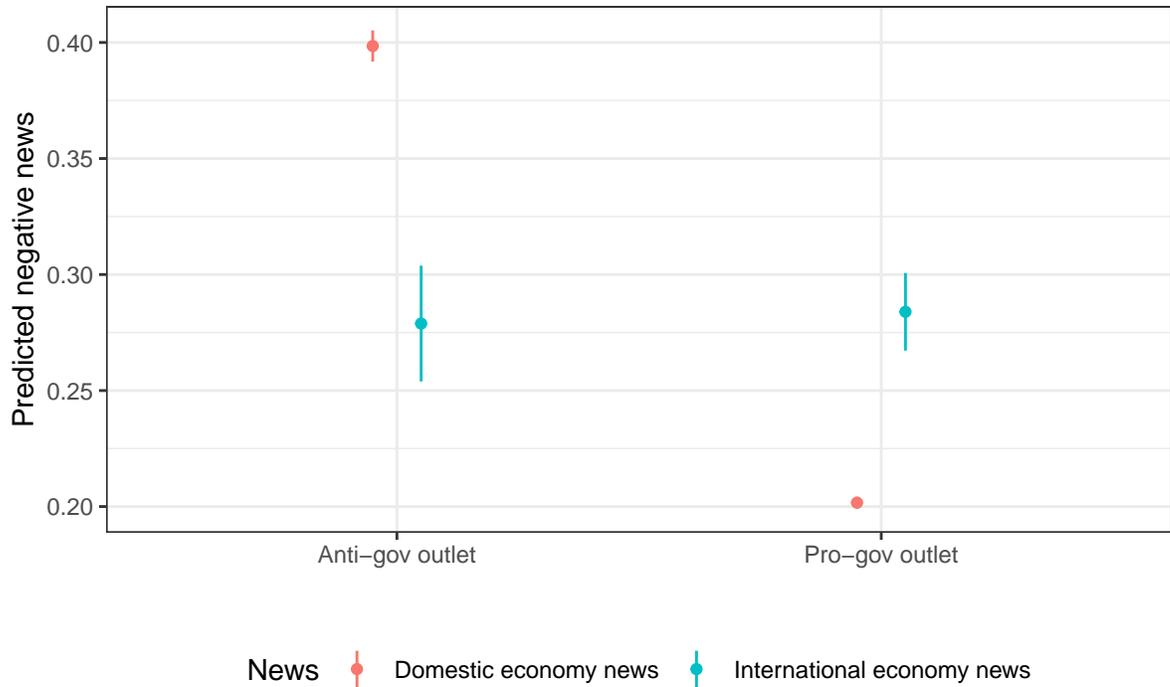


FIGURE 3.8: Predicted negative news among economy articles

Although these results show that pro-government and anti-government outlets differ in terms of their editorial stance vis-à-vis domestic and foreign economies, the difference could be driven entirely by their stance toward the domestic economy. While pro-government outlets are more likely to portray the domestic economy with a positive tone, anti-government outlets do the opposite. It could be that both types of outlets cover foreign economies in the same way, so the difference is explained by their stance toward the domestic economy.

Analyzing each newspaper’s reaction to the deepening of the economic crisis gives us more insights into whether they change their editorial stance towards foreign economies. The figure 3.9 shows how negative sentiment toward foreign economies changed as the crisis deepened. In the first half of the year, there has been no change in sentiment towards foreign economies relative to domestic economic news in the Sabah newspaper. However, it became more negative in tone starting in August 2021,

the month when Erdoğan announced interest rates would decrease. The increase in negative sentiment towards foreign economies is also substantive: in October 2021, the negative sentiment increases by around 17% relative to our baseline month, July 2021.

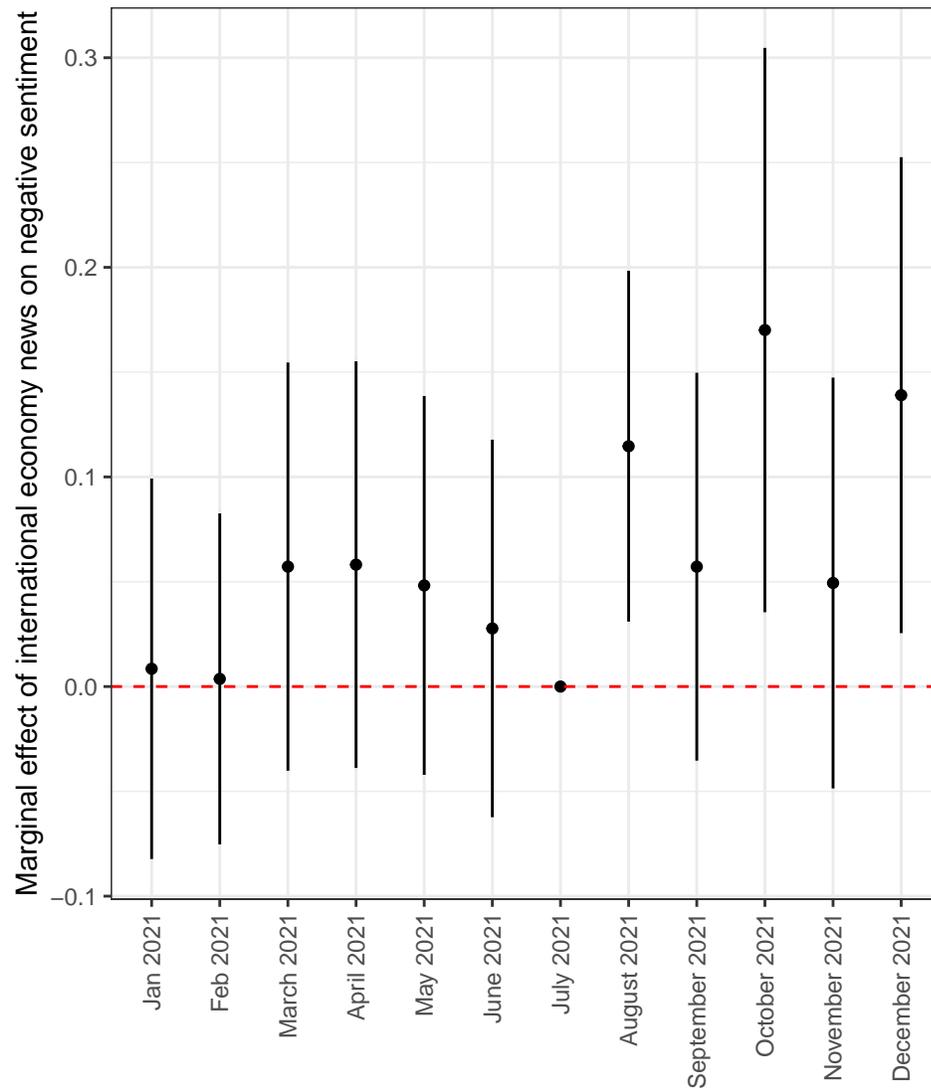


FIGURE 3.9: International economy news and negative sentiment in Sabah

When we look at TRT, another pro-government outlet, we see a slight increase in August 2021 though the difference is not statistically different. In September

2021, however, the month when the Central Bank officially decreased the interest rates causing massive depreciation of the currency, we see a significant increase in negative sentiment towards foreign economies, in line with the expectations of the reference point manipulation mechanism. By October 2021, however, the effect becomes statistically non-distinguishable from the baseline month again.

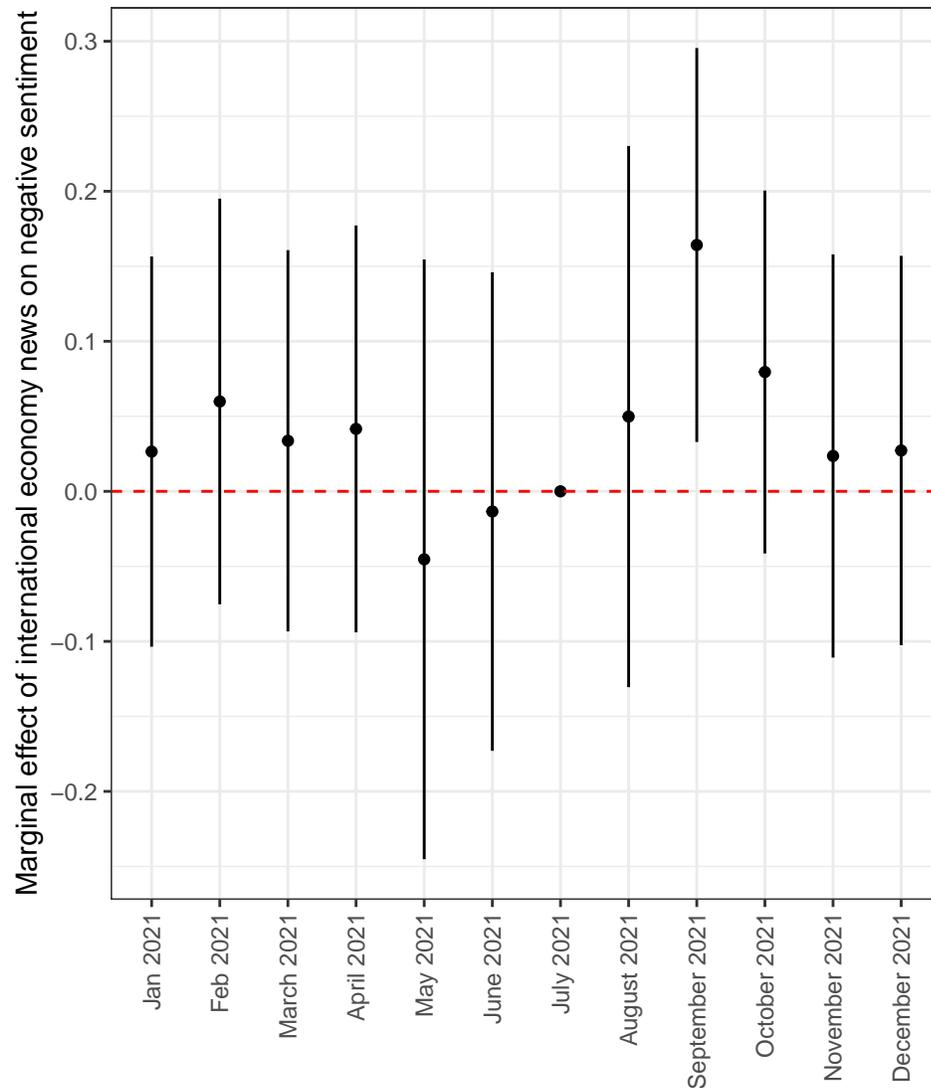


FIGURE 3.10: International economy news and negative sentiment in TRT

When we turn our attention to the opposition outlet, Sözcü, we see in Figure

3.11 that their editorial stance against the foreign economies did not change in the second half of 2021, showing us the fact that only pro-government outlets became more critical of foreign economies as the Turkish economy collapsed.

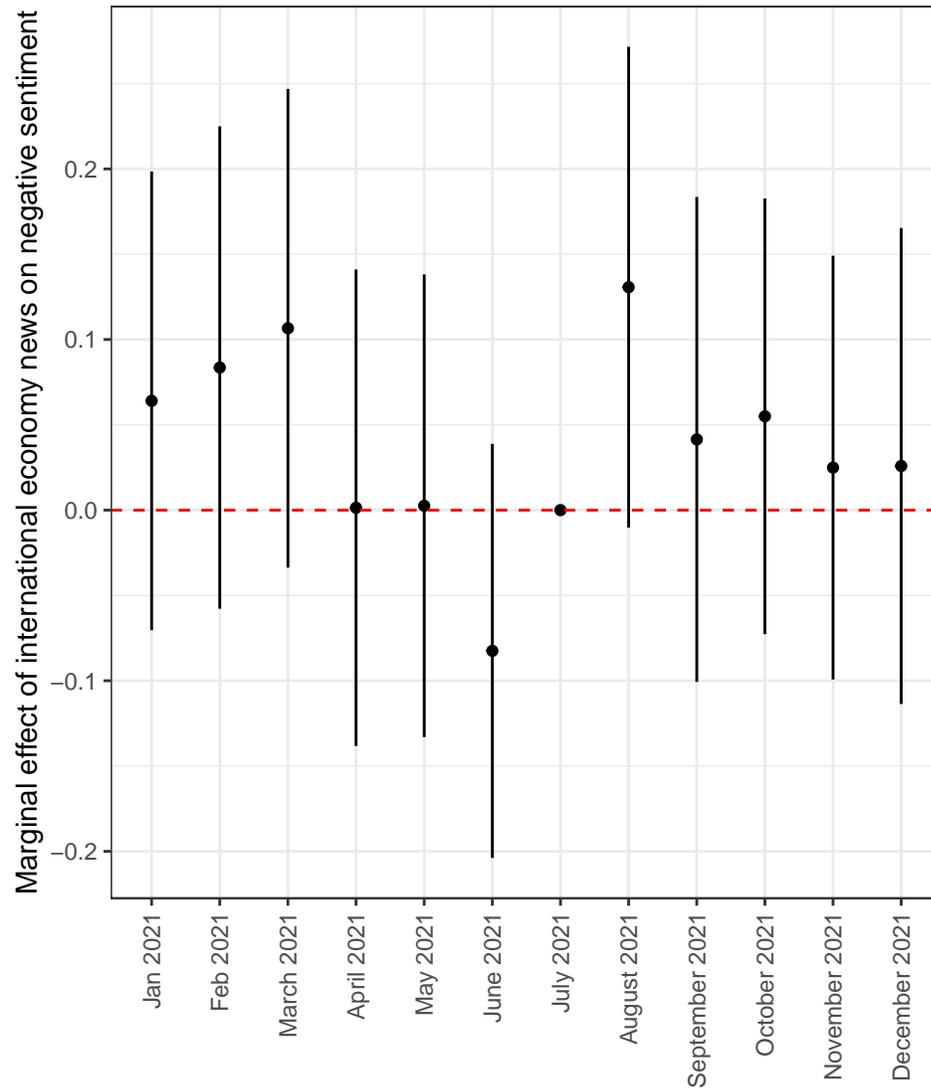


FIGURE 3.11: International economy news and negative sentiment in Sözcü

3.8 Agenda-setting

3.8.1 Empirical specification

Lastly, I focus on what is being covered by these outlets rather than how it is covered to test the implications of the agenda-setting mechanism. To test whether pro-government outlets publish significantly less hard news in general or economic news in particular, I estimated the following simple linear model:

$$y_{it} = ProGovOutlet_{it} + \gamma X_{it} + \theta_t + \epsilon_{it}$$

where y_{it} is whether the article i in day t is economy news, domestic economic news, or hard news (economy, world, politics). Similar to the model specifications above, $ProGovOutlet_{it}$ is 1 if the article is published in one of the two pro-government outlets. γX_{it} and θ_t are article-level controls and day fixed effects, respectively.

Similar to previous two mechanisms, I also estimated flexible models for each newspaper separately to see whether their coverage of domestic economic news changes as the crisis intensifies:

$$DomesticEconNews_{it} = \sum_{M=-M_0}^{M_1} \beta_M 1[M_{i,t} = M] + \gamma X_{it} + \epsilon_{it}$$

where $\left\{ \beta_M \right\}_{-M_0}^{M_1}$ gives us a vector of coefficients that estimate each month's dynamic effect on publishing domestic economy news articles. Note that this model cannot include day fixed effects since we analyze whether each outlet covers fewer domestic economic news stories over time, rather than comparing different groups within a day, such as the average negative sentiment between international economy news and domestic economic news.

3.8.2 Agenda-setting: results

The results in Table 3.3 give evidence in favor of the agenda-setting mechanism. In 2021, pro-government outlets published significantly less hard news, some of which is driven by fewer economic news stories. While pro-government outlets publish less economic news by 5.1%, the difference is minimal when we specifically focus on domestic economic news. The reduction is around 0.8% in pro-government outlets. This translates into 30 fewer articles about the domestic economy each day.

Table 3.3: Pro-government outlets and the agenda-setting mechanism

	DV: Economy news	DV: Hard news	DV: Domestic economy news
Pro-gov outlet	-0.051*** (0.002)	-0.061*** (0.002)	-0.008*** (0.002)
Day FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Article-level Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sample	All news	All news	Economy news
Num.Obs.	354933	354933	53267
R2	0.013	0.009	0.021
R2 Adj.	0.012	0.008	0.014

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Standard errors are clustered at the day level

To better understand how the coverage of domestic economic news changes during the economic crisis, I plotted how domestic economic coverage changes each month for each newspaper. The results in Figure 3.12 and 3.13 show that, contrary to the agenda-setting mechanism, pro-government outlets did not decrease their coverage of domestic economic news as the economic crisis intensified. On the contrary, we see an increase: Sabah and TRT published 4.5% and 3.6% more domestic economic news in December, respectively, relative to our baseline month, July 2021.

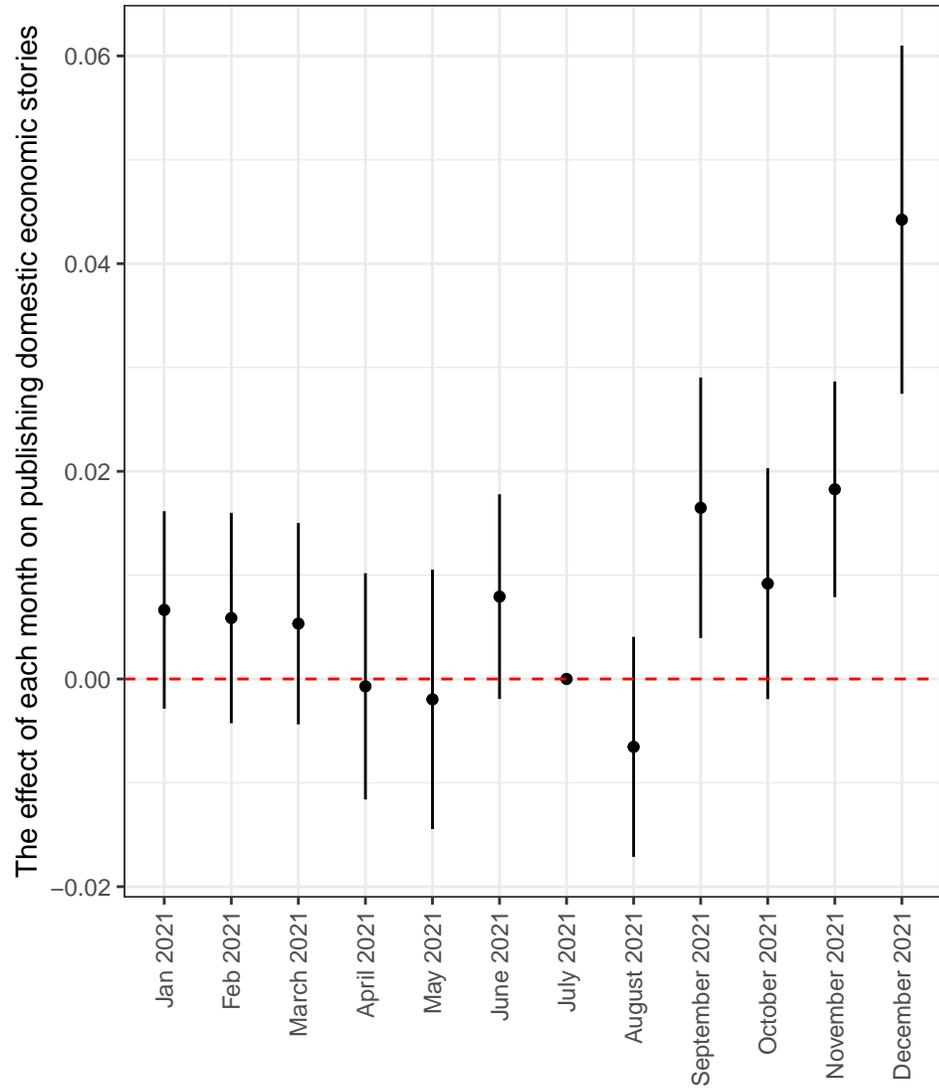


FIGURE 3.12: Agenda-setting in Sabah

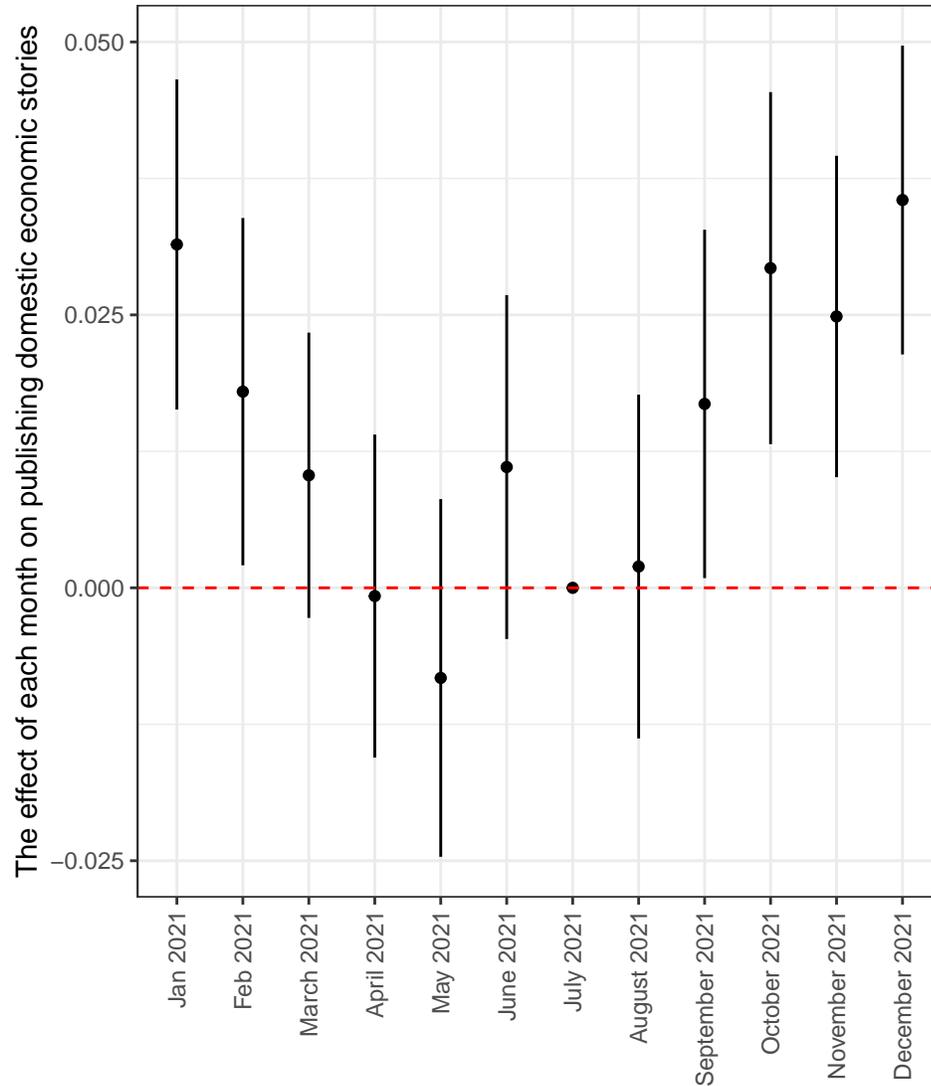


FIGURE 3.13: Agenda setting in TRT

However, when we look at the opposition outlet, we see even a more dramatic increase in domestic economy coverage: Sözcü increased its domestic economy coverage by 6.3% in December 2021 relative to July 2021. Taken together, these results show how agenda-setting becomes a less effective strategy for information manipulation in the economy. Even pro-government outlets feel the need to cover the economy more. Trying to shift the attention away from the economy can backfire while people can

use their everyday experiences about how the economy is doing. Given bad economic conditions, pro-government outlets cover domestic economic stories more rather than staying silent about the crisis.

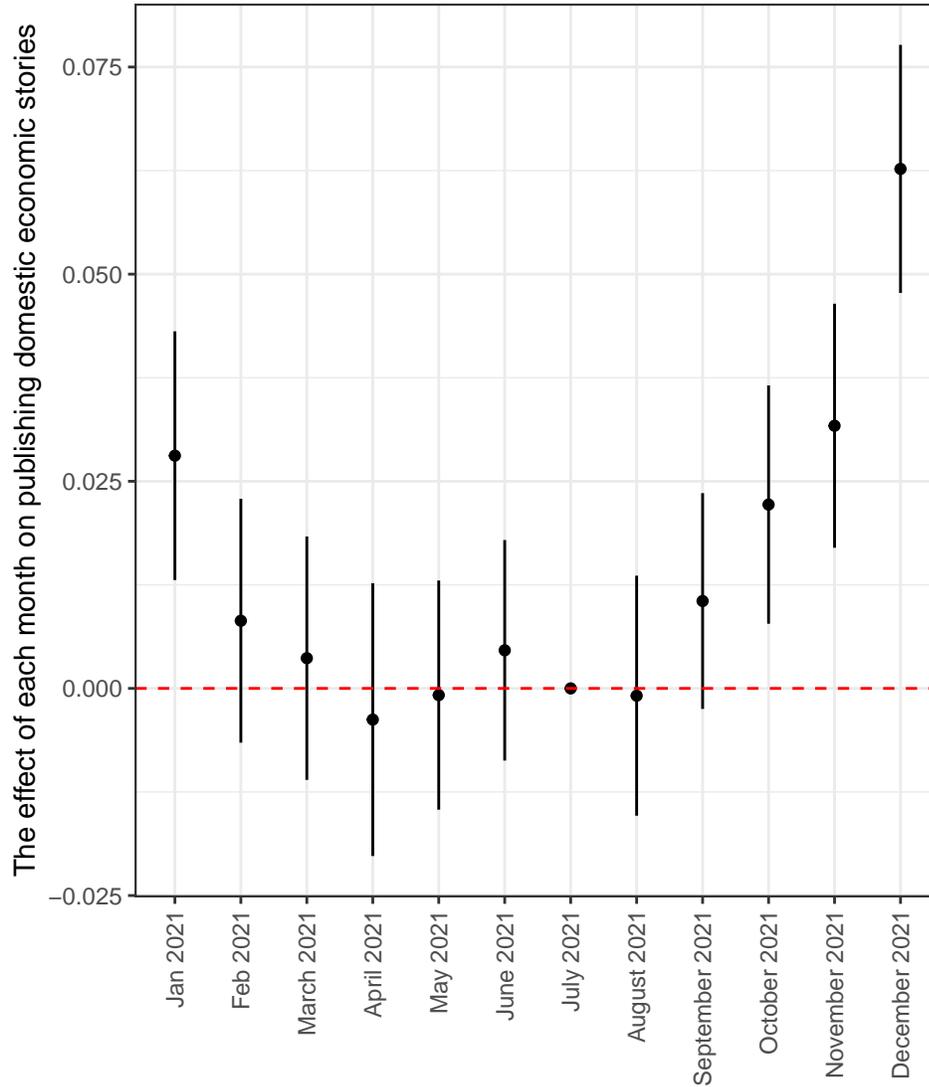


FIGURE 3.14: Agenda setting in Sözcü

To test the implications of the second-level agenda-setting, I used the topics extracted from the contextualized topic model. I extracted ten topics and reviewed the most representative words for each topic, and identified the group that includes

news about currency and foreign exchange.¹⁰ Then, I plotted their overall volume within the economic news.

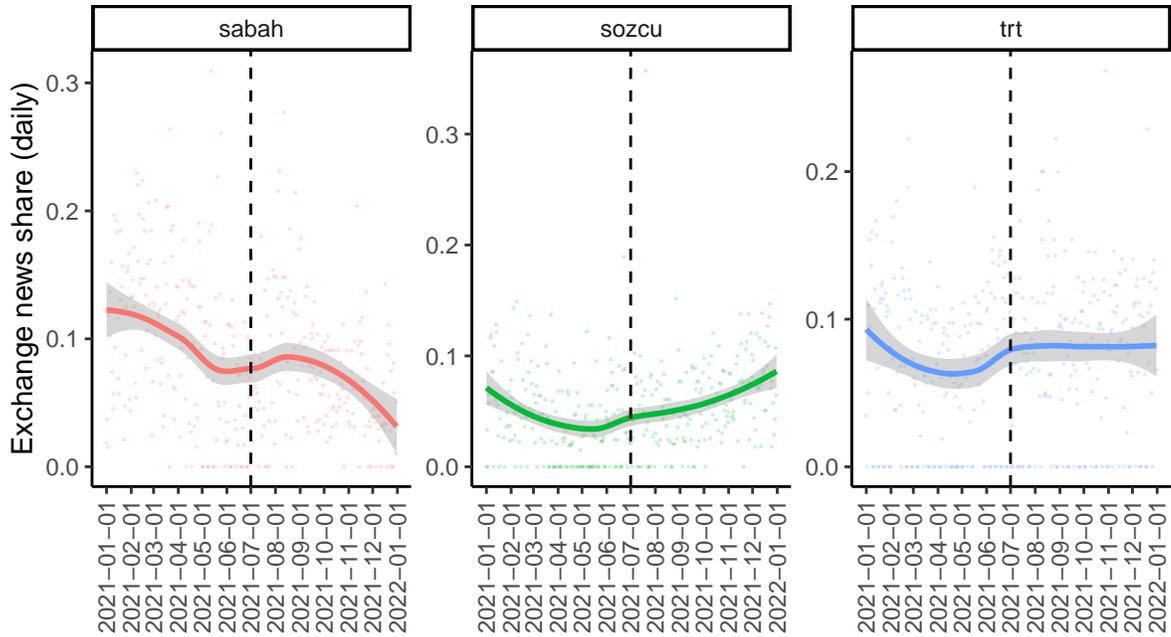


FIGURE 3.15: Second-level agenda setting: currency topic share within economy news

The results in Figure 3.15 broadly support the second-level agenda-setting mechanism. While we see a decrease in Sabah’s currency/exchange news share and no change in TRT, we actually see an increase in Sözcü. While pro-government outlets are no more likely to cover economic stories about the currency as the crisis deepens, Sözcü devotes more space to this issue.

3.9 Conclusion

What kind of information manipulation strategies do autocrats use during economic crises? Although such problems open up the possibility of regime change (Przeworski

¹⁰ See Appendix Section B.7 for details about the contextualized topic model and word clouds for each extracted topic.

and Limongi, 1997), the resilience of leaders in keeping their legitimacy in democratically backsliding regimes (Guriev and Treisman, 2019) makes this an important question to understand the dynamics of information manipulation.

This paper empirically studies three kinds of possible information manipulation strategies in times of economic crises: selective attribution, reference point manipulation, and agenda-setting by focusing on the recent currency crisis in Turkey. I analyze the entire online corpora of three media outlets: Sabah, a private pro-government newspaper; TRT, a state-owned outlet; and Sözcü, the leading opposition newspaper.

The results show that pro-government outlets, Sabah and TRT, are more likely to be positive in tone whenever they mention government actors and more negative when they mention external actors relative to the opposition outlet. While this supports the selective attribution mechanism, the results also show that selective attribution is not likely to be used intensively as the economic crisis deepens.

I argue that selective attribution is limited for information manipulation in times of economic crises for two main reasons: first, it is hard to find positive economic news to attribute to government actors in crises. Second, the centralization of power facilitates the attribution of responsibility. In personalistic regimes such as Turkey, people are more likely to attribute economic problems to the leader.¹¹

The results also show that pro-government outlets are more likely to be negative in tone whenever they cover foreign economies. I argue that this helps manipulate people's reference points about other economies. When governments cannot change people's lived experiences about the domestic economy with media manipulation, it is easier to negatively cover foreign economies to convince citizens that their economy is not performing badly. The results also show that the deepening of crisis increases the negative tone towards other economies: the results from Sabah show an increased negative tone in the second half of the year while TRT covers foreign economies with

¹¹ See footnote 1 above.

a significantly more negative tone in September 2021, the time when the Central Bank officially decreased the interest rates, which triggered massive depreciation of the currency.

The results from agenda-setting show more nuanced insights about the information manipulation in economic news. All outlets are more likely to cover the economy in the second half of 2021, contrary to the expectations of the first-level agenda-setting mechanism. I argue that this is because people experience a crisis in their lives. Under such circumstances, transferring the saliency of the economy towards other topics such as politics is less likely to impact people. On the other hand, results show that second-level agenda setting might work instead: since the economy is the most salient topic, pro-government outlets are not likely to cover the economy less, but they are less likely to cover news about currency/exchange issues. Instead, they shift the attention to other topics within the economy.

By conducting a systemic analysis of information manipulation strategies from Turkey, this paper improves our understanding of how autocrats in democratically backsliding countries manage to keep their popular support even in times of economic crises. Further research should focus not only on the economy but also on other areas in which such manipulation occurs.

Checks and Balances and Institutional Gridlock: Implications for Mixed Regimes

4.1 Introduction

Across the world, democratically elected leaders continue to enjoy popular support even when they erode democracy. Gradual usurpation of power by the executive, known as democratic backsliding, is now the dominant form of advancing toward authoritarianism (Bermeo, 2016; Mechkova et al., 2017; Svobik, 2020). However, survey evidence across the world also shows that the majority of people living both in democracies and autocracies find it important to live in a democratic country (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005), probably because democracies perform better than non-democracies in heeding the demands of the masses (Mill, 1861). Relative to non-democracies, democracies provide more welfare (see, for instance, Przeworski et al., 2000; Sen, 2000), more redistribution (Boix, 2003; Acemoglu and Robinson, 2005), and stronger property rights (Ansell and Samuels, 2014). Democracy is also the only political system that protects civil and political rights (Almond and Verba, 1965; Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). Why then do people support aspiring autocrats even

though they value living in a democratic country? Do they give up their democratic rights in exchange for some other gain? Or, more interestingly, do they think of democracy in different terms?

I argue that the widespread support for aspiring autocrats can be explained by citizens' unwillingness to accept effective checks and balances on the executive. Although these people are not necessarily against vertical accountability (e.g., elections) or individual freedom, they are willing to accept the dismantling of checks and balances due to their belief that they cause institutional gridlock in the political system. Although gridlock is not possible when the ruler is the only decision-maker, abuse of power is more likely in the absence of checks and balances. Therefore, citizens face a tension between the possibility of gridlock and abuse of power, which ultimately shapes their decision to support an aspiring autocrat.

Gridlock prevention becomes a useful strategy in the hands of aspiring autocrats. They present checks and balances as obstacles to a policy-responsive regime—a regime in which popular policies are implemented quickly and efficiently. They emphasize that a regime without checks and balances can be more efficient in translating popular preferences into actual policies. Although people are concerned about both gridlock and abuse of power, aspiring autocrats' gridlock prevention strategy increases the saliency of the former over the latter, making some people willing to give up checks and balances in return for policy responsiveness.

I test my arguments in two steps. First, I use cross-national data to show that judicial and legislative constraints decrease overall democracy satisfaction and support, while we do not see a similar effect when we look at the impact of individual liberty or vertical accountability (e.g., competitive elections). Therefore, citizens only react to a specific dimension of democracy, constraints on the executive, rather than an overall aversion to democracy.

Second, I present evidence from an original survey experiment to offer a specific

mechanism explaining why stronger checks and balances dampen satisfaction with democracy. Using data from a survey experiment conducted in Turkey, I show that while respondents are less likely to choose an authoritarian candidate who proposes attacking the judiciary, such electoral punishment for authoritarianism disappears if the candidate justifies their actions on the grounds of preventing gridlock. Therefore, people's concerns about the possibility of gridlock make them more likely to embrace a political system without checks and balances. More interestingly, the results show the tension between majoritarian and liberal components of democracy: respondents perceive the authoritarian candidates as less authoritarian if they justify their actions on the grounds of solving gridlock. This shows that the gridlock prevention strategy is seen as a pro-democratic attempt to fix the political system's problems. This result indeed gives credence to the argument that the liberal conception of democracy is in tension with its majoritarian conception (Coppedge et al., 2011, 253) and that people's understanding of democracy can align with the latter, which also explains the results from the cross-national data analysis.

This chapter focuses on the tension between the possibility of gridlock and abuse of power to explain democratic backsliding. Although some studies focus on how the number of veto players in any system determines the tension between gridlock and abuse of power (McCubbins, 2001; Tsebelis, 2002) and how reducing the number of veto players can bring about a more effective government (Howell and Moe, 2016), scant attention has been paid to the actual preferences of citizens regarding this tension. Yet, the extent to which citizens can tolerate the possibility of gridlock has significant implications on the effectiveness of the aspiring autocrat's strategy, which uses gridlock prevention as a justification for reducing the power of checks and balances. Therefore, this chapter sheds light on a relatively unexplored mechanism in democratic backsliding by exploring people's preferences regarding the tension between gridlock and abuse of power.

This chapter makes several contributions. It contributes to the democratic backsliding literature, which is far less developed than the literature on regime transitions and breakdowns (Mainwaring and Bizzarro, 2019; Mukand and Rodrik, 2020). It is also closely linked to the literature on the role of polarization in democratic backsliding (Nalepa et al., 2019; Singer, 2018; Svobik, 2020), although it focuses on a different aspect. These studies show that polarization increases people’s willingness to sacrifice democratic principles for partisan interests. This paper, on the other hand, explores people’s preferences over gridlock and abuse of power, which is a fundamental tension found in every democratic institution (McCubbins, 2001). Polarization among the electorate can definitely decrease the tolerance for gridlock, but it can also increase the need for protection by the horizontal institutions of accountability, especially when the executive is not co-partisan. By exploring the conditions under which gridlock prevention strategy becomes effective and why some people interpret it as a pro-democratic attempt, this paper extends our understanding of democratic backsliding. It also provides experimental evidence to explain democratic backsliding, which is a recently growing literature (Ahlquist et al., 2018; Svobik, 2020; Şaşmaz et al., 2022).¹ Finally, it contributes to veto players literature by analyzing the sources of popular demand for major veto players in any political system.

4.2 Theory

How does the autocrat’s strategy of framing dismantling of checks and balances for gridlock prevention become effective? More interestingly, how can such a gridlock prevention strategy be perceived as pro-democratic?

I propose a mechanism informed by the veto players literature, principal-agent

¹ Grossman et al. (2019) and Graham and Svobik (2020) also provide an experimental evidence to explain popular support for aspiring autocrats. But these studies focus on the United States, a consolidated democracy, despite recent drawbacks.

models of delegation, and the majoritarian conception of democracy to answer these questions. I argue that the gridlock prevention strategy increases the electoral chances of would-be authoritarians and that such a strategy, in fact, can make authoritarian actions look more democratic because people are concerned about the possibility of gridlock. Although delegating all power to one ruler poses risks, the increased salience of gridlock possibility makes citizens more likely to accept the dismantling of checks and balances to get things done. More interestingly, such dismantling becomes less threatening to democracy when framed with a gridlock-prevention strategy because the majority of people have an instrumental understanding of democracy. The regime which translates popular demands into actual policies is enough for most citizens to qualify as democratic (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). As a result, removing any obstacle to popular will, such as decreasing the power of the independent judiciary, will be perceived as more democratic (or less autocratic) when framed with gridlock prevention framing.

Ever since Montesquieu (1750), political theorists and constitutional designers, such as Madison (1787b), argued that political power must be divided among horizontal institutions to prevent the executive from abusing its authority. They also recognized the possibility of gridlock in such a system since factions are bound to emerge in heterogeneous societies (Madison, 1787a). While delegating all decision power to a certain ruler and getting rid of other veto players remove the possibility of gridlock, the absence of horizontal institutions also makes it relatively easy for the rulers to raise political rents (Acemoglu et al., 2013; Persson et al., 1997).

Veto players are “individual or collective actors whose agreement is necessary for a change of the status-quo” (Tsebelis, 2002, 19). When many veto players with different policy preferences exist, it is harder to change the status quo since implementing a new policy requires the consent of all veto players. On the other hand, when only one veto player exists, such as the ruler, the status-quo can easily change,

which brings more flexibility in terms of decision making.

The literature has indeed identified the tension between gridlock and abuse of power (McCubbins, 2001; Tsebelis, 2002) and studied the implications of the different number of veto players on fiscal policy (Alesina and Drazen, 1991; Velasco, 1997), economic reforms (MacIntyre, 2001), and adjustments (Spolaore, 2004). Some studies have also pointed out that reducing the number of veto players can create a more effective government (Howell and Moe, 2016) and more flexibility in economic reforms, facilitating the dismantlement of checks and balances (Forteza and Pereyra, 2019).

Despite this theoretical link between effective veto players and the flexibility to carry out critical policies, such as economic reforms, and fiscal/monetary policies, the literature has paid scant attention to people's preferences over the tension between gridlock and abuse of power. This is even more surprising given the ample empirical evidence between economic crises, and regime changes (see, for instance, Gasiorowski, 1995; Geddes, 1999; Przeworski and Limongi, 1997) because inertia in fiscal/monetary policies or the inability to implement economic reforms due to gridlocks can cause economic crises. Since effective veto players in any political system determine the possibility of institutional gridlock, aspiring autocrats can find employing a gridlock-prevention strategy useful to convince people that removing other veto players can create a more policy-responsive system. Such a strategy can work even when there is no imminent threat of economic crisis as long as people believe that powerful veto players can bring about gridlock and that the regime would be more policy-responsive in their absence. As a result, people support the dismantlement of checks and balances.

Although veto players literature studies the implications of veto players at the system level, it does not say much about its behavioral implications. To better understand the tension citizens face, we can rely on the insights generated by the principal-

agent models of delegation. When voters believe that the ruler represents them, they are more likely to delegate power to him since they think that a co-partisan leader can enact policies in line with their preferences without any interference from veto players (Bartels and Kramon, 2020; Singer, 2018). This “preference-alignment” mechanism, e.g., having similar preferences with the ruler, has been the focus of various recent studies to explain the support for autocrats in democratically backsliding countries (Singer, 2018; Svobik, 2020; Nalepa et al., 2019; Şaşmaz et al., 2022).

However, although having common interests is necessary for power delegation, it may not be sufficient if citizens do not think that gridlock is a real threat. Since effective horizontal institutions of accountability limit rent distribution and corruption (Acemoglu et al., 2013) and protect against the encroachments of the ruler, citizens may not be willing to delegate power in the absence of gridlock expectation. That is why aspiring autocrats’ gridlock prevention strategy aims to reframe the costs of having additional veto players from the citizens’ perspective.

But, why should a gridlock prevention strategy promising a policy-responsive regime be perceived as pro-democratic? People’s understanding of democracy is more likely to align with the majoritarian conception, which rests on the principle that the majority’s will should be sovereign. In contrast, the liberal conception of democracy emphasizes individual liberty and effective checks on rulers (Coppedge et al., 2011). In line with this conception, the political economy tradition accepts that people are pro-democratic due to democracy’s superior ability to provide better outcomes such as more redistribution and stronger property rights (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2005; Ansell and Samuels, 2014; Boix, 2003). Indeed, there is evidence that for many citizens, support for democracy rests on the perception that democratic procedures deliver the policies that these voters prefer, especially in the developing world, showing an instrumental understanding of democracy (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). Such a view is indeed majoritarian because, within this logic, failure to heed

the demands of the masses, i.e., the inability to translate popular preferences into actual policies, can be interpreted as “undemocratic.”²

Therefore, it is not unnatural to expect that some people see institutional changes as “democratic” when they believe that such changes bring about better outcomes by preventing gridlock. Even though these changes can promote an unconstrained ruler and, therefore, is “undemocratic” in liberal democratic terms, people may not perceive the danger. On the contrary, they can justify the dismantlement of checks and balances from a purely majoritarian point of view if they believe that checks and balances impede the “will of the nation,” even when these institutions perform as they should in a liberal democracy. As a result, aspiring autocrats’ gridlock prevention strategy can cause citizens to conclude that eliminating these horizontal institutions can create a more policy-responsive and hence more democratic regime.

How voters perceive such gridlock prevention strategy matters, especially in our context, since democratic backsliding takes place in incremental steps, and the executive takes one action at a time (Nalepa et al., 2019; Waldner and Lust, 2018). The nature of democratic backsliding creates uncertainty around the ruler’s real purpose, and citizens may not immediately perceive the real danger when the ruler proposes reducing the veto power of horizontal institutions. They can support the ruler, who might be an aspiring autocrat, thinking that they support a democratic individual who aims to remove obstacles to a policy-responsive regime. The ruler’s gridlock prevention strategy serves this purpose and affects people’s perception of the threat to democracy.

To the extent the majority of citizens have an instrumental understanding of democracy, which rests on the majoritarian conception, we should see that people should be less satisfied with the way democracy works as horizontal institutions of

² The tension between horizontal institutions, the judiciary in particular, and democracy has also been extensively studied by legal scholars (for details, see Vanberg, 2018).

accountability get stronger. This suggests a negative relationship between the power of checks and balances and satisfaction with democracy. This constitutes the first hypothesis:

H1: Satisfaction with democracy decreases within a country as horizontal institutions of accountability get stronger.

Testing this hypothesis gives evidence in favor of the majoritarian understanding of democracy, but does not tell us why people become less disillusioned about the way democracy works in their country as checks and balances effectively constrain the executive. I argue that the tension between gridlock and abuse of power and the aspiring autocrats' strategic manipulation of the former explains the disillusionment. The gridlock prevention strategy increases the saliency of gridlock over abuse of power, making it an effective strategy to gain popular support for the would-be authoritarian:

H2: Aspiring autocrats are less likely to be punished electorally when they use a gridlock prevention strategy to dismantle checks and balances.

H3: People perceive the gridlock prevention strategy as a pro-democratic attempt.

4.3 Research Design

I test the implications of the theory in two steps. In the first step, I use cross-national data to see how people's attitudes towards democracy change with changes in constraints on the executive. In the second step, I use a survey experiment conducted in Turkey to better understand how the tension citizens face regarding gridlock and abuse of power translates into their electoral choices.

For the cross-national data analysis, the main challenge is to find a comparable measure of attitudes towards democracy over the years. Although various surveys

include questions about attitudes toward democracy, they provide a snapshot of a country at one point in time. Some surveys ask similar questions over different cycles, but such surveys are not implemented each year which creates gaps in time series. While various surveys ask similar questions that tap into attitudes about democracy, their wordings differ, making them not comparable across surveys.

To overcome these problems, I use data from Claassen and Magalhães (2021). Claassen creates two latent variables of attitudes towards democracy (Claassen, 2020b,a): democratic mood and democratic satisfaction. While the former measures public's support for democratic political systems, the latter is a measure of public satisfaction with the way democracy works in their country. To construct these variables, he combines all publicly available cross-national survey projects and uses various different questions that tap into democratic mood and satisfaction. For instance, the democratic mood measure is constructed using questions that evaluate the desirability of democracy or compare democracy to other forms of undemocratic alternatives. Democratic satisfaction, on the other hand, is based on survey questions that ask people about how satisfied they are with the way democracy works (Claassen and Magalhães, 2021, 875). The measures are then created using a Bayesian latent variable model. This gives us smooth country-year measures of democratic mood and satisfaction. While the democratic mood measure is available for 144 countries from 1988 to 2020, the democratic satisfaction measure covers 132 countries from 1973 to 2020.³

I use democracy satisfaction as the primary dependent variable and present democratic mood results in the Appendix C. Although various studies use democracy satisfaction as a proxy measure for different things such as democratic support or political support, the consensus is to treat democratic satisfaction as a measure of citizens' instrumental appreciation of democracy (Claassen and Magalhães, 2021;

³ The data is available here: <http://www.chrisclaassen.com/data.html>

Norris, 2011; Quaranta and Martini, 2016). On the other hand, democratic mood measures the extent to which the public supports democracy and rejects autocratic alternatives (Claassen and Magalhães, 2021).

For my main independent variable, I use data from the Varieties of Democracy Project (V-Dem) to measure constraints on the executive (Coppedge et al., 2020). In particular, I use judicial and legislative constraints on the executive indices. These indices are constructed by the Bayesian factor analysis model of various relevant questions answered by the country experts.

Another important independent variable for our theory is corruption. I use the Control of Corruption Index from Worldwide Governance Indicators (Kaufmann and Kraay, 2020). The index is constructed with input from various government and non-government sources and has a broad definition since it includes both petty and grand forms of corruption.

Using these variables to see whether constraints on the executive impact satisfaction from democracy, I estimated the following linear model:

$$Satis_{it} = \theta_1 JudicialConstraints_{it} + \theta_2 ControlCorruption_{it} + \beta' \mathbf{X} + \alpha_t + \gamma_i + \epsilon_{it}$$

where $Satis_{it}$ is the satisfaction from democracy index at country i in year t as outlined above. $JudicialConstraints_{it}$ and $ControlCorruption_{it}$ is the judicial constraint index and control of corruption variables, respectively. I also replace $JudicialConstraints_{it}$ with legislative constraints on the executive index to show that the results are similar. \mathbf{X} is a set of time-varying relevant control variables such as GDP growth, Gini coefficient, average years of education, and physical violence. α_t and γ_i are time and country fixed effects, respectively. By focusing on within-country variation, the model absorbs time-invariant unobserved confounders such as civic culture that might explain high satisfaction from democracy in certain countries

(Almond and Verba, 1965; Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). Although there is more cross-country variation than the within-country change in democracy satisfaction, such a more conservative model makes sure that the results are not explained by some unobserved time-invariant heterogeneity.

Although cross-national analysis shows us whether constraints on the executive dampen democracy satisfaction, it does not tell us why this is the case. To better understand the mechanism behind these results, I rely on a candidate-choice experiment conducted in Turkey.

In the experiment, voters were presented with two hypothetical presidential candidates with randomly drawn characteristics.⁴ The respondents were told that they were not affiliated with any political party and that they were entering the presidential race for the first time. Presenting non-partisan candidates aimed to prevent partisanship from confounding the results since party labels would be the only deciding factor for the respondents if they had been added to the experiment, given the level of polarization in the country.⁵

Each candidate has two characteristics. The first is the candidate's position regarding the judiciary. I call this characteristic the judiciary position, which can take three different values: authoritarian, neutral, and democratic positions. The authoritarian characteristic proposes limiting the judicial checks on the executive. The democratic characteristic, on the other hand, increases the judiciary's power and, therefore, promises a system with more extensive judicial constraints over the executive. The neutral characteristic takes a neutral position concerning the judiciary and serves as a baseline. Therefore, in the survey experiment, an authoritarian candidate proposes an institutional change aiming to limit the power of the independent judi-

⁴ See Figure C.1 in the Online Appendix for an example of a candidate profile (in Turkish) or Table 4.2 in the main text for the translated version.

⁵ For a similar strategy, see Magiya and Kilavuz (2020).

ciary. A democratic candidate, on the other hand, proposes to increase the power of the judiciary.

The second characteristic is the candidate's social policy position, and it can take five different values, one of which is no policy proposal. This was added to the experiment for two reasons. Firstly, empirical evidence has shown that social policies helped Erdoğan to garner electoral support (Adiguzel et al., 2020a; Özel and Yıldırım, 2019; Kaba, 2022). Hence, the social policy position demonstrates how much a candidate can leverage support by increasing the level of public services compared to what citizens currently have in an experimental setting. Since respondents also rate each candidate based on how democratic each candidate is, estimating the impact of social policy allows us to see how such policy responsiveness impacts citizens' perception of what democracy is. To the extent that citizens have a more instrumental understanding of democracy, such social policy positions should significantly increase the democracy ratings of candidates.

The social policy position also helps us conceal our interest in the popular support for authoritarian candidates. It limits the problem of social desirability bias (Carlson, 2015; Svobik, 2019) since people are overwhelmingly pro-democratic when they are asked explicitly, demonstrating the fact that people might refrain from explicitly stating their support for an authoritarian candidate. Since supporting a candidate because of social policies can be a reasonable justification, it helps to reduce the desirability bias. This second characteristic also limits the risk of repetition across different candidate profiles and enables us to present candidate pairs in multiple rounds to each respondent since it increases the number of possible candidate profiles.

Respondents were presented a pair of hypothetical candidates in each round, five pairs in total. They were then asked to choose one candidate and rate them on how democratic they think each candidate is.⁶ While I use the former dependent variable

⁶ They were also asked to rate how likely they were to support each candidate using a five-point

to measure selection, the latter serves to measure how democratic the voters perceive each candidate to be. The standard errors are clustered at the respondent level since each respondent was presented with five pairs.⁷ One profile example can be found in Table 4.2. Each respondent saw five such pairs.⁸

Since the theory points out a tension between the possibility of gridlock and abuse of power, the experimental setting is designed to allow us to measure the effectiveness of both strategies separately. Each respondent was randomly assigned to one of two versions of the experiment.⁹ In one version ($T = 1$), respondents saw democratic and authoritarian candidates with their respective corruption and gridlock prevention strategies. These strategies serve as signals to defend the action taken, and they are our main treatments in the experiment since we want to see the effect of emphasizing gridlock prevention and abuse of power prevention on candidate selection.¹⁰ In the version including the strategies ($T = 1$), which is referred to as the treatment group going forward, an authoritarian candidate justifies his attack on the judiciary to speed up the public good provision process. This justification implies that the judiciary is the source of gridlock and that decreasing its power

Likert scale. The main results are substantively similar when I use this support variable instead of selection (see Table C.15 in the Online Appendix).

⁷ The row ranking of the two characteristics was also randomized, as suggested in Hainmueller et al. (2013). This means that while a respondent sees judiciary positions at the top of a candidate's profile for each candidate pair, she can see social policy positions at the top in the next round. This randomization prevents any ordering from confounding the results.

⁸ Diagnostic checks in Appendix C show that point estimates are stable across rounds and that there is no "carryover effect" across rounds.

⁹ See Table C.12 in the Online Appendix for balance in some key covariates. There are minor imbalances due to chance. The results are not affected when these imbalances are accounted for by including these covariates in the regressions (see Table C.16 in the Appendix) or by using weighting (not reported here).

¹⁰ Both strategies are justifications for gaining support for the action taken, and they aim to reframe institutional changes that could otherwise be perceived as undesirable (McGraw, 1991).

can provide the desired outcome for the voters (efficient public service provision). In particular, respondents assigned to $T = 1$ read the following when they see an authoritarian candidate: “She¹¹ proposes to make it harder for the judiciary to check the government **in order to speed up the provision of public services.**” Those assigned to $T = 0$ were given the same line except for the part written in bold. The treatment written in bold, which is our gridlock prevention strategy, does not imply that the judiciary is a total block that stops all public services, as this would not be realistic. Instead, it subtly implies that the judiciary causes delays in delivering these services because of its different interests—concerns for the legality, the biases of judges, etc.

Similarly, a democratic candidate in the treatment group ($T = 1$) justifies his attempts to strengthen the judiciary on the grounds of preventing corruption, which is the general manifestation of abuse of power stemming from political rents and decreased accountability (Acemoglu et al., 2013; Persson et al., 1997). In the control group ($T = 0$), the democratic candidate does not make such an emphasis (see Table 4.1 for exact wording). Hence, while we can estimate the effect of gridlock justification, which is our gridlock prevention strategy, we can also see how justifying a democratic position in the name of preventing abuse of power by controlling corruption can help candidates electorally. Therefore, the experimental design allows us to simulate an electoral context in which both candidates defend their actions for instrumental reasons. While a pro-democratic candidate defends checks and balances to prevent corruption, an authoritarian candidate wants to remove horizontal institutions of accountability by implying that they are the source of gridlock.

While democratic and authoritarian candidates differ only in terms of the strategies across the two versions, the neutral candidates are the same in both versions. Table 4.1 shows all the possible values the hypothetical candidate can have. Each

¹¹ Turkish is a gender-neutral language, the pronoun “she” is used here only for translation.

hypothetical candidate has random judiciary and social policy positions, which are drawn from the set of all possible values in Table 4.1. Versions do not differ concerning social policy positions, and respondents were given one of the five possible social policy positions for each candidate to create artificial differences between candidate pairs and across rounds. However, during the analysis, I grouped the first four as social policy and left the null as a baseline.

Table 4.1: All possible characteristics of a hypothetical candidate. Each candidate gets one randomly drawn value from the judiciary position and social policy position each. Respondents assigned to $T = 1$ saw the anti-gridlock and the abuse of power strategies as well (written in bold).

Characteristics of Hypothetical Candidates	
Judiciary Position	She proposes to make it harder for the judiciary to check the government in order to speed up the provision of public services .
	She proposes to make it easier for the judiciary to check the government in order to decrease corruption .
	She proposes a law that will decrease the workload density of the judges.
Social Policy Position	She plans to expand the social security coverage of private hospitals to make these hospitals available for more people.
	She plans to provide attending physicians in all major areas in public hospitals.
	She plans to provide one free meal to all students in public elementary schools.
	She plans to provide at least one science lab in all public elementary schools.
	She did not make any proposals about this policy.

Table 4.2: A candidate profile example from the Treatment Group

	Candidate A	Candidate B
Judiciary Position	She proposes to make it easier for the judiciary to check the government in order to decrease corruption.	She proposes to make it harder for the judiciary to check the government in order to speed up the provision of public services.
Social Policy	She plans to provide attending physicians in all major areas in public hospitals.	She plans to provide at least one science lab in all public elementary schools.

Using the data from this experiment¹², I estimated the parameters of the following model:

$$\begin{aligned}
 y_{ijk} = & \beta_1 D_{ijk} + \beta_2 A_{ijk} + \beta_3 SocPos_{ijk} + \theta T + \\
 & \gamma_1 D_{ijk} T + \gamma_2 A_{ijk} T + \gamma_3 SocPos_{ijk} T + \epsilon_{ijk},
 \end{aligned}
 \tag{4.1}$$

where y_{ijk} is one of the two outcome variables (selection and democracy rating) for individual i in profile j ($j = \{1, 2, 3, 4, 5\}$) for candidate k ($k = \{A, B\}$), and D_{ijk} and A_{ijk} are categorical variables for democratic and authoritarian characteristics respectively. $SocPos_{ijk}$ is the candidates' social policy position. These characteristics are interacted with a dummy variable, T , that takes the value 1 if the version is $T = 1$ ("treatment group"). Therefore, our main parameters of interests are γ_1 and γ_2 , which show the effects of corruption prevention and gridlock prevention strategies, respectively.

4.4 Results

I first present the results from the cross-national empirical analysis. The results in Table 4.3 support the argument that judicial constraints significantly decrease the

¹² I excluded 5 respondents as they were outliers (found with Tukey's fences method) in finishing the survey too quickly.

satisfaction with democracy. The negative impact of judicial constraints is substantively sizeable as well: 1 standard deviation increase (0.28) in judicial constraints decreases the satisfaction from democracy by 1/5th of its standard deviation (using Model 10 in Table 4.3). This is a very sizeable impact because the cross-country variation in satisfaction from democracy is much higher than within-country variation.

Another important variable that consistently correlates with democracy satisfaction is the control of corruption variable. As expected, the results show that citizens are more satisfied with democracy in less corrupt countries. 1 standard deviation in the control of corruption index (1.04) increases the satisfaction with democracy by almost 1/2 of its standard deviation. Similar to the negative impact of judicial constraints, the positive effect of corruption control seems substantive.

These two results confirm the tension citizens face when voting for a strong unconstrained leader. Political systems with extensive constraints on the executive are more successful in preventing corruption, but they are more likely to suffer from potential gridlock and cause delays in getting things done. Citizens can embrace an unconstrained leader to get things done, but this might come with a cost in the form of increased corruption.

As expected, among other variables, GDP growth seems to impact satisfaction with democracy positively. On the other hand, other variables do not seem to correlate with democracy satisfaction significantly.

In the Appendix, I show that the results are similar (even more substantive) when we use legislative constraints instead of judicial constraints as the primary independent variable (see Table C.2 in the Appendix).

Table 4.3: Judicial constraints and democracy satisfaction

	Dependent Variable: Satisfaction from democracy									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Judicial constraints	-0.536** (0.250)	-0.542** (0.241)	-0.589** (0.240)	-0.590** (0.232)	-0.664** (0.262)	-0.583** (0.247)	-0.785*** (0.263)	-0.704*** (0.258)	-0.833*** (0.291)	-0.697** (0.293)
GDP change (percent)			0.021*** (0.004)	0.023*** (0.005)	0.022*** (0.005)	0.022*** (0.005)	0.022*** (0.003)	0.024*** (0.003)	0.022*** (0.004)	0.024*** (0.004)
Gini index (disposable)			-0.003 (0.014)	-0.008 (0.014)	-0.011 (0.013)	-0.010 (0.014)	-0.012 (0.015)	-0.006 (0.015)	-0.012 (0.015)	-0.006 (0.015)
Years of education (ave.)					0.182* (0.100)	-0.194 (0.265)	0.175* (0.098)	-0.365 (0.245)	0.173* (0.098)	-0.365 (0.245)
Control of corruption							0.481*** (0.168)	0.443** (0.186)	0.478*** (0.168)	0.444** (0.183)
Physical violence index									0.098 (0.401)	-0.013 (0.404)
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Num.Obs.	3018	3018	2481	2481	2182	2182	1918	1918	1918	1918
R2	0.829	0.844	0.844	0.857	0.844	0.853	0.878	0.884	0.878	0.884
R2 Adj.	0.822	0.834	0.835	0.846	0.836	0.842	0.870	0.875	0.870	0.875

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01
Standard errors are clustered at the country level

One could argue that components of liberal democracy correlate highly with each other, so other components could also have similar results. The hierarchical nature of the V-Dem data allows us to see the impact of each component separately. V-Dem’s liberal component index consists of three attributes: judicial constraints on the executive index, legislative constraints on the executive index, and equality before the law and individual liberty index. Therefore, I repeated the analyses by replacing judicial and legislative constraints with equality before the law and the individual liberty index. We see in Table 4.4 that changes in equality before the law and individual liberty index do not seem to change satisfaction from democracy. Although the coefficients are negative, they are imprecisely estimated, and the results do not allow us to make firm conclusions.

Table 4.4: Individual liberty and democracy satisfaction

	Dependent Variable: Satisfaction from democracy									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Individual liberty	-0.050 (0.374)	-0.233 (0.425)	-0.630 (0.425)	-0.850* (0.469)	-0.614 (0.454)	-0.603 (0.445)	-0.808* (0.470)	-0.775 (0.486)	-0.941 (0.757)	-0.727 (0.780)
GDP change (percent)			0.023*** (0.005)	0.025*** (0.005)	0.023*** (0.005)	0.024*** (0.005)	0.024*** (0.004)	0.026*** (0.004)	0.024*** (0.004)	0.026*** (0.004)
Gini index (disposable)			-0.005 (0.014)	-0.010 (0.014)	-0.013 (0.013)	-0.012 (0.014)	-0.015 (0.016)	-0.009 (0.016)	-0.015 (0.016)	-0.009 (0.016)
Years of education (ave.)					0.183* (0.100)	-0.209 (0.265)	0.167* (0.098)	-0.397 (0.244)	0.166* (0.098)	-0.397 (0.244)
Control of corruption							0.463*** (0.161)	0.429** (0.176)	0.462*** (0.161)	0.429** (0.176)
Physical violence index									0.113 (0.563)	-0.041 (0.554)
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Num.Obs.	3018	3018	2481	2481	2182	2182	1918	1918	1918	1918
R2	0.828	0.842	0.843	0.856	0.843	0.852	0.876	0.883	0.876	0.883
R2 Adj.	0.820	0.832	0.834	0.845	0.834	0.841	0.868	0.874	0.868	0.874

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01
Standard errors are clustered at the country level

To further show that the particular selection of variables does not drive the results, I use an alternative variable for judicial constraints in the Appendix C (horizontal accountability index). Table C.3 in the Appendix shows that increases in horizontal accountability significantly decrease the satisfaction with democracy. On the other hand, changes in the vertical accountability index have no impact as expected (see Table C.4 in the Appendix). This gives further evidence to the argument that citizens' demand for democracy is more in line with the majoritarian and instrumentalist conception of democracy that does not include liberal elements.

Lastly, Table C.1 in the Appendix adds two more additional covariates, inflation and petroleum production per capita. While inflation further controls macroeconomic stability within countries, petroleum production per capita is added because of the well-known results from the resource curse literature (Ross, 2001). The main findings remain unchanged despite the lower number of observations due to missing variables.¹³

¹³ Main results are similar when we change the outcome variable and use democracy support instead (see Table C.8 in the Appendix).

Before presenting results from the experiment, I first present some results on what respondents think about the possibility of gridlock. Before the experiment, we ask respondents three questions about whether they think an opposing judge, parliament, and media impact the government’s service provision. Figure 4.1 plots these results. The figure shows that around 37% of respondents think (agree or certainly agree) that an opposing judge tries to prevent the government from providing public services.¹⁴ Similarly, 52% agree or certainly agree that a parliament with a majority from a different political party prevents governments’ effective working. 43% of respondents also think that even opposing media, which is not a real veto player that can cause gridlock, publish biased news to hinder the government’s public services.

In the Appendix (see Table C.13), I show that AKP voters are more likely to agree with all these three statements. In the most demanding models, the results show that AKP voters are 29% more likely to agree with the statement that an opposing judge prevents the government’s service provision (24% and 16% for parliament and media questions, respectively).

Next, I present the results from the survey experiment. I combined social policies into an aggregate social policy category in Table 4.5 for brevity, but the results remain unchanged when each social policy enters separately (see Table C.14 in the Appendix).

The results (the first column of Table 4.5) show that a candidate with the authoritarian characteristic is less likely to be chosen by around 15 percent ($SE = 0.026$), relative to the neutral characteristic in the absence of the gridlock prevention strat-

¹⁴ How can the judiciary prevent the government from providing public services? When the judiciary acts as a proper check, it can invalidate legislation whenever it violates the law through a process known as judicial review. It is an integral part of the system of checks and balances (Karakas, 2017, 89). Although there are differences across countries on how this is practiced, the courts have the power to invalidate legislation in certain areas, stopping the executive from changing the status quo. Similarly, through “stay of execution” decisions, the courts can directly block the specific policies of the executive. The judiciary can either take action by itself or by people who bring the issue to the court depending on the legal system.

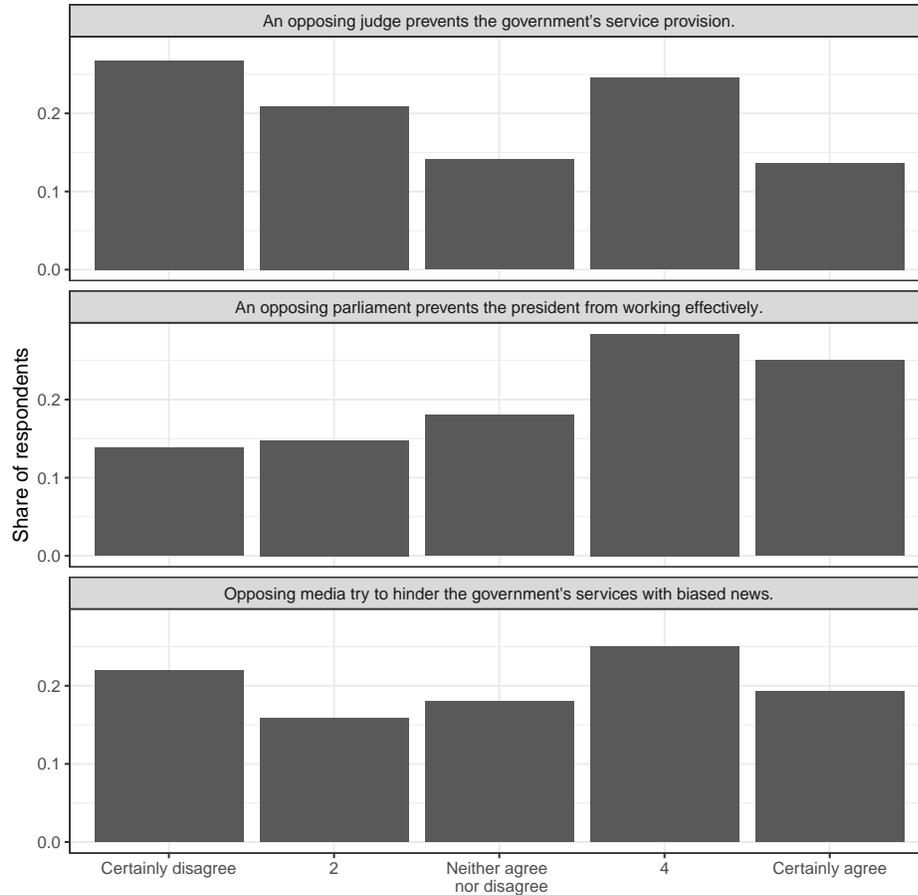


FIGURE 4.1: Respondents' gridlock concerns

egy. This shows that people do not tolerate a hypothetical presidential candidate who wants to remove judicial checks on the executive. As a result, they are less likely to choose candidates that suggest the removal of judicial checks. However, we see that the gridlock prevention strategy increases the probability of electing the authoritarian candidate by around 10 percent ($SE = 0.039$).

In the second column of Table 4.5, I changed the outcome variable from selection to democracy ratings, which takes values from 0 (not democratic at all) to 10 (the most democratic). The results show that an authoritarian candidate receives around one less point ($SE = 0.149$) than the neutral baseline without the gridlock prevention strategy. More interestingly, we see that the gridlock prevention strategy increases

the authoritarian candidate's democracy rating by 0.45 points ($SE = 0.219$) (see the second model in Table 4.5). This amounts to a 0.17 standard deviation of the democracy rating variable. Given that having a democratic characteristic increases the democracy rating by 0.6 points, the effect of the gridlock prevention strategy on candidates' democracy rating is substantive. Almost half of the adverse impact of being authoritarian is canceled out if the authoritarian candidate uses the gridlock prevention strategy to justify an attack on the judiciary.

These results show that the gridlock prevention strategy can be a useful tool for aspiring autocrats when they want to undermine horizontal accountability institutions. Such a strategy also makes democratic backsliding more sinister (Nalepa et al., 2019) because voters may not even perceive the danger as the anti-gridlock strategy makes aspiring autocrats look less authoritarian.

When we look at the impact of the corruption prevention strategy, we see that it helps democratic candidates, giving them a boost of around 8% ($SE = 0.038$). Although smaller in effect than gridlock prevention, corruption prevention also increases candidates' democracy rating.

Table 4.5: The effect of candidate characteristics on candidate selection and democracy rating

	Selection	Democracy Rating
Authoritarian Characteristic	-0.145*** (0.026)	-1.033*** (0.148)
Democratic Characteristic	0.159*** (0.026)	0.595*** (0.128)
Social Policy	0.304*** (0.023)	1.044*** (0.141)
Version (Treatment=1)	0.007 (0.035)	0.085 (0.266)
Authoritarian Characteristic x (Treatment=1)	0.099** (0.039)	0.450** (0.219)
Democratic Characteristic x (Treatment=1)	0.083** (0.038)	0.341* (0.202)
Social Policy x (Treatment=1)	-0.079** (0.033)	-0.418** (0.207)
Intercept	0.243*** (0.024)	5.098*** (0.174)
Num.Obs.	4642	4769
R2	0.107	0.070
R2 Adj.	0.106	0.069

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Standard errors are clustered at the individual level.

In Figure 4.2, I plotted the marginal effects of having authoritarian and democratic characteristics across treatment and control groups for easier comparison. Gridlock prevention strategy increases the authoritarian candidates' electoral chances, but the point estimate is still negative (though statistically not significant). However, these results probably underestimate the impact of the gridlock prevention strategy for at least three reasons.

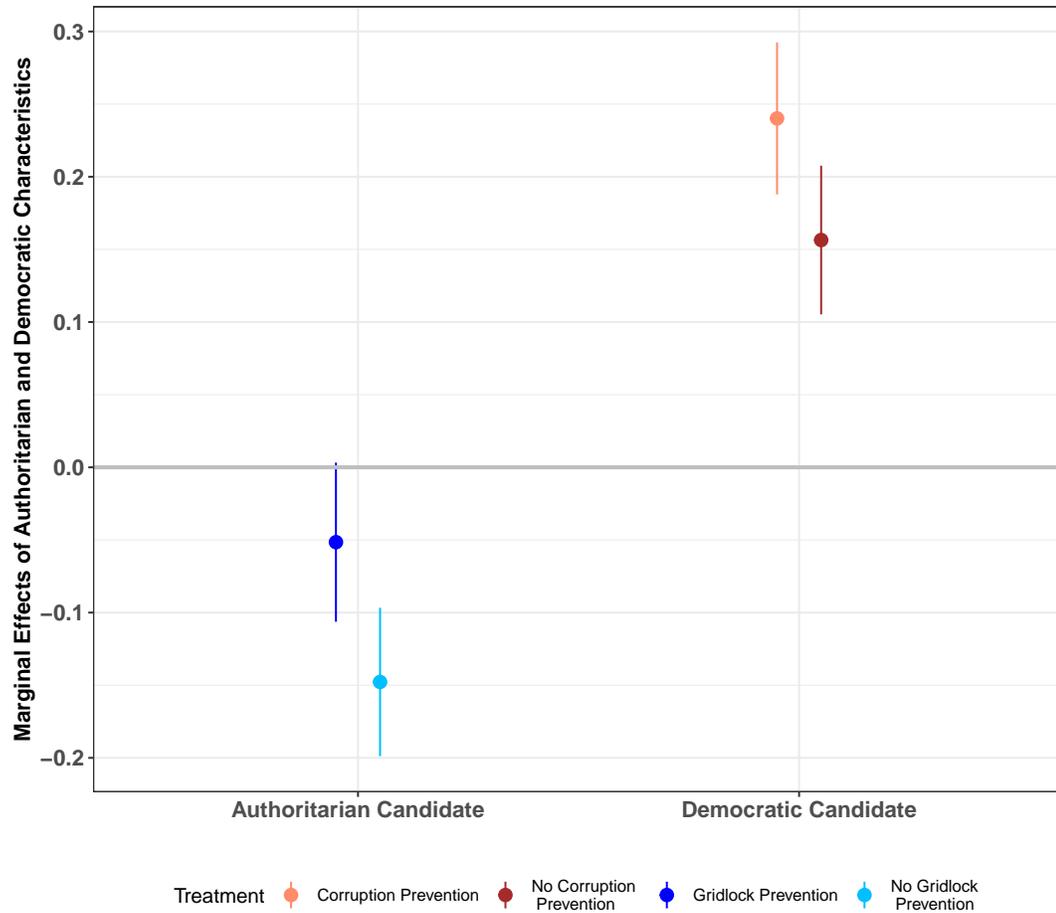


FIGURE 4.2: The effect of candidate characteristics on candidate selection

First, one could argue that some of the respondents are already “treated” outside of the experiment since they might be exposed to these strategies by the political parties and their leaders. This is an even more serious issue if such external effects are more durable and respondents are motivated to form strong attitudes (Druckman and Leeper, 2012; Slothuus, 2016). However, note that this works against finding any difference between control and treatment groups since some of the respondents in the control group may already be “pre-treated” by the actual gridlock prevention strategy implemented by Erdoğan and his political party. Of course, respondents could also see arguments about how effective checks could prevent corruption, but

such news is less likely to be circulated in mainstream media given the government's comprehensive information manipulation strategies (Guriev and Treisman, 2019) (see also Chapter 2 and 3).

Second, the experiment is conducted in Turkey's biggest province, and, therefore, the sample is more urban than the population.¹⁵ However, the sample makes it difficult to test the implications of the theory since a gridlock prevention strategy should be less effective among people with developed liberal values, which are more critical for college-educated people (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). People with liberal values are less likely to accept an unconstrained ruler when exposed to a gridlock prevention strategy, primarily because their understanding of democracy is not aligned with the majoritarian conception. Hence, identifying the effect of the gridlock prevention strategy among a more urban sample is harder than identifying it in the population.

Third, the experiment presents two non-partisan candidates to prevent party labels from interfering with the results. Party labels would be the only deciding factor for the respondents if they were added to the experiment, given the level of polarization and partisanship in the country (Laebens and Öztürk, 2021). In normal circumstances, the gridlock prevention strategy is accompanied by strong partisan cues, making its effects even more dramatic. Hence, the results in the experiment provide a lower bound for the real impact of gridlock prevention strategy.

These results shed light on a relatively unexplored mechanism in democratic backsliding: gridlock prevention strategy can be a useful tool for aspiring autocrats when they want to undermine horizontal institutions of accountability. Such a strategy also makes democratic backsliding more sinister because voters may not even perceive the danger as the gridlock prevention strategy makes aspiring autocrats look

¹⁵ The share of people with an associate degree or higher is around 17 percent in the sample, while it is 15.7 percent in the population according to the Turkish Statistical Institute. On the other hand, the mean ideology is almost identical to the national average. While the average ideology is 6.02 in the sample (using a 0-10 left-right scale), it is 6.04 in nationally representative CSES-Module 5 data (CSES, 2020).

less authoritarian.

However, not everyone is equally tempted by the gridlock prevention strategy. In Table 4.6, I divided the sample in two ways to see how Erdoğan voters differ from the rest. Since they seem to be more concerned about the gridlock before the experiment, it could be that the treatment affected these voters significantly more. The results show that both Erdoğan and non-Erdoğan voters punish authoritarian candidates and reward democratic candidates. However, we see that they react differently to gridlock prevention and corruption prevention treatments. While the gridlock prevention strategy increases authoritarian candidates' electoral chance by 11.5% for Erdoğan voters, the effect is not statistically significant for non-Erdoğan voters. On the other hand, non-Erdoğan voters give extra 11% support when the democratic candidate justifies their actions on the grounds of preventing corruption, while it does not seem to impact Erdoğan voters' decisions.

Table 4.6: The effect of candidate characteristics on candidate selection among president supporters and others

	Erdogan voters	Non-Erdogan voters
Authoritarian Characteristic	-0.160*** (0.036)	-0.133*** (0.047)
Democratic Characteristic	0.097** (0.039)	0.238*** (0.040)
Social Policy	0.277*** (0.032)	0.354*** (0.037)
Version (Treatment=1)	-0.015 (0.053)	0.063 (0.053)
Authoritarian Characteristic x (Treatment=1)	0.115** (0.054)	0.097 (0.064)
Democratic Characteristic x (Treatment=1)	0.034 (0.059)	0.110** (0.054)
Social Policy x (Treatment=1)	-0.045 (0.049)	-0.143*** (0.052)
Intercept	0.296*** (0.033)	0.163*** (0.038)
Num.Obs.	2150	1834
R2	0.076	0.159
R2 Adj.	0.073	0.155

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Standard errors are clustered at the individual level.

4.5 Conclusion

Although liberalism and democracy historically accompany each other, they must be distinguished from one another (Schmitt, 1988, 8). This paper focuses on the motivations for supporting an aspiring autocrat who wants to dismantle checks and balances, which are key institutions for liberal democracy. I argue that the popular demand for checks and balances is governed by the tension between gridlock and power abuse. When the ruler uses a gridlock prevention strategy and justifies their authoritarian actions on the grounds of breaking gridlock, citizens believe that the alternative regime in which the ruler is the only decision-maker will be more policy-

responsive. Therefore, they may decide to support the ruler. More interestingly, such a gridlock prevention strategy can change how citizens perceive the act of dismantling checks and balances. Reducing the judiciary's power can look more "democratic" because solving the gridlock problem and restoring the policy-responsive system is democratic in the majoritarian sense of the concept.

The results from cross-national analysis and the survey experiment support this argument. Cross-national analysis shows that the democracy support and satisfaction decrease as judicial and legislative constraints on the executive increase. On the other hand, increases in individual liberty or vertical accountability do not seem to dampen either democracy support or satisfaction.

The results from the survey experiment show that while respondents do punish an authoritarian candidate in the absence of a gridlock prevention strategy, they fail to do so when they are told that reducing the judiciary's power would bring about faster provisions of public services. More interestingly, the gridlock prevention strategy makes the "authoritarian" candidate look more democratic. These changes in people's perceptions can also help us understand why people seem to value democracy when asked yet, fail to vote aspiring autocrats out of office. While there is certainly a social desirability bias when people are asked directly about their support for democracy (Svolik, 2020), these results show that what they understand from democracy can also be different from what scholars conceptualize. As this paper shows, people do not tolerate authoritarian actions in the absence of a gridlock prevention strategy. Such a strategy, in fact, changes how they perceive the dismantling of horizontal institutions. Taken together, these results suggest that people are more likely to think about democracy in majoritarian terms in which the preferences of the masses are translated into actual policies without any veto threat from horizontal institutions of accountability. People are less likely to tolerate these institutions when they consider them as obstacles to implementing popular policies.

Democratic backsliding is the new form of reaching toward authoritarianism, and we must focus more on the motivations of people to understand why they are supportive of regimes that lack horizontal institutions but have competitive elections. Only after understanding these motivations can we develop interventions that can counteract the detrimental effect of signals spread by the autocrats of the new era.

Conclusion

This dissertation focuses on media and information manipulation strategies to understand the sources of legitimacy unconstrained leaders have enjoyed over the last two decades. Chapter 2 shows that state contracts provide valuable carrots for unconstrained leaders to incentivize conglomerate-owned media for collusive relationships. The results show that conglomerate-owner newspapers are significantly more pro-government than others. The difference in pro-government slant between these newspapers and others increases after the government gets more discretion in distributing state contracts. The government reciprocates this favor by distributing state contracts to media owners' subsidiary firms. These firms are more likely to be single-bidders and more likely to enjoy exceptional clauses in auctions, which are also more likely to be non-open. As a result, they get contracts with higher prices and lower rebate values.

Chapter 3 then takes the analysis one step further and analyzes the prevalence of specific information manipulation strategies from a particular domain, e.g., economic news. This chapter shows that governments can engage in various information manipulation strategies when censorship is not possible or politically not desirable.

In particular, the results show that pro-government news outlets are more likely to selectively attribute positive and negative economic news to government and external actors, respectively. However, as the economic crisis intensifies, this selective attribution strategy becomes harder to sustain. Instead, the results show that pro-government outlets are more likely to portray foreign economies negatively as the crisis intensifies, in an attempt to change people's reference point about them. Lastly, pro-government outlets are less likely to cover exchange/currency news over time and shift their attention to other issues within the economy.

Chapter 4, on the other hand, focuses on the citizens' side and tries to understand their behavior in times of critical junctures, e.g., during institutional changes that pave the way for unconstrained executives. This chapter shows that although citizens face a tradeoff between the possibility of gridlock and abuse of power, the increased saliency of the former makes respondents more likely to support leaders who want to dismantle checks and balances. In particular, the results show that people are less likely to be satisfied with the way democracy works as judicial and legislative constraints on the executive increase. I argue that aspiring unconstrained executives exploit this distaste for checks and balances and present them as obstacles to getting things done. Using data from an original survey experiment, I show that a gridlock prevention strategy increases the electoral chances of an authoritarian candidate and that such a strategy makes the authoritarian candidate look less authoritarian.

Chapter 2 shows that subtle strategies such as state contracts are useful to capture media outlets. Since the distinct characteristic of democratic erosion is the gradual and incremental decay in democratic institutions, such a subtle mechanism also helps the government to affect media coverage without attracting citizens' reaction. Unlike coercive strategies such as censorship or government takeovers of media outlets, I argue that subtle capture strategies that rely on favor exchanges are politically more desirable.

Similarly, Chapter 3 shows that mixed regimes continue using subtle strategies once they capture media outlets as well. Since outright denial or full censorship are not feasible, especially in economic news, they use various information manipulation strategies to convince citizens that the government remains competent even in times of economic crisis. This emphasis on competency and getting things done indeed convince citizens, as we see in Chapter 4.

These results have important implications for future research, and I will briefly mention them here. First, although the results in Chapter 2 provide convincing evidence of how state contracts can be valuable carrots, the evidence comes from one country. Can these results be generalized to other mixed regimes? I think that the following scope conditions have to be met for favor exchanges between governments and media owners: 1) conglomerates should dominate the media market, and 2) a stable government with no threat of losing elections should be in power. As long as these two conditions are met, I expect to see favor exchanges between government and conglomerate-owned media. The first condition is already fulfilled in many countries due to financially failing media outlets as a result of high-speed internet penetration. As advertising revenues dramatically declined with the internet, media outlets started having severe financial distress. As a result, conglomerates bought many failing media outlets across the world (Reporters without Borders, 2016). The second condition is also required because of the tradeoff media owners face when they want to engage in a collusive relationship with the government. As outlined in Chapter 2, having a pro-government slant brings financial loss from media operations. Although favors such as state contracts more than compensate for such loss, a possible change in government poses a threat for media owners. In case of a government turnover, there is no guarantee that the next government will continue to engage in a similar collusive relationship. Therefore, a stable government with no threat of losing elections will increase the possibility of such collusive relationships

in which favors are exchanged.

Although governments' exact favor can take different forms such as tax breaks, subsidies, or state advertising (Szeidl and Szucs, 2021; Di Tella and Franceschelli, 2011), state contracts will remain financially the most attractive among all, given the sheer size of government demand for goods and purchases. Since one type of favor does not exclude the possibility of using others, we can see different forms of favors from the government as long as these favors are reciprocated with pro-government coverage in media outlets. Future studies should study other forms of favors in addition to state advertising and state contracts and, more importantly, analyze how the availability/unavailability of such favors changes the incentive structures for conglomerate-owned media. For instance, future studies can leverage exogenous shocks that impact the government's ability for purchases, such as economic crises, to see how the nature of collusive relationships changes when one side cannot fulfill its side of the bargain.

Chapter 2 also implies that governments have a menu of media capture strategies. While some formal treatments distinguish between coercive (censorship, regulatory institutions, legal fines, etc.) and collusive (state advertising, state contracts, tax breaks, etc.) strategies and analyze the conditions under which each emerges (Gehlbach and Sonin, 2014), scant attention has been paid to study such variation empirically. Future studies should focus more on both government and media owners' sides to understand the motivations for each media capture strategy. Although I argue that collusive strategies are politically more desirable because they are subtle, governments in mixed regimes sometimes use coercive strategies as well. For instance, in Turkey, we see that the government started using more coercive strategies after 2013 (Yeşil, 2018). Do governments employ coercive strategies only when collusive strategies turn out to be infeasible? If yes, what makes subtle strategies infeasible?

One possible answer is media owners' political ideology. Although we know that ownership affects the content of media outlets (Archer and Clinton, 2018; Baum and Zhukov, 2019; Dunaway, 2008; Dunaway and Lawrence, 2015) and results in supply-driven media bias (Grossman et al., 2020; Martin and McCrain, 2019), it is still unknown how owners' ideological and profit motivations interact and impact the resulting media content, which ultimately shapes the government's decision about how to capture the outlet. Although this requires data collection on media owners' ideological motivations, various data sources could be used as a proxy for ideology. For instance, in the US, Bonica (2016)'s Database on Ideology, Money in Politics, and Elections (DIME) calculates ideology scores for everyone that donates to political campaigns. Similarly, media owners explicitly state their political affiliation in specific settings, sometimes running in the elections, as in the case of Rostam Azizi, a Tanzanian billionaire who also owns a newspaper. In other settings, media owners' social media accounts, such as Twitter, can give insights into their ideology (Barberá, 2015). Therefore, future studies should focus more on empirical research to understand the variation we see in media capture strategies.

Chapter 3 shows that governments can engage in complex and subtle information manipulation strategies in economic news since censorship or denial are not options. They are not options to manipulate economic news because citizens can use their own experiences to verify them. Does this mean that censorship is more likely in domains where citizens cannot use other signals to confirm the news? What happens if citizens have access to alternative sources of information which they can use to verify the news? The evidence shows that increased access to fast mobile internet decreases government approval, especially when the traditional media is censored, showing the interaction between the internet and the conventional media (Guriev et al., 2021). That is why future studies should focus on other domains and study how the increased possibility of verification, either by lived experience or by access to

alternative sources of information, changes the nature of propaganda. For instance, the results in Chapter 3 show that media outlets portray foreign economies more negatively as the domestic economic crisis intensifies because media outlets cannot manipulate information about the domestic economy as easily as foreign economies. Can we see similar strategies in other settings? For instance, the recent evidence shows that non-democracies are more likely to engage in data manipulation in Covid-19 statistics (Adiguzel et al., 2020b; Cassan and Van Steenvoort, 2021). Just like the economic news, it is also not feasible to censor news about Covid-19 since citizens can use their lived experience to verify the news anyway. Does this mean that we can also see selective attribution, reference manipulation, and agenda-setting in Covid-19 news as well? Future research should answer it. Generalizing the insights from Chapter 3 to other domains can provide a fruitful line of research to understand the information manipulation strategies when censorship is not feasible.

In Chapter 4, I show that people's understanding of democracy is more likely to align with the majoritarian and instrumental conception. As a result, informational treatments that present institutions of liberal democracy such as independent judiciary as a source of gridlock make citizens less likely to oppose institutional changes that dismantle them. However, the results also show that reminding citizens about the possibility of corruption in the absence of strong checks and balances can also make them oppose such attacks. This suggests that although gridlock concerns bring about approvals for the dismantling of checks and balances, similar instrumental motivations can also be leveraged to convince people to have a system with a constrained executive. Although intrinsic attachment to democracy is more stable and resilient to changes in regime performance such as economic growth, inflation, etc., developing such commitment requires a slow process that spans a couple of generations (Almond and Verba, 1965; Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). Therefore, future studies can design interventions that leverage people's instrumental understanding of democracy and

emphasize the instrumental values of checks and balances, similar to the corruption prevention treatment in the survey experiment in Chapter 4. Such treatments can prove to be useful in protecting democratic institutions.

Appendix A

Appendix for Chapter 2

A.1 Data collection and description

I used the following keywords to find the relevant articles when the newspaper website does not have a digital archive but host articles from 2007-2009 on their servers and allow online searching. I have also used the same keywords to filter the news collected from other ways (collected via digital archives and the internet archive/common crawlers) to eliminate irrelevant articles.

The keywords for politicians include major party officials as well as specific keywords for major political offices. Any news article that contains any of the keywords is included in the database.

keywords for politicians = [erdođan, baykal, bahçeli, demirtaş, kılıçdarođlu, perinçek, sezer, abdullah gül, deputy, president, commander, minister, prime minister, parliamentary speaker, mayor, governor, district governor¹, prosecutor]

The list for institutions includes political party abbreviations and the major judicial, legislative, executive, and regulatory institutions. Instead of listing each min-

¹ In Turkish, the word for district governor is *kaymakam*, while the word for governor is *vali*. That is why, they are added separately

istry separately, I searched for the word “ministry” as this would capture all news that mentions a specific ministry. Similarly, the word “municipality” is broad enough to capture all news that mentions a particular municipality.

keywords for institutions = [akp, ak parti, justice and development, chp, people’s republican, mhp, dtp, national action, saadet, independent, btp, hdp, hadep, dehap, opposition, supreme court, court of appeal, state council, the central bank, competition authority, privatization administration, BDDK², İMKB³, general directorate of security, SGK⁴, ministry, municipality, the council of ministers, YSK⁵, TBMM⁶, parliament, cabinet, çankaya palace, general staff, Turkish armed forces, Turkish statistical agency, TÜİK⁷, RTÜK⁸]

keywords for the economy = [dollar, gold, euro, Turkish lira, interest, inflation, export, import, MÜSİAD⁹, TÜSİAD¹⁰, TUSKON¹¹, Turkish economy, market, finance, pension, prices, investment, tax, wage increase, İTO¹², TOBB¹³, sabancı, koç, treasury, stock exchange, unemployment, corruption, employment agency, holding, minimum wage, discount]

keywords for certain events = [kurdish problem, kurdish initiative]

The figure below presents the distribution of weekly counts for both contractor-

² Council of Bank Audit and Regulation

³ Istanbul Stock Exchange

⁴ Social Security Agency

⁵ Supreme Electoral Council

⁶ Grand National Assembly of Turkey

⁷ Turkish Statistical Agency

⁸ The Supreme Board of Radio and Television

⁹ Independent Industrialist and Businessmen Association

¹⁰ Turkish Industry and Business Association

¹¹ Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists

¹² Istanbul Chamber of Commerce

¹³ Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey

owned newspapers and other newspapers.

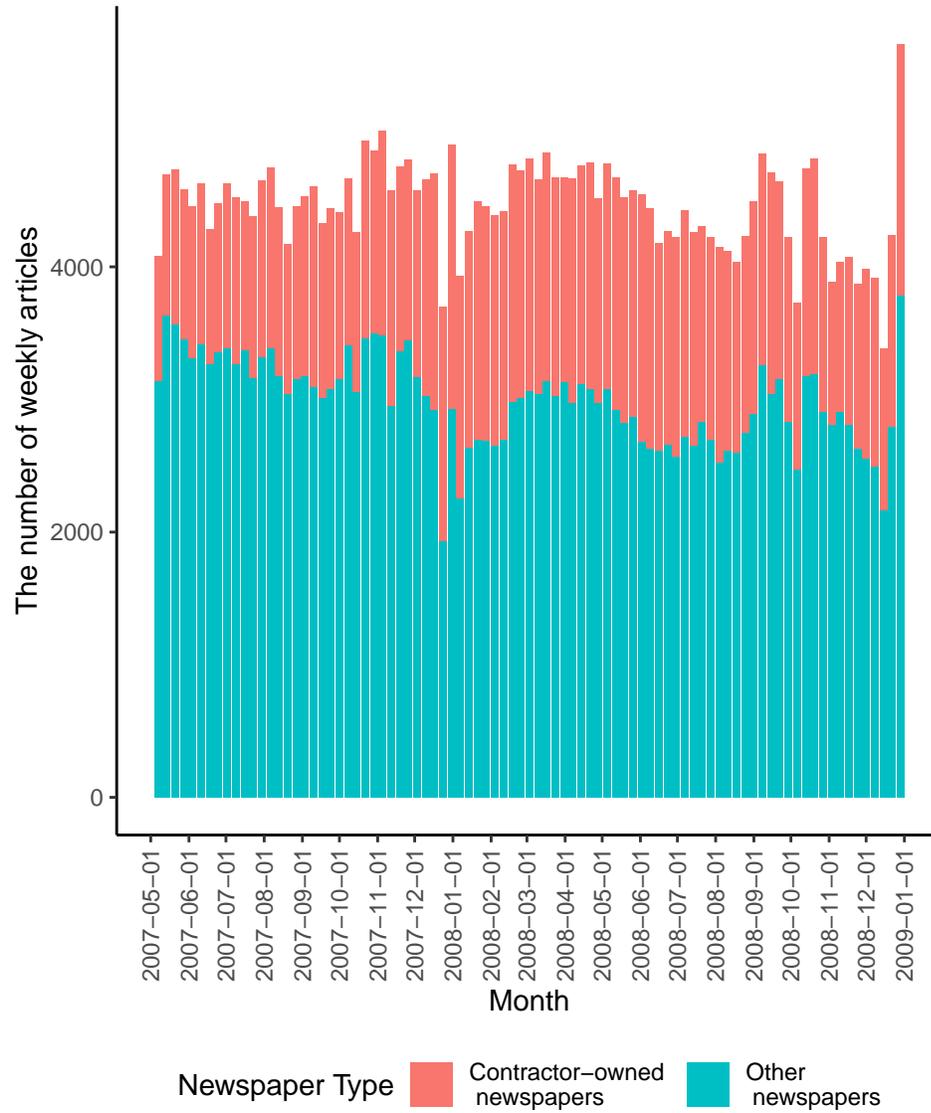


FIGURE A.1: The weekly distribution of articles across two groups of newspapers

Table A.1: Descriptive statistics about the newspapers in the sample

	newspaper	min	max	mean	total
1	aksam	1	50	19.300	1,351
2	birgun	86	225	165.851	14,429
3	cumhuriyet	1	6	2	50
4	evrensel	244	365	303	26,361
5	gunes	1	141	47.051	3,670
6	haberturk	247	698	393.310	34,218
7	hurriyet	615	1,360	949.103	82,572
8	milligazete	87	568	366.103	31,851
9	milliyet	15	361	77.356	6,730
10	sabah	227	453	327.207	28,467
11	sol	1	275	89.767	7,720
12	takvim	30	322	188.184	16,372
13	turkiye	50	641	442.230	38,474
14	vatan	269	501	391.632	34,072
15	yenisafak	460	1,198	710.241	61,791
16	zaman	1	44	5.921	450

A.2 Fine-tuning the BERT model

Since BERT is an enormous neural network architecture (around 300 million model parameters), we are not really “training” a neural network model from scratch. Instead, we “fine-tune” the model by training only the higher layers. The other layers’ weights come from the installed BERT model, which is trained by huge amounts of raw text. In my case, I used Schweter (2020)’s BERTurk uncased model (128K vocabulary).

To fine-tune the model, I first created training data randomly sampled from the database. Since neutral news is more frequent in the data, I undersample them to have a balanced sample. I use the Google Colab platform since it provides free GPU. Since I have relatively small training data, I used cross-validation while fine-tuning the model.

I used an early stopping rule to prevent overfitting with an early stopping delta equal to 0.01 and MCC (Matthews correlation coefficient) as the stopping metric. I keep the number of epochs at five since the model is not trained from scratch. Indeed, the authors of the original paper (Devlin et al., 2018) use 2-4 epochs in their fine-tuning experiments.

In each iteration of the cross-validation ($n = 5$), I randomly divided 20% of the training sample as a test set and fine-tuned the model with the remaining 80%. The accuracy in each iteration was 79.08%, 78.51%, 72.49%, 80.22%, 72.98%, averaging 77%.

The precision, recall, f1-scores, and support for each label in each iteration can be found in Table A.2 below.

Table A.2: Detailed results from validation in each iteration

Iteration = 1				
	precision	recall	f1-score	support
neutral	0.85	0.79	0.82	140
progov	0.78	0.78	0.78	115
antigov	0.73	0.81	0.77	94
Iteration = 2				
	precision	recall	f1-score	support
neutral	0.79	0.78	0.78	122
progov	0.78	0.83	0.8	122
antigov	0.8	0.74	0.77	105
Iteration = 3				
	precision	recall	f1-score	support
neutral	0.69	0.75	0.72	125
progov	0.83	0.64	0.72	122
antigov	0.69	0.79	0.74	102
Iteration = 4				
	precision	recall	f1-score	support
neutral	0.81	0.82	0.82	120
progov	0.74	0.83	0.78	119
antigov	0.88	0.75	0.81	110
Iteration = 5				
	precision	recall	f1-score	support
neutral	0.76	0.68	0.72	122
progov	0.63	0.77	0.69	100
antigov	0.81	0.75	0.78	126

A.3 Alternative bias measure: partisan phrases

As an alternative to the main media bias measure, I also created another bias measure by searching for the partisan phrases in newspaper articles. Similar to Gentzkow and Shapiro (2010), I identified major partisan phrases used by the incumbent and opposition parties by analyzing all parliamentary speeches during the 24th Parliamentary sessions of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey to create another bias measure. In particular, I used all speeches delivered by the incumbent (*AKP*, Justice and Development Party) and the main opposition party (*CHP*, People’s Republican

Party) deputies.

I first got rid of stopwords and lemmatized the main texts. After lemmatization, I got rid of specific phrases that are irrelevant for our purposes. These are procedural phrases about the legislation processes, deputy/ministry/political party names, wishes/greetings, and other simple common phrases used for a speech. Then, I computed Gentzkow and Shapiro (2010)’s χ^2 statistic, which is a test statistic for the null hypothesis that the propensity to use a phrase (a bigram in our case) is equal for AKP and CHP deputies. Increases in the statistic suggest that a phrase is used more frequently by one side relative to the other. By ranking the phrases based on their χ^2 statistic, I identified the most partisan phrases used by the incumbent and the main opposition party deputies.

Table A.3 below shows the most partisan 30 AKP-phrases.¹⁴ As we see, some of these phrases mostly make references to the nation, something you would expect from a populist right-wing party, as well as to certain public services and infrastructure, which are the key to the AKP’s electoral success (Akbulut-Yuksel et al., 2020; Adiguzel et al., 2020a). Some phrases are about political stability as AKP officials consistently use them to remind people about the lost decade of the 90s, characterized by weak coalition governments. Lastly, two phrases refer to AKP’s 2023 target, which is consistently brought by Erdoğan himself as well.

Table A.3: Government partisan words (most partisan 30 phrases)

mighty nation	nation respect	[to] provide service	unity solidarity
service [to] the nation	action plan	change [and] transformation	2023 target
social security	education [and] health	2023 vision	[to] invest
divide[d] road	party government	global crisis	peace process
[to] complete project	today dignity	[to] start execution	[to] provide support
growth develop	unity brother[hood]	[to let] the people live	political stability
revolutionary	party governments	work security	trust [and] stability
stream restoration	trusting atmosphere		

¹⁴ See Tables A.5 and A.6 in Section A.3 for the complete lists of partisan phrases for AKP and CHP, respectively.

When we look at the most partisan CHP words, on the other hand, we see a different picture. The phrases in Table A.4 show that the most partisan CHP phrase is pepper gas, which refers to police brutality and excessive use of pepper gas during the protests. There are also references to protest, arrests, corruption, and bribing,¹⁵ as well as references to Erdoğan’s lavish palace, his three children demand from families, and a pejorative term the opposition uses to criticize the rising authoritarianism in the country (“advanced democracy”).

Table A.4: Opposition partisan words (most partisan 30 phrases)

pepper gas	[special] authorized courts	to intern	separation of power
bag law	akp term	17-December	free education
courthouse closed	to bribe	to protest	advanced democracy
corrupt bribe	midnight [arrest]	worker laborer	to commit suicide
to bypass	hunger limit	to be unfair	illegal palace
akp government	political power	gezi park	[to] make a baby
deniz fener	under repression	wrong policy	12-September
detained deputy	corrupt thief		

Using these partisan phrases, I calculated the number of times the AKP-phrases and the CHP-phrases appear in each news article, weighted by the phrase’s partisan probability. Hence, the AKP-phrases that are more frequently found in AKP speeches (thus, more partisan towards the AKP) are weighted more relative to less partisan phrases. That is, for each news article that contains R different AKP-phrases, I calculated the following:

$$TotalRightBias = \sum_{i=1}^R rightbias_i \times count_i$$

where $rightbias_i$ is the probability that the phrase i appears in AKP deputies’

¹⁵ The phrase “deniz fener” refers to an NGO close to the government. This NGO used donation money for private business. “17-December” is the date when a major corruption scandal implicating four ministers was revealed.

speeches and $count_i$ is the number of times the phrase i appears in the text. I did the same calculation for CHP phrases as well, multiplying each count with $leftbias_i$. Then, using these two measures, I constructed the following bias measure, which gives the ratio of right bias over left bias for each news article:

$$RelativeBias = \log\left(\frac{TotalRightBias + 1}{TotalLeftBias + 1}\right)$$

The measure increases in the right bias, so a higher relative bias means more right-biased content over the left-biased. Since many news articles do not contain any partisan phrase, I added 1 to each measure. Therefore, neutral articles take the value 1 while right-biased and left-biased content is > 1 and < 1 , respectively.

Since AKP deputies have spoken significantly less than their CHP counterparts (7145 vs. 11129), there were fewer AKP-partisan phrases (163 vs. 325) once I got rid of procedural phrases, wishes/greetings, and other simple phrases used during a speech. Therefore, I used the most partisan 200 CHP phrases according to their χ^2 statistics to have a more balanced phrase distribution across two groups.

Table A.5: Government partisan words (whole list)

mighty nation	welfare level	central administration	start paying salary
nation respect	interest rate	turkish world	peace welfare
[to] provide service	criminal enforcement	refine plant	leader country
unity solidarity	let the state exist	do reform	real investment
service [to] the nation	person employment	before government	next generation
action plan	transformation process	country grow	fiscal discipline
change [and] transformation	implement project	health transport	initiate project
2023 target	together brother	life quality	increase employment
social security	support program	turkish diaspora	total unity
education [and] health	program scope	blood tear	state nation
2023 vision	bring peace	central asia	private sector
[to] invest	country develop	faith complete	supreme nation
divide[d] road	private budget	soil meet	provide employment
party government	nation top	tap water	national income
global crisis	national unity	project real	beyond border
peace process	grant support	socio cultural	restructure
[to] complete project	peace stability	human focus	economic social
today dignity	rural develop	defense industry	give service
[to] start application	land irrigate	structural reform	people service
[to] provide support	discriminate	investment incentive	world economy
growth develop	school ratio	project life	nation service
unity brother[hood]	zero tolerance	easy access	mother tongue
[to let] the people live	nation unity	world competition	country economy
do service	country unity	tranquility peace	fast train
provide opportunity	stability environment	start construction	equal opportunity
political stability	2023 year	increase employment	value added
revolutionary	groundbreaking	grow develop	national will
party governments	civilization level	public official salary	do procurement
work security	investment fast	peace tranquility	28 February
trust [and] stability	supply pipe	anatolian region	High speed
give service	crisis impact	investment program	martyr, war veteran
stream restoration	27 May	water purify	do investment
start project	enter into service	persuasion room	double highways
trusting atmosphere	put into action	increase capacity	reduce dependency
solution recover	dollar export	provide stability	economic crisis
contemporary civilization	economic develop	positive discrimination	1990s
despite crisis	democratic step	nation knows	use resource
competition power	close community	nation peace	social policy
citizen service	real project	program implement	employ
create infrastructure	r&d	counterterrorism	

Table A.6: Opposition partisan words (whole list)

pepper gas	against law	organization member	fellow citizens
[special] authorized courts	open an investigation	thief corrupt	to go out to streets
special authorized	do corrupt	debt	laborer labor
to intern	parallel state	mit law	discretionary fund
bag bill	cut trees	citizen right	electoral threshold
separation of power	sledgehammer trials	two lips	constitutional right
bag law	minister's child	claim right	publish a decree
akp term	corruption investigation	earn [one's] keep	majority
17 December	be an opponent	chamber of medical doctors	difficult conditions
free education	great problem	one man	fair trial
courthouse closed	clearly against [law]	partial police	to hoodwink
to bribe	rightful share	to bleed	to smuggle
to protest	appoint teacher	[to bring] bread to home	ismet inonu
advanced democracy	gas bomb	orphan's right	to obey
corrupt bribe	explain	majority driven	bid rigging
midnight [arrest]	oda tv	working guarantee	to give raise
worker laborer	take an action	cry out	chamber of medical doctors
bribe corrupt	missile shield	to drink liquor	akp supporters
to suicide	wealth	to violate	factory work
to bypass	[to] prevent victimization	to take a bread [to one's home]	to give tax
hunger limit	hot money	secret witness	worker die
be unfair	fethullah gulen	farmer villager	this akp
illegal palace	to loot	parliamentary majority	rosy picture
akp government	pay a debt	fatih hilmioğlu	disaster happens
political power	parallel structure	national liberation	lay aside
gezi park	miserable condition	abdullah ocalan	25 December
[to] make a baby	working class	separation principle	hakan fidan
deniz fener	to issue license	scheme	taksim gezi
under repression	between two lips	security package	cagdas hukuk [an NGO]
wrong policy	ergenekon trials	party government	to overlook
12 September	berkin elvan	17 25	government proponent
detained deputy	ismail korkmaz	to change perceptions	mosque liquor
corrupt thief	ali ismail	labor union laborer	[unconstitutional] regulation
court of account report	independent judiciary	unfur! a banner	[bring someone] to account
gezi demonstrations	ethem sarisuluk	ergenekon sledgehammer	to pay tax
be a mere spectator	throw a veil [over something]	occupational accident	businessmen
turn a deaf ear to	fossil fuel plant	police state	labor union
professional chamber	labor union	police violence	shoebox
turkish nation	own partisan	fener trials	serious allegation
unconstitutional	honor glory	turk is	December 25
poverty threshold	children school	to close down cram schools	turkish medical [association]
to intern	unbalanced force	first akp	go on a strike
win tender	right to strike	hurry scurry	Mr. Tayyip
supreme court ¹⁶	minister's son	close to government	kith and kin
job security	nazim hikmet	military espionage	wiretap
employment security	partisan press	quarry	fertilizer
minimum wage	special consumption tax, value added tax	4 minister	december corruption
human right	long-time prisoner	to organize freely	secular republic
kenan evren	to administer state	traitor	authoritarian regime

¹⁶ The original phrase is *yüce divan*, a special name for the supreme court when it tries high officials such as the president, prime minister, ministers etc.

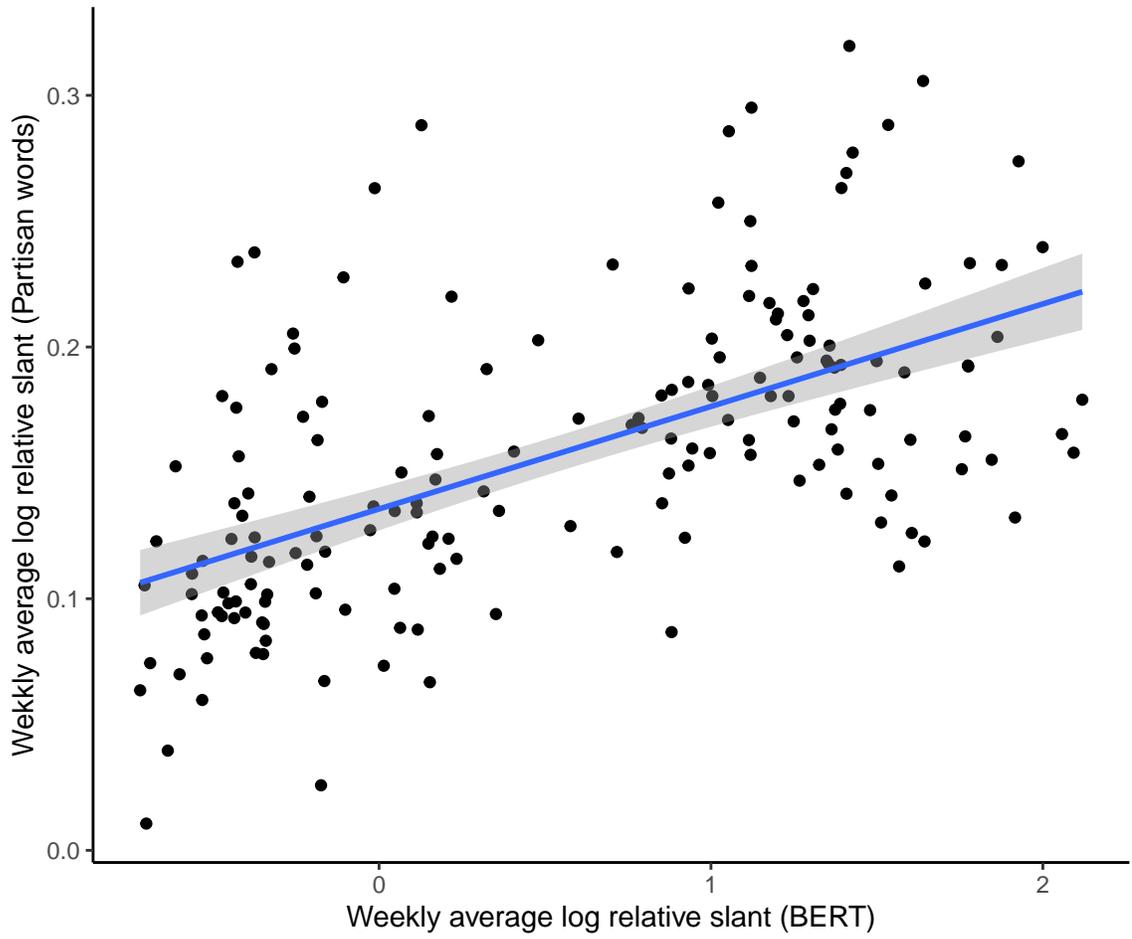


FIGURE A.2: Weekly Relative Bias averages across two different methods

A.4 Extra results (BERT)

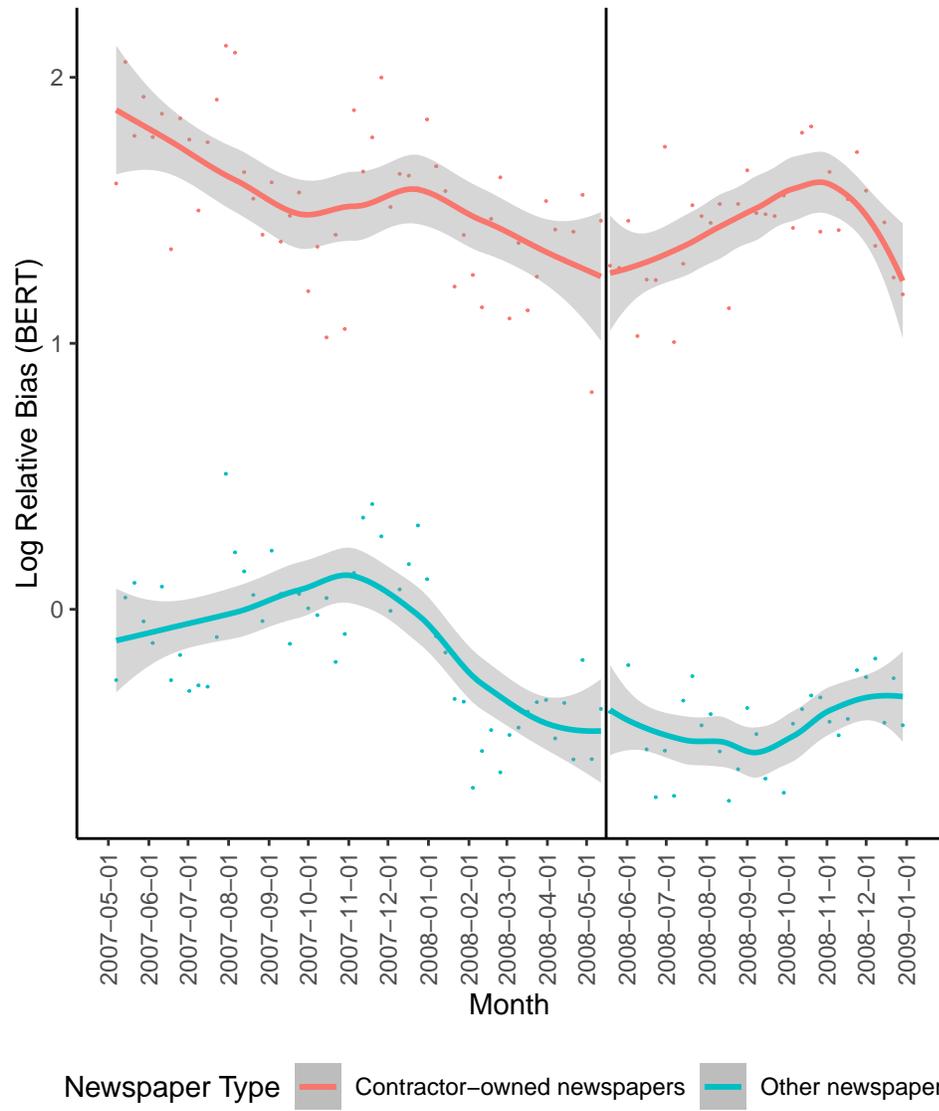


FIGURE A.3: Relative bias overtime (without Calik Group newspapers)

Table A.7: The effect of legal change announcement in procurement law on relative bias (daily averages) (without Calik Group newspapers)

	Log Relative Bias (BERT) (daily averages)					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Contractor-owned newspaper	2.939*** (0.879)	2.196*** (0.098)	2.182*** (0.102)	-0.044 (0.077)	-0.066 (0.091)	-0.056 (0.082)
After legal change	-0.609*** (0.175)	-0.500*** (0.168)	-0.149 (0.279)	-0.493*** (0.171)	-0.158 (0.272)	0.543 (0.597)
Daily average length of articles (log)		-0.636*** (0.130)	-0.657*** (0.122)	-0.360*** (0.111)	-0.390*** (0.110)	-0.388*** (0.112)
After legal change x Contractor-owned newspaper	0.632*** (0.218)	0.550** (0.230)	0.557** (0.230)	0.532** (0.224)	0.539** (0.223)	0.547** (0.227)
Num.Obs.	6740	6740	6740	6740	6740	6740
R2	0.152	0.287	0.299	0.300	0.313	0.323
R2 Adj.	0.152	0.285	0.296	0.299	0.309	0.313
Ownership FE	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Newspaper FE	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month FE	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Week FE	No	No	No	No	No	Yes

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01
Standard errors are clustered at the newspaper level

Table A.8: The effect of legal change announcement in procurement law on relative bias (daily averages) (with wild cluster standard errors)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>					
	Log Relative Bias (BERT) (daily averages)					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
After legal change	-0.761 (-1.222;-0.301)	-0.500 (-0.894;-0.106)	-0.232 (-0.756;0.292)	-0.493 (-0.868;-0.118)	-0.238 (-0.730;0.254)	0.469 (-0.545;1.484)
Contractor-owned newspaper	2.151 (-0.319;4.622)	-0.360 (-0.703;-0.017)	0.138 (-0.278;0.555)	-0.360 (-0.704;-0.017)	0.150 (-0.254;0.555)	0.167 (-0.269;0.603)
Daily average length of articles (log)		-0.561 (-0.850;-0.271)	-0.580 (-0.911;-0.250)	-0.493 (-0.762;-0.224)	-0.523 (-0.791;-0.256)	-0.506 (-0.765;-0.246)
After legal change x Contractor-owned newspaper	0.611 (0.156;1.066)	0.751 (0.231;1.272)	0.617 (0.234;0.999)	0.740 (0.216;1.263)	0.601 (0.185;1.018)	0.603 (0.177;1.029)
Constant	-0.145 (-0.838;0.547)	2.332 (0.545;4.118)	2.906 (0.770;5.042)	4.233 (2.730;5.737)	4.882 (3.094;6.671)	3.972 (2.402;5.543)
Ownership FE	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Newspaper FE	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month FE	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Week FE	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	7,958	7,958	7,958	7,958	7,958	7,958
Akaike Inf. Crit.	39,769.270	38,314.940	38,217.850	38,165.060	38,064.590	38,076.650

Note: Wild-cluster bootstrapped confidence intervals (95 percent) are in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

A.5 Results using partisan phrases

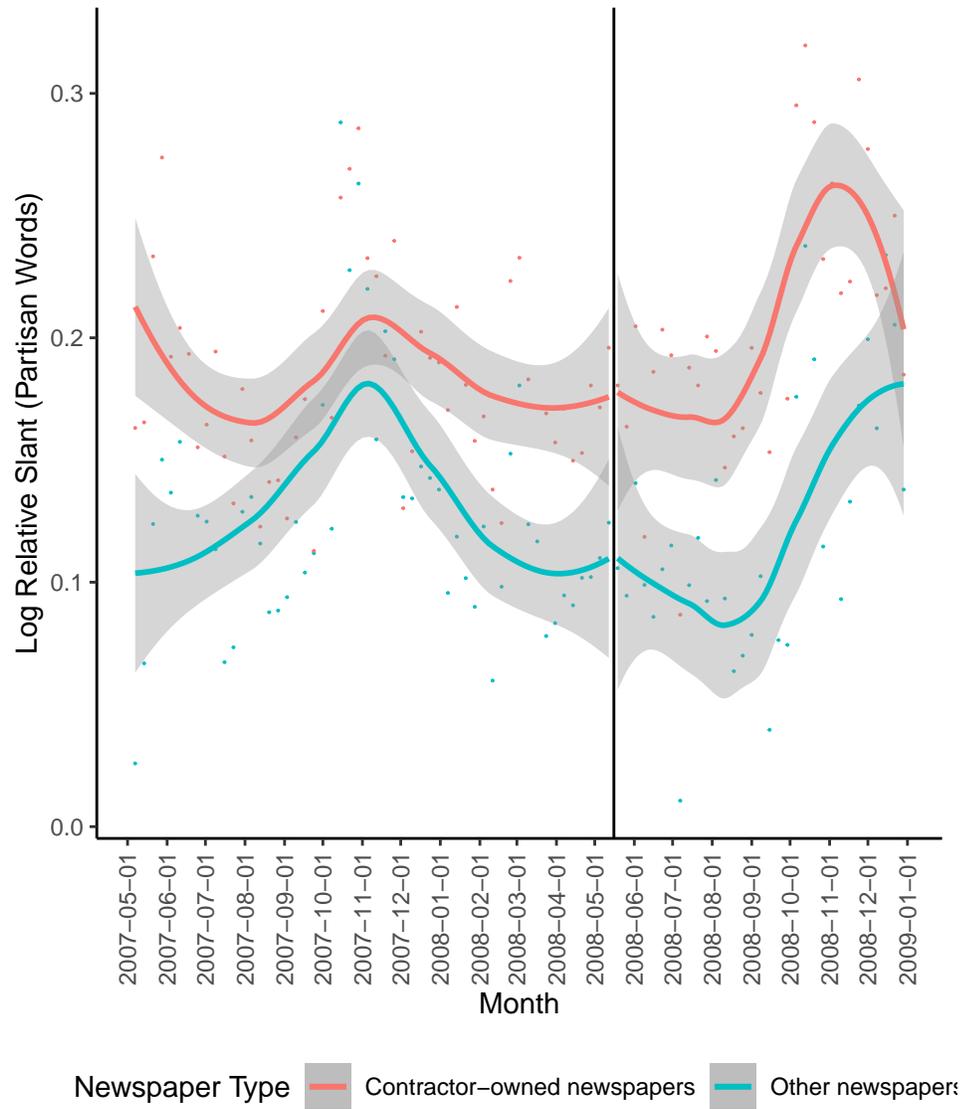


FIGURE A.5: Relative bias overtime using partisan words

Table A.9: The effect of legal change announcement in procurement law on partisan words choice

	Log Relative Bias (Partisan words)					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Contractor-owned newspaper	0.068** (0.032)	-0.038*** (0.005)	-0.021* (0.012)	-0.037*** (0.005)	-0.020 (0.012)	-0.020 (0.012)
After legal change	-0.052** (0.023)	-0.038* (0.021)	-0.004 (0.015)	-0.040** (0.020)	-0.002 (0.016)	-0.026* (0.015)
After legal change x Contractor-owned newspaper	0.056** (0.024)	0.045** (0.021)	0.045** (0.021)	0.046** (0.021)	0.045** (0.022)	0.045** (0.022)
Num.Obs.	388578	388578	388578	388578	388578	388578
R2	0.006	0.014	0.016	0.028	0.030	0.032
R2 Adj.	0.006	0.013	0.016	0.028	0.030	0.032
Ownership FE	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Newspaper FE	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month FE	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Week FE	No	No	No	No	No	Yes

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Standard errors are clustered at the newspaper level

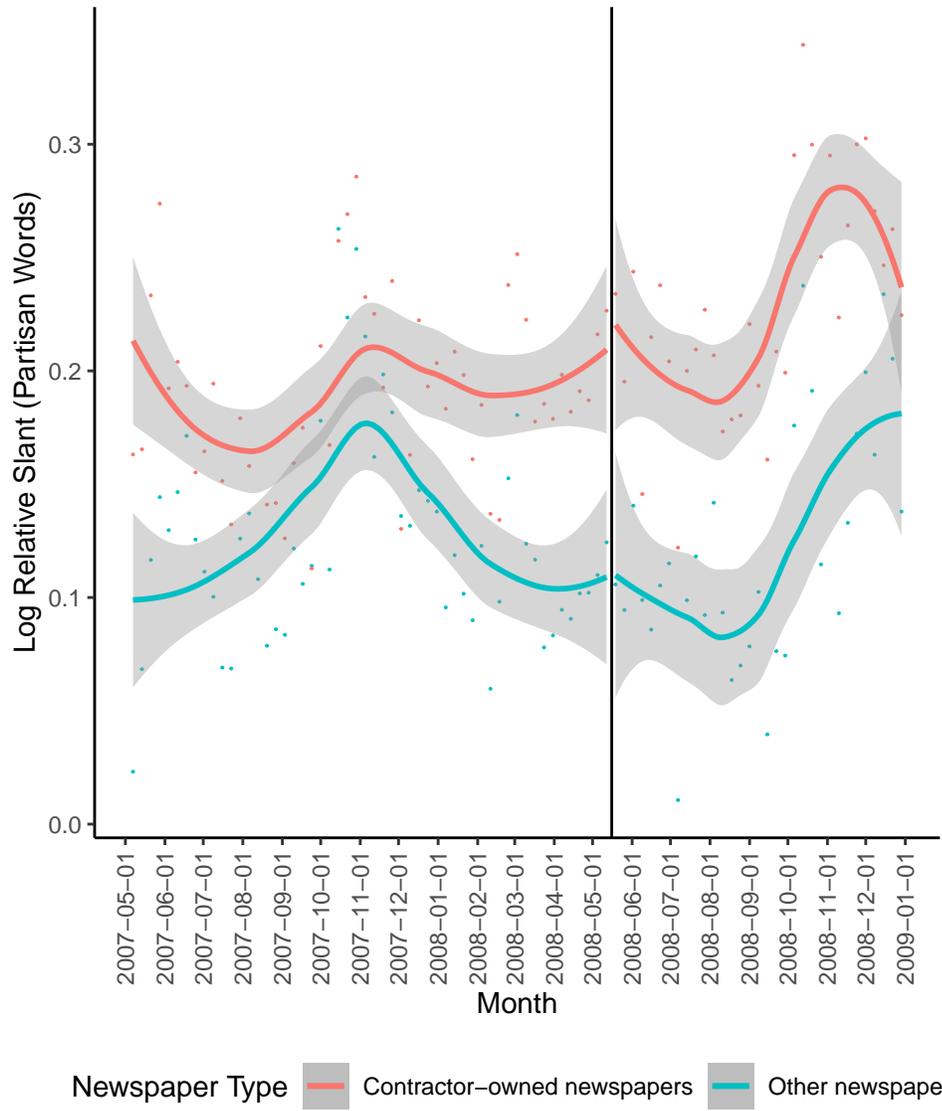


FIGURE A.6: Relative bias overtime using partisan words (without Calik Group newspapers)

Table A.10: The effect of legal change announcement in procurement law on partisan words choice (without Calik Group newspapers)

	Log Relative Bias (Partisan words)					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Contractor-owned newspaper	0.083** (0.034)	0.113* (0.066)	0.109* (0.065)	-0.049*** (0.009)	-0.051*** (0.010)	-0.049*** (0.010)
After legal change	-0.046** (0.020)	-0.038* (0.021)	-0.003 (0.017)	-0.040** (0.021)	-0.000 (0.018)	-0.027* (0.015)
After legal change x Contractor-owned newspaper	0.063*** (0.022)	0.049** (0.021)	0.053** (0.022)	0.051** (0.021)	0.055** (0.022)	0.055** (0.022)
Num.Obs.	343739	343739	343739	343739	343739	343739
R2	0.008	0.014	0.017	0.030	0.032	0.034
R2 Adj.	0.007	0.014	0.017	0.030	0.032	0.034
Ownership FE	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Newspaper FE	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month FE	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Week FE	No	No	No	No	No	Yes

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Standard errors are clustered at the newspaper level

A.6 Alternative bias measure: absolute bias

Table A.11: The relationship between absolute bias and contractor-owned newspapers

	Absolute Bias (BERT) (daily averages)			
	1	2	3	4
Contractor-owned newspaper	0.136** (0.054)	0.144*** (0.043)	0.145*** (0.043)	0.146*** (0.042)
Conservative newspaper	0.079 (0.061)	0.047 (0.052)	0.047 (0.052)	0.045 (0.051)
Daily average length of articles (log)		-0.120*** (0.031)	-0.119*** (0.032)	-0.123*** (0.035)
Num.Obs.	7958	7958	7958	7958
R2	0.126	0.191	0.203	0.255
R2 Adj.	0.126	0.189	0.194	0.192
Month FE	No	Yes	No	No
Week FE	No	No	Yes	No
Day FE	No	No	No	Yes

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Standard errors are clustered at the newspaper level

Table A.12: The effect of legal change announcement in procurement law on absolute bias (BERT)

	Absolute Bias (BERT) (daily averages)					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Contractor-owned newspaper	0.158*** (0.047)	-0.044*** (0.006)	0.003 (0.018)	-0.044*** (0.006)	0.004 (0.018)	0.005 (0.019)
After legal change	-0.085*** (0.025)	-0.057*** (0.017)	0.006 (0.019)	-0.057*** (0.017)	0.006 (0.019)	0.016 (0.030)
Daily average length of articles (log)		-0.033** (0.015)	-0.035** (0.015)	-0.020 (0.017)	-0.024 (0.017)	-0.022 (0.017)
After legal change x Contractor-owned newspaper	0.082*** (0.026)	0.078*** (0.020)	0.065*** (0.023)	0.077*** (0.020)	0.064*** (0.022)	0.064*** (0.023)
Num.Obs.	7958	7958	7958	7958	7958	7958
R2	0.132	0.363	0.377	0.378	0.392	0.403
R2 Adj.	0.132	0.362	0.375	0.376	0.389	0.395
Ownership FE	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Newspaper FE	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month FE	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Week FE	No	No	No	No	No	Yes

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Standard errors are clustered at the newspaper level

Table A.13: The effect of legal change announcement in procurement law on absolute bias (BERT) (without Calik Group newspapers)

	Absolute Bias (BERT) (daily averages)					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Contractor-owned newspaper	0.206*** (0.041)	0.299*** (0.010)	0.298*** (0.011)	0.067*** (0.008)	0.065*** (0.009)	0.064*** (0.009)
After legal change	-0.070*** (0.020)	-0.057*** (0.017)	0.016 (0.021)	-0.057*** (0.017)	0.016 (0.020)	0.015 (0.034)
Daily average length of articles (log)		-0.033** (0.016)	-0.036** (0.016)	-0.007 (0.013)	-0.010 (0.013)	-0.010 (0.013)
After legal change x Contractor-owned newspaper	0.095*** (0.024)	0.084*** (0.023)	0.084*** (0.023)	0.082*** (0.022)	0.083*** (0.023)	0.083*** (0.023)
Num.Obs.	6740	6740	6740	6740	6740	6740
R2	0.149	0.366	0.382	0.381	0.396	0.409
R2 Adj.	0.149	0.365	0.379	0.379	0.393	0.400
Group FE	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Newspaper FE	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month FE	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Week FE	No	No	No	No	No	Yes

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Standard errors are clustered at the newspaper level

Table A.14: The effect of legal change announcement in procurement law on absolute bias choice (partisan words)

	Absolute Bias (Partisan words)					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Contractor-owned newspaper	0.151** (0.074)	-0.077*** (0.011)	-0.027 (0.032)	-0.076*** (0.010)	-0.025 (0.033)	-0.027 (0.033)
After legal change	-0.138** (0.066)	-0.102* (0.056)	0.041 (0.048)	-0.109* (0.056)	0.046 (0.050)	-0.043 (0.041)
After legal change x Contractor-owned newspaper	0.144** (0.065)	0.112* (0.057)	0.109* (0.056)	0.115** (0.057)	0.113** (0.057)	0.112** (0.057)
Num.Obs.	388578	388578	388578	388578	388578	388578
R2	0.005	0.012	0.014	0.025	0.027	0.029
R2 Adj.	0.005	0.012	0.014	0.024	0.027	0.029
Ownership FE	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Newspaper FE	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month FE	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Week FE	No	No	No	No	No	Yes

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Standard errors are clustered at the newspaper level

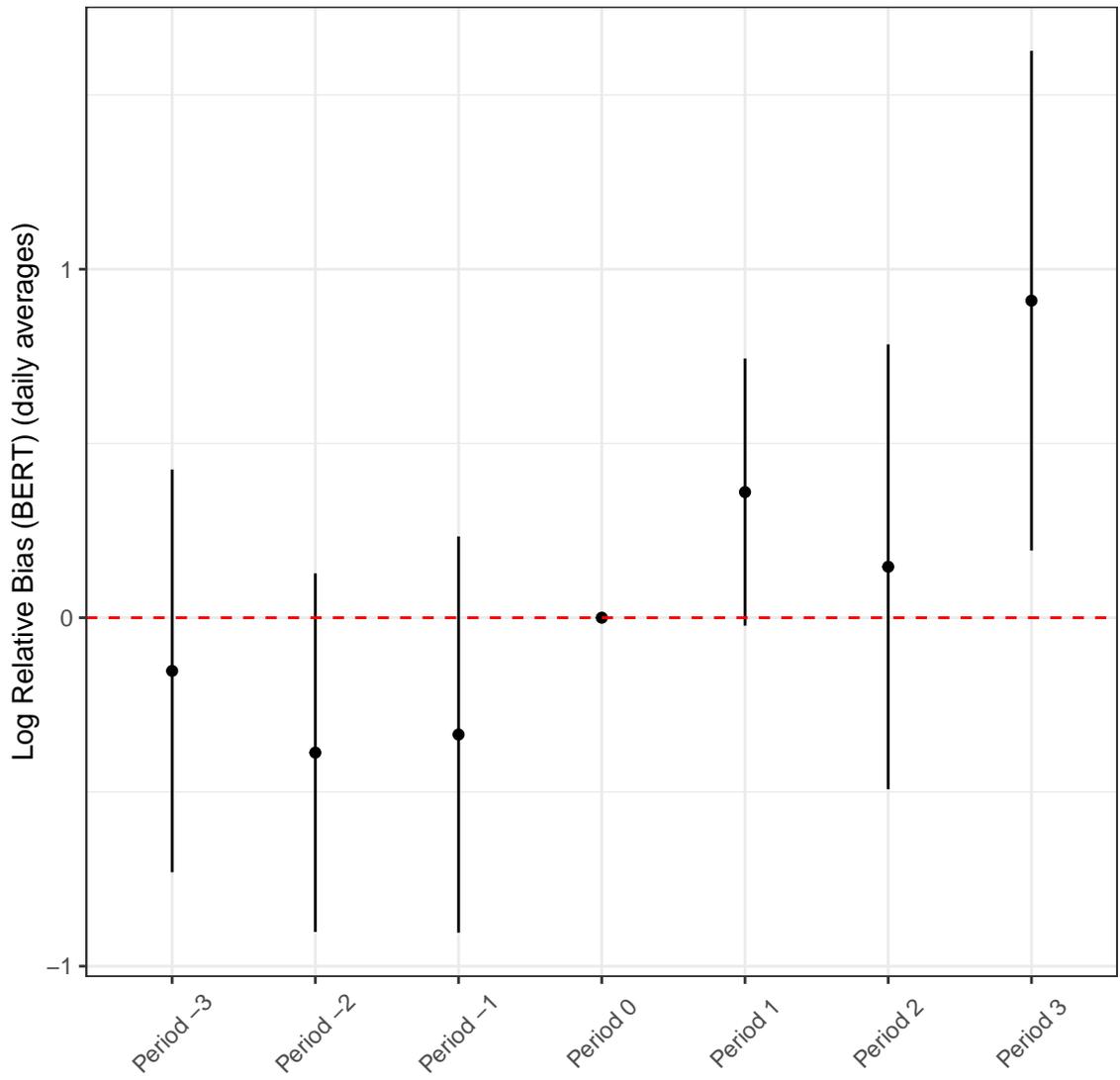


FIGURE A.4: The effect of legal change announcement in procurement law on relative slant (daily averages)

Appendix B

Appendix for Chapter 3

B.1 Keyword lists

Those with * are searched with word boundaries to decrease the number of false positive cases. English translations are given in parantheses.

Economy relevant keywords: [fed*, amerikan merkez bankası (fed), faiz (interest), ekonomi (economy), dış ticaret açığı (foreign trade deficit), enflasyon (inflation), dolar*, euro*, piyasa (market), finans (finance), yatırım (investment), zam* (pay increase), borsa (stock exchange), nasdaq*, nyse*, fomc*, federal açık piyasa komitesi (federal open market committee), ecb*, avrupa merkez bankası (european central bank), küresel kriz (global crisis), lira*, türk lirası (turkish lira), amerikan doları (american dollar),abd doları (usd), küresel ticaret (global trade), almanya federal istatistik ofisi (german federal statistics bureau), destatis, eurobond, new york borsa (new york stock exchange), avrupa istatistik ofisi (european statistics office), eurostat, wall street, deutsche bank, jp morgan, jpmorgan, morgan stanley, gelişen ülke piyasaları (developing country markets), gelişmekte olan ülke piyasaları (developing country markets), commerzbank, asya borsaları (asian stock exchanges), ingiltere

merkez bankası (bank of england), boe*, işsizlik (unemployment), grev (strike), sektör (sector), ticaret (trade), ihracat (export), ithalat (import), sendika (trade union), ekonomik kriz (economic crisis), sanayi (industry), tüccar (trader), tüketici (consumer), üretici (producer), üretim (production), tüketim (consumption), banka (bank), istihdam (employment), kredi* (credit), yolsuzluk (corruption), vergi* (tax)].

External actor list: [dış mihrak (external power), dış ekonomik (external economic), ekonomik savaş (economic war), ekonomik saldırı (economic attack), ekonomik soğuk savaş (economic cold war), faiz lobi (interest rate lobby), uluslararası piyasa (international market), uluslararası finans (international finance), döviz sabotaj (foreign exchange sabotage), döviz saldırı (foreign exchange attack), imf, dünya bankası (world bank), yabancı ekonomi (foreign economy), george soros, yabancı borsa (foreign stock exchange), uluslararası para (international money), küresel piyasa (global market), dış güçler (external power), fed*, avrupa merkez bankası (european central bank), rant lobi (rent lobby), asya borsaları (asian markets), asya ekonomileri (asian economies), gelişmiş ekonomiler (developed economies), kur oyunu (foreign exchange plot), kur darbe (currency coup)]

B.2 General trends across topics

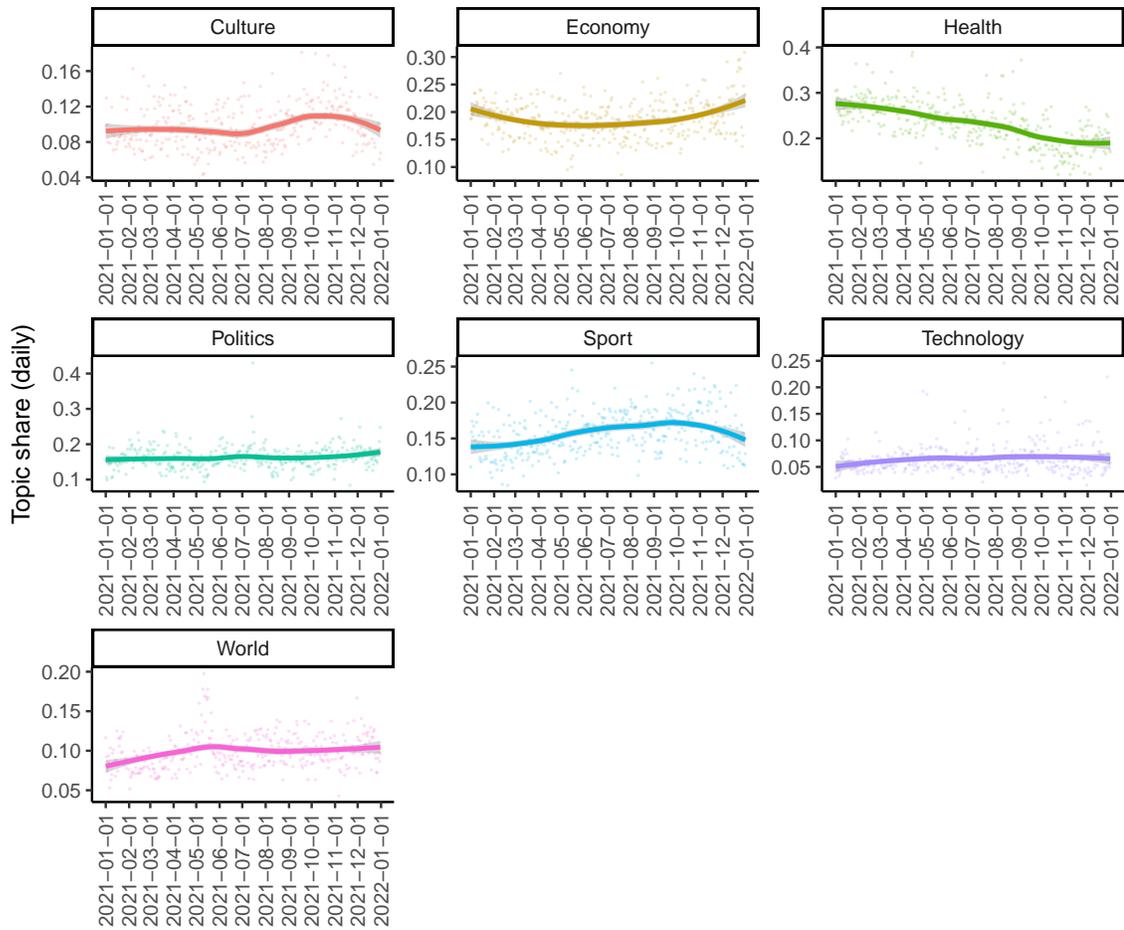


FIGURE B.1: The distribution of articles in Sabah

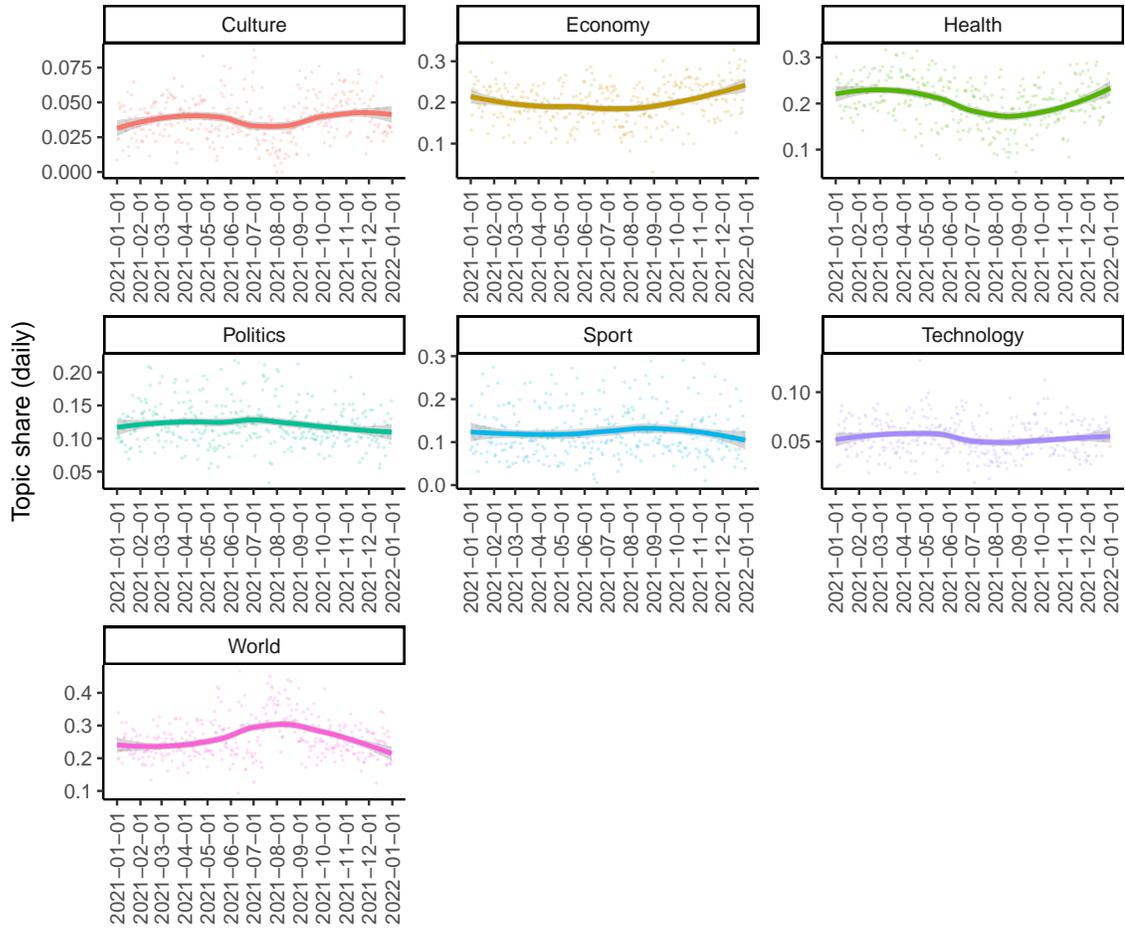


FIGURE B.2: The distribution of articles in TRT

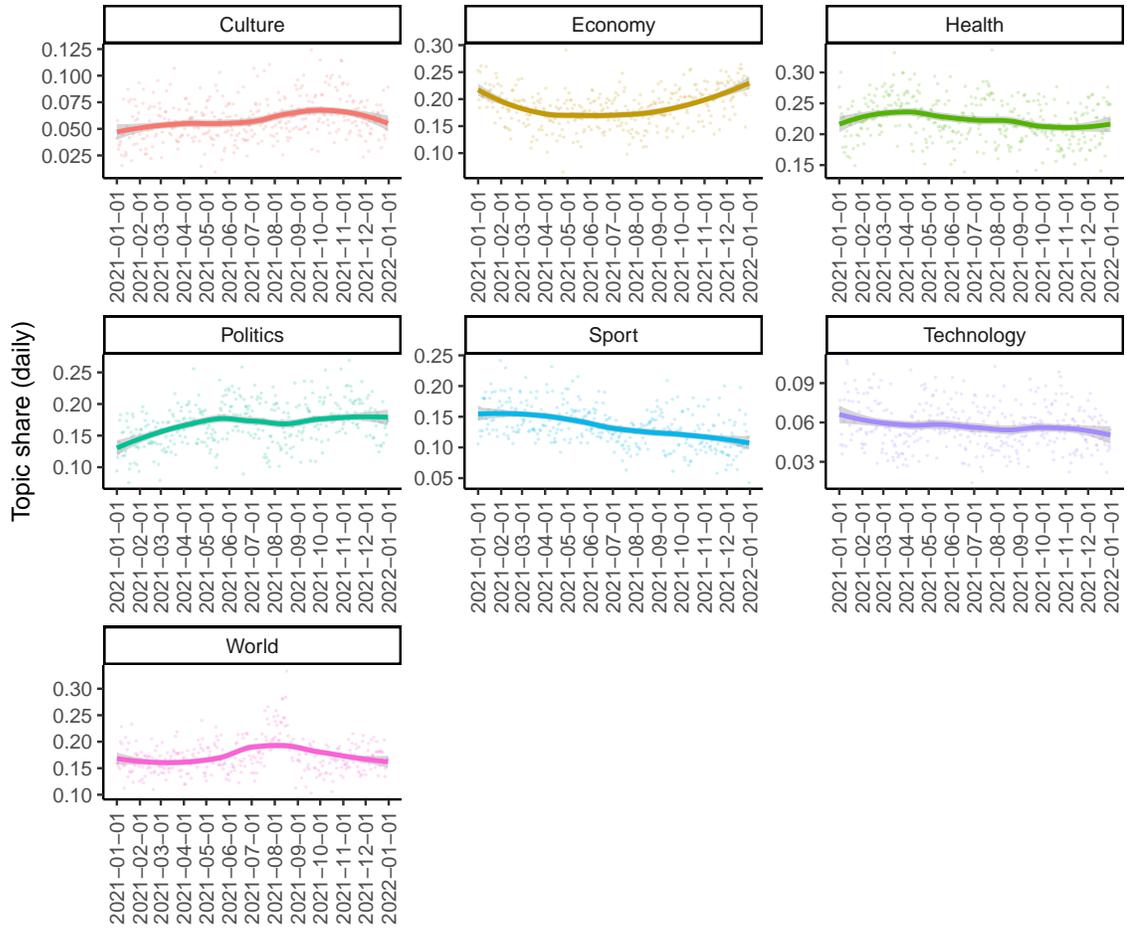


FIGURE B.3: The distribution of articles in Sözcü

B.3 Cross-benchmarking dynamic models

	Negative news	
	All news	Economy news
International economy news	-0.042 (0.034)	-0.015 (0.032)
International economy news x Jan 2021	0.008 (0.046)	0.008 (0.046)
International economy news x Feb 2021	-0.011 (0.042)	0.004 (0.040)
International economy news x March 2021	0.044 (0.050)	0.057 (0.050)
International economy news x April 2021	0.043 (0.047)	0.058 (0.049)
International economy news x May 2021	0.020 (0.045)	0.048 (0.046)
International economy news x June 2021	0.021 (0.047)	0.028 (0.046)
International economy news x August 2021	0.101** (0.043)	0.115*** (0.043)
International economy news x September 2021	0.051 (0.046)	0.057 (0.047)
International economy news x October 2021	0.183*** (0.069)	0.170** (0.069)
International economy news x November 2021	0.041 (0.051)	0.049 (0.050)
International economy news x December 2021	0.139** (0.060)	0.139** (0.058)
Day FE	Yes	Yes
Article-level Controls	Yes	Yes
Num.Obs.	174611	31010
R2	0.011	0.027
R2 Adj.	0.009	0.015

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Standard errors are clustered at the day level

	Negative news	
	All news	Economy news
International economy news	0.022 (0.047)	0.026 (0.054)
International economy news x Jan 2021	0.064 (0.059)	0.026 (0.066)
International economy news x Feb 2021	0.110* (0.064)	0.060 (0.069)
International economy news x March 2021	0.040 (0.058)	0.034 (0.065)
International economy news x April 2021	0.035 (0.060)	0.042 (0.069)
International economy news x May 2021	0.000 (0.095)	-0.045 (0.102)
International economy news x June 2021	-0.007 (0.073)	-0.013 (0.081)
International economy news x August 2021	0.054 (0.085)	0.050 (0.092)
International economy news x September 2021	0.163*** (0.060)	0.164** (0.067)
International economy news x October 2021	0.084 (0.054)	0.080 (0.062)
International economy news x November 2021	0.007 (0.063)	0.024 (0.069)
International economy news x December 2021	0.015 (0.058)	0.027 (0.066)
Day FE	Yes	Yes
Article-level Controls	Yes	Yes
Num.Obs.	91562	18240
R2	0.020	0.065
R2 Adj.	0.016	0.046

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Standard errors are clustered at the day level

	Negative news	
	All news	Economy news
International economy news	-0.076*	-0.147***
	(0.041)	(0.049)
International economy news x Jan 2021	0.022	0.064
	(0.058)	(0.069)
International economy news x Feb 2021	0.060	0.084
	(0.064)	(0.072)
International economy news x March 2021	0.062	0.107
	(0.064)	(0.072)
International economy news x April 2021	-0.044	0.001
	(0.062)	(0.071)
International economy news x May 2021	-0.028	0.003
	(0.063)	(0.069)
International economy news x June 2021	-0.118**	-0.083
	(0.052)	(0.062)
International economy news x August 2021	0.101	0.131*
	(0.068)	(0.072)
International economy news x September 2021	0.044	0.041
	(0.062)	(0.073)
International economy news x October 2021	0.026	0.055
	(0.054)	(0.065)
International economy news x November 2021	-0.008	0.025
	(0.054)	(0.063)
International economy news x December 2021	-0.019	0.026
	(0.063)	(0.071)
Day FE	Yes	Yes
Article-level Controls	Yes	Yes
Num.Obs.	88760	16900
R2	0.011	0.034
R2 Adj.	0.007	0.012

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Standard errors are clustered at the day level

B.4 Selective attribution dynamic models

B.4.1 Positive sentiment over time with government actors mentioned

	Positive news	
	All news	Economy news
Government actors mentioned	0.020 (0.014)	-0.058** (0.029)
Government actors mentioned x Jan 2021	0.071*** (0.021)	0.133*** (0.042)
Government actors mentioned x Feb 2021	-0.002 (0.023)	0.102** (0.042)
Government actors mentioned x March 2021	0.066*** (0.020)	0.182*** (0.039)
Government actors mentioned x April 2021	-0.012 (0.021)	0.033 (0.043)
Government actors mentioned x May 2021	0.017 (0.020)	0.134*** (0.042)
Government actors mentioned x June 2021	0.066*** (0.022)	0.115*** (0.041)
Government actors mentioned x August 2021	-0.017 (0.019)	0.028 (0.051)
Government actors mentioned x September 2021	0.039* (0.022)	0.063 (0.044)
Government actors mentioned x October 2021	0.013 (0.021)	0.103** (0.043)
Government actors mentioned x November 2021	-0.002 (0.020)	0.038 (0.042)
Government actors mentioned x December 2021	-0.014 (0.025)	0.061 (0.042)
Day FE	Yes	Yes
Article-level Controls	Yes	Yes
Num.Obs.	174611	31010
R2	0.026	0.032
R2 Adj.	0.024	0.020

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Standard errors are clustered at the day level

	Positive news	
	All news	Economy news
Government actors mentioned	0.037** (0.015)	0.009 (0.031)
Government actors mentioned x Jan 2021	0.062*** (0.024)	0.025 (0.043)
Government actors mentioned x Feb 2021	0.022 (0.023)	0.031 (0.046)
Government actors mentioned x March 2021	0.081*** (0.025)	0.162*** (0.049)
Government actors mentioned x April 2021	0.031 (0.024)	0.038 (0.045)
Government actors mentioned x May 2021	-0.014 (0.022)	0.080 (0.051)
Government actors mentioned x June 2021	0.104*** (0.029)	-0.004 (0.045)
Government actors mentioned x August 2021	0.019 (0.026)	0.100 (0.067)
Government actors mentioned x September 2021	0.071*** (0.024)	0.078* (0.046)
Government actors mentioned x October 2021	0.086*** (0.027)	0.102* (0.061)
Government actors mentioned x November 2021	0.011 (0.022)	-0.017 (0.054)
Government actors mentioned x December 2021	-0.009 (0.020)	-0.028 (0.039)
Day FE	Yes	Yes
Article-level Controls	Yes	Yes
Num.Obs.	91562	18240
R2	0.050	0.054
R2 Adj.	0.046	0.034

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Standard errors are clustered at the day level

	Positive news	
	All news	Economy news
Government actors mentioned	-0.007 (0.015)	-0.001 (0.031)
Government actors mentioned x Jan 2021	-0.001 (0.023)	-0.028 (0.052)
Government actors mentioned x Feb 2021	0.007 (0.025)	0.020 (0.060)
Government actors mentioned x March 2021	0.003 (0.023)	-0.013 (0.048)
Government actors mentioned x April 2021	-0.042** (0.020)	-0.052 (0.036)
Government actors mentioned x May 2021	-0.031 (0.021)	0.035 (0.044)
Government actors mentioned x June 2021	0.050** (0.023)	0.054 (0.044)
Government actors mentioned x August 2021	0.042* (0.022)	0.009 (0.042)
Government actors mentioned x September 2021	0.033* (0.018)	0.067 (0.043)
Government actors mentioned x October 2021	0.023 (0.022)	0.075 (0.047)
Government actors mentioned x November 2021	-0.016 (0.018)	0.026 (0.041)
Government actors mentioned x December 2021	0.008 (0.020)	0.073* (0.037)
Day FE	Yes	Yes
Article-level Controls	Yes	Yes
Num.Obs.	88760	16900
R2	0.011	0.026
R2 Adj.	0.006	0.004

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Standard errors are clustered at the day level

B.4.2 Negative sentiment over time with external actors mentioned

	Negative news	
	All news	Economy news
External actors mentioned	-0.034 (0.035)	-0.017 (0.035)
External actors mentioned x Jan 2021	-0.041 (0.043)	-0.017 (0.046)
External actors mentioned x Feb 2021	0.018 (0.051)	-0.013 (0.049)
External actors mentioned x March 2021	-0.035 (0.040)	-0.033 (0.040)
External actors mentioned x April 2021	0.083 (0.055)	-0.005 (0.045)
External actors mentioned x May 2021	-0.054 (0.045)	-0.021 (0.049)
External actors mentioned x June 2021	-0.034 (0.042)	-0.035 (0.046)
External actors mentioned x August 2021	0.034 (0.040)	0.040 (0.043)
External actors mentioned x September 2021	0.012 (0.046)	-0.018 (0.049)
External actors mentioned x October 2021	0.040 (0.048)	0.021 (0.050)
External actors mentioned x November 2021	-0.042 (0.039)	-0.026 (0.041)
External actors mentioned x December 2021	-0.060 (0.044)	-0.086* (0.045)
Day FE	Yes	Yes
Article-level Controls	Yes	Yes
Num.Obs.	174611	31010
R2	0.011	0.027
R2 Adj.	0.009	0.015

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Standard errors are clustered at the day level

	Negative news	
	All news	Economy news
External actors mentioned	-0.064 (0.041)	-0.056 (0.041)
External actors mentioned x Jan 2021	0.040 (0.052)	-0.006 (0.056)
External actors mentioned x Feb 2021	0.073 (0.059)	-0.018 (0.063)
External actors mentioned x March 2021	0.001 (0.047)	-0.017 (0.050)
External actors mentioned x April 2021	0.001 (0.050)	-0.006 (0.051)
External actors mentioned x May 2021	-0.031 (0.049)	-0.063 (0.046)
External actors mentioned x June 2021	-0.033 (0.046)	-0.051 (0.050)
External actors mentioned x August 2021	0.063 (0.056)	0.040 (0.057)
External actors mentioned x September 2021	0.114* (0.058)	0.100* (0.058)
External actors mentioned x October 2021	0.072 (0.046)	0.067 (0.049)
External actors mentioned x November 2021	0.048 (0.050)	0.068 (0.049)
External actors mentioned x December 2021	0.020 (0.048)	0.017 (0.054)
Day FE	Yes	Yes
Article-level Controls	Yes	Yes
Num.Obs.	91562	18240
R2	0.019	0.064
R2 Adj.	0.015	0.044

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Standard errors are clustered at the day level

	Negative news	
	All news	Economy news
External actors mentioned	-0.104** (0.051)	-0.164*** (0.057)
External actors mentioned x Jan 2021	0.045 (0.075)	0.054 (0.084)
External actors mentioned x Feb 2021	0.018 (0.068)	-0.063 (0.072)
External actors mentioned x March 2021	-0.056 (0.060)	-0.055 (0.070)
External actors mentioned x April 2021	0.028 (0.068)	-0.022 (0.072)
External actors mentioned x May 2021	0.081 (0.079)	0.100 (0.103)
External actors mentioned x June 2021	-0.040 (0.064)	-0.049 (0.069)
External actors mentioned x August 2021	0.031 (0.072)	-0.016 (0.074)
External actors mentioned x September 2021	0.033 (0.068)	0.059 (0.081)
External actors mentioned x October 2021	-0.033 (0.058)	-0.060 (0.066)
External actors mentioned x November 2021	0.014 (0.058)	0.039 (0.067)
External actors mentioned x December 2021	0.001 (0.059)	-0.019 (0.069)
Day FE	Yes	Yes
Article-level Controls	Yes	Yes
Num.Obs.	88760	16900
R2	0.011	0.038
R2 Adj.	0.007	0.016

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Standard errors are clustered at the day level

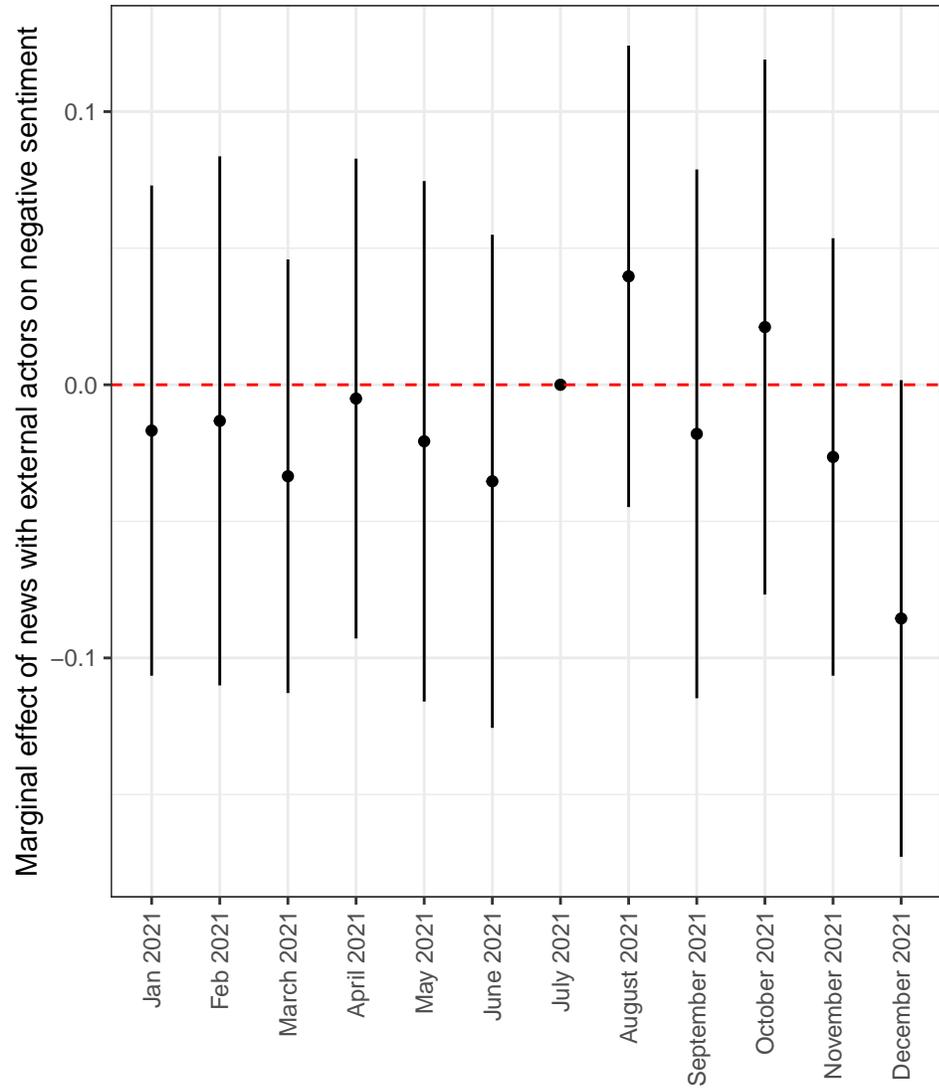


FIGURE B.4: News with external actors and negative sentiment in Sabah

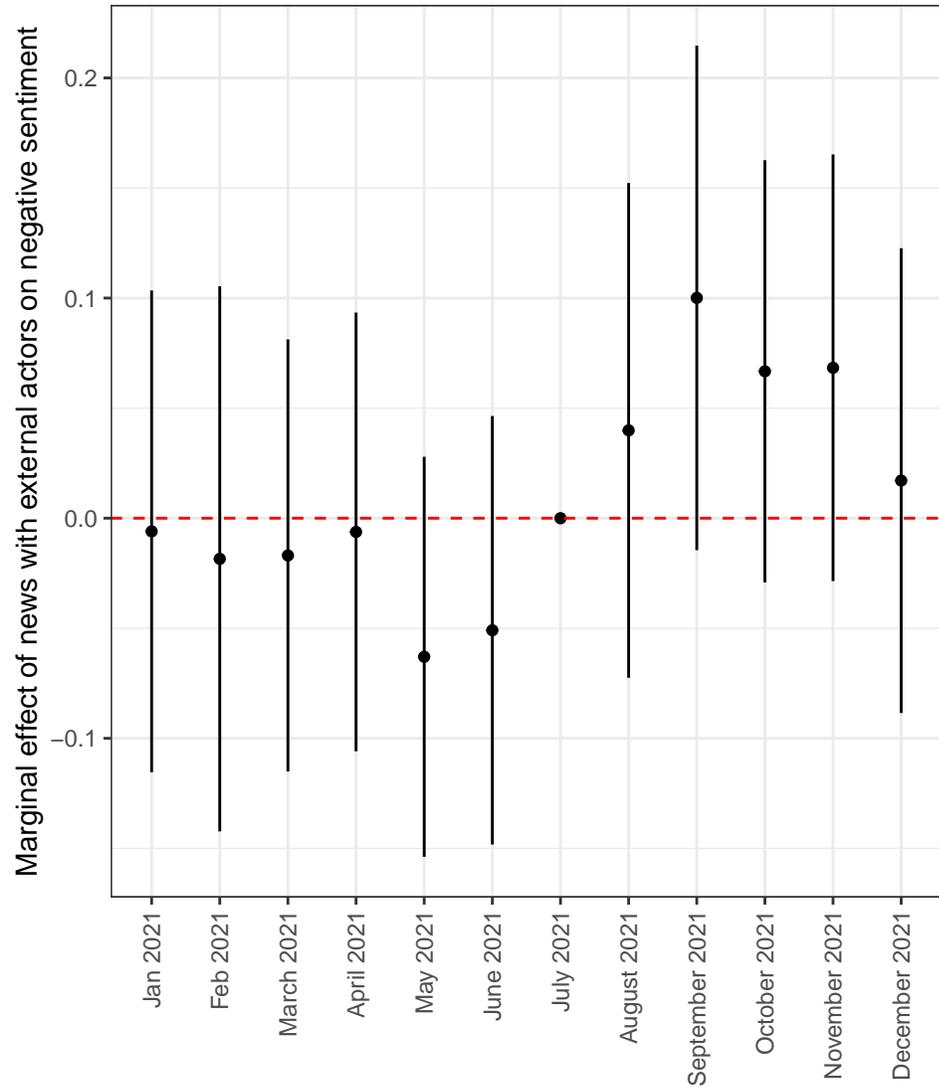


FIGURE B.5: News with external actors and negative sentiment in TRT

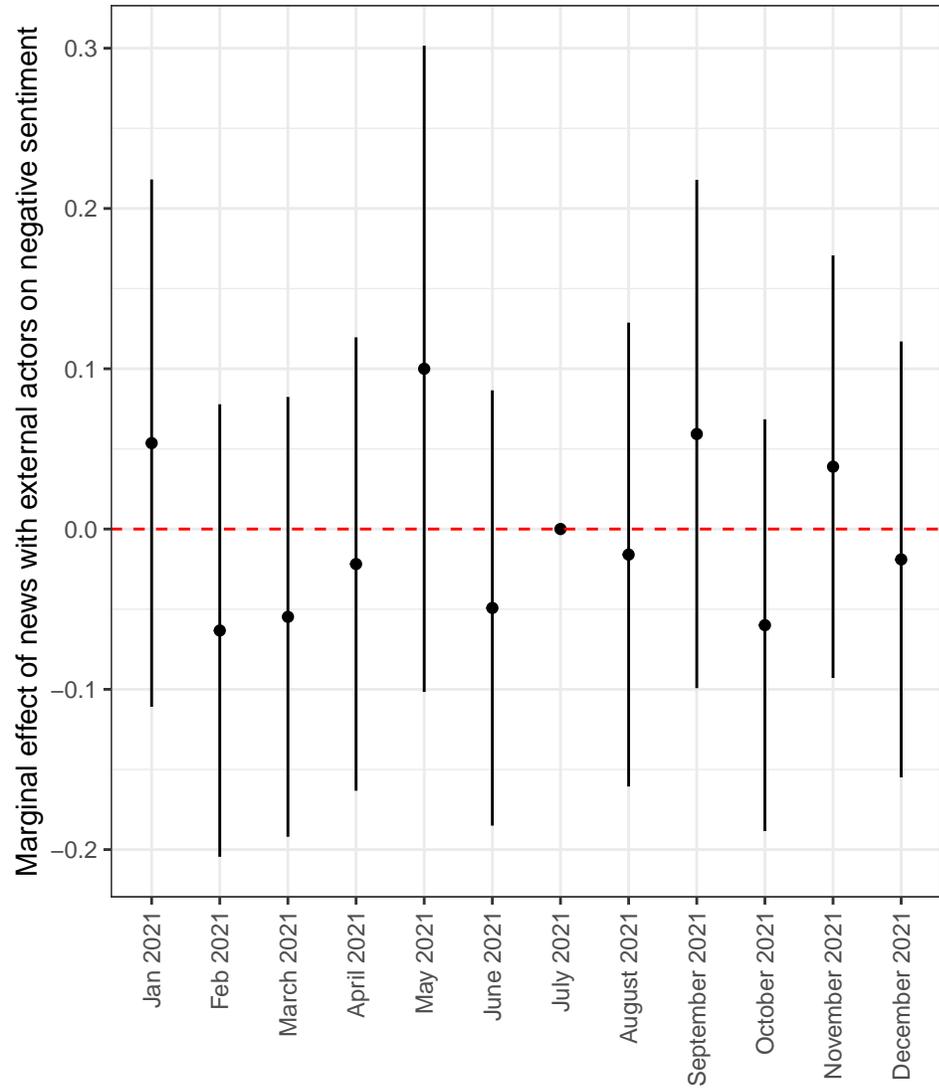


FIGURE B.6: News with external actors and negative sentiment in Sozcu

B.5 Agenda setting dynamic models

	Sabah	TRT	Sozcu
Jan 2021	0.007 (0.005)	0.031*** (0.008)	0.028*** (0.008)
Feb 2021	0.006 (0.005)	0.018** (0.008)	0.008 (0.008)
March 2021	0.005 (0.005)	0.010 (0.007)	0.004 (0.007)
April 2021	-0.001 (0.006)	-0.001 (0.008)	-0.004 (0.008)
May 2021	-0.002 (0.006)	-0.008 (0.008)	-0.001 (0.007)
June 2021	0.008 (0.005)	0.011 (0.008)	0.005 (0.007)
August 2021	-0.007 (0.005)	0.002 (0.008)	-0.001 (0.007)
September 2021	0.016** (0.006)	0.017** (0.008)	0.011 (0.007)
October 2021	0.009 (0.006)	0.029*** (0.008)	0.022*** (0.007)
November 2021	0.018*** (0.005)	0.025*** (0.008)	0.032*** (0.008)
December 2021	0.044*** (0.009)	0.036*** (0.007)	0.063*** (0.008)
Article-level Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Num.Obs.	174611	91562	88760
R2	0.007	0.008	0.008
R2 Adj.	0.006	0.008	0.008

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Standard errors are clustered at the day level

B.6 Fine-tuning the BERT Model for news classification

Since, we “fine-tune” the BERT model rather than training from scratch, we only train higher layers. Other layers’ weights come from the installed BERT model, which is trained by huge amounts of raw text. I use Schweter (2020)’s BERTurk uncased model (128K vocabulary) since it is the only model available for Turkish at

the time of writing.

To fine-tune the model, I used a training data that classifies news articles into seven topics: politics, world, economy, culture, health, sport, and technology.¹

I use the Google Colab platform to fine-tune the model. I used an early stopping rule to prevent overfitting with an early stopping delta equal to 0.01 and MCC (Matthews correlation coefficient) as the stopping metric. I keep the number of epochs at three since the model is not trained from scratch, which is in line with the creators' of the original BERT model (Devlin et al., 2018).

The precision, recall, f1-scores, and support for each label in each iteration can be found in Table B.1 below. The overall accuracy is around 94%.

Table B.1: Accuracy results from the test data

	precision	recall	f1-score	support
Politics	0.905	0.922	0.913	103
World	0.931	0.941	0.936	101
Economy	0.901	0.883	0.892	103
Culture	0.957	0.967	0.962	91
Health	0.943	0.935	0.939	107
Sport	0.975	0.983	0.979	120
Technology	0.935	0.918	0.927	110
Accuracy	0.936	0.936	0.936	0.936
Macro Average	0.935	0.936	0.935	735
Weighted Average	0.936	0.936	0.936	735

B.7 Contextualized topic modelling

To extract topics, I use Bianchi et al. (2020)'s contextualized topic model, which is an improvement over traditional topic modelling approaches since it uses word-embeddings to extract coherent topics and feeds model with context information. In particular, Bianchi et al. (2020) extend Srivastava and Sutton (2017)'s neural

¹ The data is available here: <https://www.kaggle.com/datasets/savasy/ttc4900>.

topic model to include contextualized embeddings from large language models such as BERT (Devlin et al., 2018).

Since the number of topics is user-defined, I tried a different number of topics to find coherent topics and ended up with ten topics. This ensures that I coherently extract the currency/exchange topic (see topic one below). Based on my review of the most important words for each topic, I named each topic as follows. I also plotted the word clouds for each topic below:

- Transport/weather: This is mostly about the weather and its impact on transportation and infrastructure.
- Currency/exchange: This is mostly about foreign exchange and gold prices. But it also seems to capture oil and cryptocurrency news.
- Economic crime: This topic is specifically about economic crimes such as gambling, smuggling of tobacco, and alcoholic products.
- Trade: This topic includes news about exports and imports.
- Industry: This topic includes news about major companies and holdings such as Mercedes, Toyota, Amazon, Boeing, and Sabanci.
- Macro-policy: This topic includes news about general macro-policy. Although the most representative words do not seem to be very informative, further inspection reveals that this topic mostly covers stories about fiscal policy, macro-policy, and industry news.
- Infrastructure/energy: This topic mostly includes news from the energy sector and stories about the infrastructural projects.

- State economy: This topic mostly includes stories about government policies on the economy, such as tax policies, welfare state policies, or other economic incentive policies provided by various ministries/government agencies.
- Payment/salary: This topic includes stories about payments, salaries, and pensions.
- Agriculture: This topic primarily covers agriculture news.

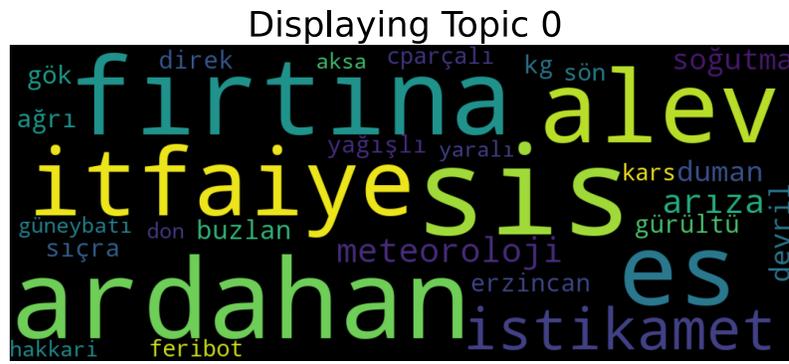


FIGURE B.7: Transport/Weather topic: Major words in the cloud → storm, fire, ferry, direction, ice



FIGURE B.8: Currency/Exchange topic: Major words in the cloud → grand bazaar, sterlin, half [gold], gold, prices

Displaying Topic 5



FIGURE B.12: Macro-policy topic: Major words in the cloud → money, do, say, know, go

Displaying Topic 6



FIGURE B.13: Infrastructure/energy topic: Major words in the cloud → technology, ship, enterprise, domestic energy, infrastructure

Displaying Topic 7



FIGURE B.14: State economy topic: Major words in the cloud → youtube, portal, voter, to sign, coupon

Displaying Topic 8



FIGURE B.15: Payment/salary topic: Major words in the cloud → salary, government official, retiree, insurance, allowance

Displaying Topic 9



FIGURE B.16: Agriculture topic: Major words in the cloud → fish, potato, strawberry, honey, farming

Appendix C

Appendix for Chapter 4

C.1 Additional control variables

Table C.1: Judicial and legislative constraints and democracy satisfaction

	Dependent Variable: Satisfaction from democracy							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Judicial constraints	-0.891*** (0.324)	-0.740** (0.307)	-0.779** (0.354)	-0.678** (0.330)				
Legislative constraints					-0.891*** (0.300)	-0.786*** (0.252)	-0.749** (0.307)	-0.654** (0.265)
GDP change (percent)	0.018*** (0.005)	0.020*** (0.006)	0.019*** (0.006)	0.016** (0.007)	0.017*** (0.005)	0.019*** (0.005)	0.018*** (0.006)	0.015** (0.006)
Gini index (disposable)	-0.034** (0.015)	-0.032** (0.014)	-0.031 (0.022)	-0.040* (0.022)	-0.031* (0.017)	-0.029* (0.015)	-0.034 (0.022)	-0.043* (0.022)
Years of education (ave.)	0.158* (0.091)	-0.373* (0.205)	0.087 (0.144)	-0.333 (0.273)	0.143 (0.092)	-0.404** (0.190)	0.089 (0.144)	-0.338 (0.270)
Control of corruption	0.337*** (0.103)	0.289** (0.114)	0.305*** (0.114)	0.276** (0.118)	0.358*** (0.097)	0.311*** (0.104)	0.326*** (0.112)	0.296** (0.114)
Inflation	-0.000*** (0.000)	-0.000*** (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000*** (0.000)	-0.000*** (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
Physical violence index	0.184 (0.450)	0.127 (0.418)	-0.115 (0.459)	-0.164 (0.440)	0.134 (0.323)	0.115 (0.300)	-0.172 (0.344)	-0.212 (0.321)
Petroleum production per capita			-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000* (0.000)			-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000* (0.000)
Num.Obs.	1153	1153	759	759	1152	1152	758	758
R2	0.921	0.926	0.942	0.944	0.922	0.928	0.943	0.945
R2 Adj.	0.913	0.918	0.934	0.935	0.915	0.920	0.934	0.935
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Standard errors are clustered at the country level

C.2 Using legislative constraints as the main independent variable

Table C.2: Legislative constraints and democracy satisfaction

	Dependent Variable: Satisfaction from democracy									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Legislative constraints	-0.645** (0.255)	-0.705*** (0.228)	-0.725*** (0.270)	-0.776*** (0.250)	-0.753*** (0.281)	-0.727*** (0.248)	-0.922*** (0.307)	-0.886*** (0.284)	-0.991*** (0.307)	-0.936*** (0.280)
GDP change (percent)			0.020*** (0.004)	0.022*** (0.004)	0.021*** (0.005)	0.021*** (0.005)	0.020*** (0.003)	0.022*** (0.003)	0.019*** (0.004)	0.022*** (0.004)
Gini index (disposable)			-0.000 (0.013)	-0.005 (0.013)	-0.008 (0.012)	-0.007 (0.013)	-0.009 (0.014)	-0.002 (0.014)	-0.008 (0.014)	-0.002 (0.014)
Years of education (ave.)					0.183* (0.101)	-0.205 (0.266)	0.158 (0.097)	-0.410* (0.225)	0.151 (0.096)	-0.412* (0.225)
Control of corruption							0.514*** (0.153)	0.478*** (0.169)	0.506*** (0.156)	0.472*** (0.169)
Physical violence index									0.198 (0.290)	0.143 (0.297)
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Num.Obs.	3015	3015	2479	2479	2180	2180	1916	1916	1916	1916
R2	0.831	0.847	0.846	0.859	0.846	0.856	0.881	0.888	0.881	0.888
R2 Adj.	0.824	0.837	0.838	0.849	0.838	0.844	0.873	0.879	0.873	0.879

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01
Standard errors are clustered at the country level

C.3 Alternative variables for judicial and legislative constraints

Table C.3: Horizontal accountability and democracy satisfaction

	Dependent Variable: Satisfaction from democracy									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Horizontal accountability index	-0.173** (0.084)	-0.212*** (0.074)	-0.189** (0.089)	-0.225*** (0.083)	-0.204** (0.091)	-0.200** (0.082)	-0.272*** (0.096)	-0.264*** (0.092)	-0.285*** (0.097)	-0.270*** (0.092)
GDP change (percent)			0.020*** (0.004)	0.022*** (0.005)	0.021*** (0.005)	0.021*** (0.005)	0.020*** (0.003)	0.022*** (0.003)	0.020*** (0.004)	0.022*** (0.004)
Gini index (disposable)			-0.001 (0.013)	-0.006 (0.013)	-0.009 (0.013)	-0.008 (0.013)	-0.010 (0.014)	-0.003 (0.014)	-0.010 (0.015)	-0.003 (0.015)
Years of education (ave.)					0.188* (0.102)	-0.200 (0.264)	0.165* (0.098)	-0.393 (0.239)	0.162* (0.097)	-0.393 (0.239)
Control of corruption							0.502*** (0.158)	0.467*** (0.174)	0.498*** (0.159)	0.465*** (0.173)
Physical violence index									0.101 (0.324)	0.053 (0.326)
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Num.Obs.	3018	3018	2481	2481	2182	2182	1918	1918	1918	1918
R2	0.830	0.845	0.844	0.858	0.845	0.854	0.879	0.886	0.879	0.886
R2 Adj.	0.822	0.836	0.836	0.847	0.836	0.843	0.871	0.877	0.871	0.877

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01
Standard errors are clustered at the country level

Table C.4: Vertical accountability and democracy satisfaction

	Dependent Variable: Satisfaction from democracy									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Vertical accountability index	-0.106 (0.139)	-0.190 (0.140)	-0.165 (0.155)	-0.254* (0.150)	-0.214 (0.156)	-0.170 (0.148)	-0.228 (0.156)	-0.185 (0.152)	-0.178 (0.181)	-0.120 (0.172)
GDP change (percent)			0.021*** (0.005)	0.023*** (0.005)	0.022*** (0.005)	0.022*** (0.005)	0.022*** (0.004)	0.024*** (0.004)	0.022*** (0.004)	0.025*** (0.004)
Gini index (disposable)			-0.003 (0.014)	-0.007 (0.014)	-0.011 (0.013)	-0.010 (0.014)	-0.013 (0.015)	-0.006 (0.015)	-0.014 (0.016)	-0.008 (0.016)
Years of education (ave.)					0.189* (0.099)	-0.199 (0.266)	0.171* (0.099)	-0.383 (0.245)	0.178* (0.099)	-0.386 (0.242)
Control of corruption							0.453*** (0.168)	0.414** (0.187)	0.467*** (0.163)	0.432** (0.178)
Physical violence index									-0.286 (0.397)	-0.362 (0.379)
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Num.Obs.	3018	3018	2481	2481	2182	2182	1918	1918	1918	1918
R2	0.828	0.843	0.843	0.856	0.843	0.852	0.875	0.882	0.876	0.883
R2 Adj.	0.820	0.833	0.834	0.845	0.834	0.840	0.868	0.873	0.868	0.873

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01
Standard errors are clustered at the country level

C.4 Mood results

Table C.5: Judicial constraints and democracy support

	Dependent Variable: Support for democracy									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Judicial constraints	-0.743*** (0.203)	-0.732*** (0.207)	-0.815*** (0.211)	-0.809*** (0.215)	-0.708*** (0.220)	-0.735*** (0.221)	-0.686*** (0.244)	-0.705*** (0.238)	-0.876*** (0.285)	-0.907*** (0.265)
GDP change (percent)			0.006** (0.003)	0.006** (0.003)	0.006** (0.003)	0.007* (0.003)	0.003 (0.003)	0.004 (0.003)	0.002 (0.003)	0.003 (0.003)
Gini index (disposable)			-0.000 (0.011)	-0.002 (0.012)	0.001 (0.011)	0.002 (0.012)	-0.001 (0.011)	-0.000 (0.012)	0.001 (0.011)	0.002 (0.012)
Years of education (ave.)					-0.087 (0.063)	-0.090 (0.145)	-0.104 (0.082)	-0.193 (0.177)	-0.113 (0.082)	-0.191 (0.176)
Control of corruption							0.091 (0.084)	0.097 (0.086)	0.073 (0.087)	0.078 (0.089)
Physical violence index									0.389 (0.308)	0.408 (0.291)
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Num.Obs.	3059	3059	2461	2461	2157	2157	2034	2034	2034	2034
R2	0.898	0.904	0.910	0.914	0.919	0.922	0.916	0.920	0.917	0.921
R2 Adj.	0.893	0.898	0.905	0.908	0.914	0.916	0.911	0.914	0.911	0.915

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01
Standard errors are clustered at the country level

Table C.6: Legislative constraints and democracy support

	Dependent Variable: Support for democracy									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Legislative constraints	-0.558** (0.241)	-0.556** (0.232)	-0.652** (0.277)	-0.626** (0.270)	-0.517* (0.291)	-0.504* (0.284)	-0.509 (0.324)	-0.491 (0.311)	-0.568* (0.324)	-0.547* (0.310)
GDP change (percent)			0.005 (0.003)	0.005 (0.004)	0.005 (0.004)	0.005 (0.004)	0.002 (0.003)	0.003 (0.004)	0.001 (0.003)	0.002 (0.004)
Gini index (disposable)			0.002 (0.010)	-0.000 (0.011)	0.003 (0.011)	0.003 (0.011)	0.001 (0.011)	0.001 (0.011)	0.002 (0.011)	0.002 (0.011)
Years of education (ave.)					-0.082 (0.063)	-0.080 (0.143)	-0.100 (0.080)	-0.185 (0.176)	-0.106 (0.082)	-0.188 (0.177)
Control of corruption							0.083 (0.086)	0.085 (0.087)	0.074 (0.088)	0.076 (0.089)
Physical violence index									0.175 (0.227)	0.166 (0.217)
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Num.Obs.	3045	3045	2458	2458	2154	2154	2031	2031	2031	2031
R2	0.898	0.904	0.911	0.915	0.919	0.922	0.916	0.920	0.917	0.920
R2 Adj.	0.893	0.898	0.905	0.908	0.914	0.916	0.911	0.914	0.911	0.914

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Standard errors are clustered at the country level

Table C.7: Individual liberty and democracy support

	Dependent Variable: Support for democracy									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Individual liberty	-0.331 (0.370)	-0.410 (0.363)	-0.710 (0.526)	-0.705 (0.525)	-0.493 (0.551)	-0.548 (0.546)	-0.418 (0.580)	-0.489 (0.569)	-0.783 (1.042)	-1.004 (1.026)
GDP change (percent)			0.008*** (0.003)	0.008** (0.003)	0.007** (0.003)	0.008** (0.003)	0.004 (0.003)	0.005 (0.003)	0.004 (0.003)	0.005 (0.003)
Gini index (disposable)			-0.003 (0.012)	-0.005 (0.013)	-0.001 (0.012)	-0.001 (0.013)	-0.003 (0.013)	-0.003 (0.013)	-0.002 (0.013)	-0.002 (0.013)
Years of education (ave.)					-0.089 (0.066)	-0.121 (0.154)	-0.116 (0.086)	-0.235 (0.187)	-0.121 (0.086)	-0.234 (0.188)
Control of corruption							0.061 (0.089)	0.067 (0.090)	0.056 (0.089)	0.062 (0.090)
Physical violence index									0.310 (0.500)	0.434 (0.475)
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Num.Obs.	3059	3059	2461	2461	2157	2157	2034	2034	2034	2034
R2	0.895	0.901	0.907	0.911	0.916	0.920	0.914	0.918	0.914	0.918
R2 Adj.	0.890	0.895	0.902	0.905	0.911	0.914	0.908	0.912	0.909	0.912

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Standard errors are clustered at the country level

Table C.8: Judicial and legislative constraints and democracy support

	Dependent Variable: Support for democracy							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Judicial constraints	-0.620*	-0.701**	-0.520*	-0.598*				
	(0.325)	(0.317)	(0.306)	(0.305)				
Legislative constraints					-0.571***	-0.611***	-0.479**	-0.530**
					(0.214)	(0.220)	(0.217)	(0.227)
GDP change (percent)	0.005	0.009**	0.004	0.005	0.005	0.009**	0.004	0.006
	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Gini index (disposable)	-0.033**	-0.025*	-0.004	0.001	-0.031**	-0.022	-0.006	-0.000
	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.022)	(0.022)
Years of education (ave.)	-0.136*	-0.088	-0.285**	-0.068	-0.125*	-0.052	-0.266**	-0.006
	(0.077)	(0.173)	(0.110)	(0.261)	(0.072)	(0.160)	(0.107)	(0.246)
Control of corruption	0.127	0.124	0.181*	0.175*	0.125	0.121	0.177*	0.170*
	(0.084)	(0.082)	(0.100)	(0.099)	(0.087)	(0.086)	(0.099)	(0.099)
Inflation	0.000***	0.000***	0.000	0.000	0.000***	0.000***	0.000	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Physical violence index	-0.234	-0.111	-0.295	-0.212	-0.320	-0.226	-0.359	-0.298
	(0.299)	(0.292)	(0.307)	(0.307)	(0.230)	(0.223)	(0.250)	(0.249)
Petroleum production per capita			0.000	0.000			0.000	0.000*
			(0.000)	(0.000)			(0.000)	(0.000)
Num.Obs.	1225	1225	809	809	1223	1223	807	807
R2	0.948	0.951	0.957	0.959	0.949	0.952	0.958	0.960
R2 Adj.	0.943	0.945	0.951	0.952	0.944	0.947	0.952	0.953
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Standard errors are clustered at the country level

C.4.1 Mood results: alternative variables

Table C.9: Horizontal accountability and democracy support

	Dependent Variable: Support for democracy									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Horizontal accountability index	-0.192**	-0.187**	-0.231**	-0.220**	-0.193*	-0.187*	-0.192*	-0.187*	-0.224*	-0.217**
	(0.081)	(0.079)	(0.092)	(0.091)	(0.099)	(0.097)	(0.114)	(0.109)	(0.114)	(0.109)
GDP change (percent)			0.005	0.005	0.004	0.005	0.002	0.002	0.001	0.001
			(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Gini index (disposable)			0.001	-0.001	0.002	0.002	0.000	0.001	0.002	0.003
			(0.010)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)
Years of education (ave.)					-0.088	-0.113	-0.113	-0.230	-0.121	-0.235
					(0.065)	(0.151)	(0.083)	(0.183)	(0.085)	(0.184)
Control of corruption							0.092	0.093	0.079	0.080
							(0.084)	(0.086)	(0.087)	(0.089)
Physical violence index									0.256	0.244
									(0.227)	(0.215)
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Num.Obs.	3059	3059	2461	2461	2157	2157	2034	2034	2034	2034
R2	0.897	0.903	0.910	0.914	0.918	0.921	0.916	0.920	0.916	0.920
R2 Adj.	0.892	0.897	0.904	0.907	0.913	0.915	0.911	0.914	0.911	0.914

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Standard errors are clustered at the country level

Table C.10: Vertical accountability and democracy support

	Dependent Variable: Support for democracy									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Vertical accountability index	-0.122 (0.100)	-0.133 (0.101)	-0.231* (0.131)	-0.222* (0.132)	-0.174 (0.131)	-0.192 (0.132)	-0.138 (0.132)	-0.151 (0.133)	-0.134 (0.127)	-0.149 (0.129)
GDP change (percent)			0.007** (0.003)	0.006** (0.003)	0.006** (0.003)	0.007** (0.003)	0.003 (0.003)	0.004 (0.003)	0.003 (0.003)	0.004 (0.003)
Gini index (disposable)			-0.001 (0.011)	-0.003 (0.012)	0.001 (0.012)	0.001 (0.012)	-0.002 (0.012)	-0.001 (0.012)	-0.002 (0.012)	-0.001 (0.013)
Years of education (ave.)					-0.079 (0.065)	-0.096 (0.152)	-0.108 (0.084)	-0.211 (0.186)	-0.108 (0.086)	-0.211 (0.186)
Control of corruption							0.058 (0.087)	0.063 (0.090)	0.060 (0.088)	0.064 (0.091)
Physical violence index									-0.025 (0.273)	-0.013 (0.259)
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Num.Obs.	3059	3059	2461	2461	2157	2157	2034	2034	2034	2034
R2	0.895	0.901	0.908	0.912	0.917	0.920	0.914	0.918	0.914	0.918
R2 Adj.	0.890	0.895	0.902	0.905	0.912	0.914	0.909	0.912	0.909	0.912

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01
Standard errors are clustered at the country level

C.5 Additional information about the survey experiment

The survey was conducted in İstanbul, the biggest province in Turkey. The sampling unit was neighborhood, the smallest administrative unit within the province. 63 neighborhoods were selected randomly by probability proportional to size (PPS) sampling from the complete list of neighborhoods in İstanbul and the total sample size was 515 adults.

For each neighborhood, eight streets were selected randomly from the list of all streets. On each street, buildings were again randomly selected by a random selection table. In buildings with more than one residence, the first interview attempt was made at the second door number of the selected building. When this failed, the second attempt was made at the fifth house of the selected building.

If the interview could not be completed in the selected house, a new house was selected according to the same criteria, and the selection process was repeated until the interview is conducted on a random basis.

Before the interview started, the enumerators read the informed consent form to

the respondents. The respondents were not paid to participate in the interviews, which lasted around 20 minutes. The hard copies of the informed consent forms were also provided to those respondents who asked them. Since the experiment used hypothetical presidential candidates and respondents were not paid, no particular group differentially benefited or was harmed by this research.

One example profile in Turkish can be found below. Respondents saw 5 such pairs.

	Aday A	Aday B
Sosyal	Daha fazla insanın özel hastaneleri kullanabilmesi için sosyal güvenlik kapsamına özel hastaneleri de almak istemektedir	Devlet ilkokullarında okuyan tüm öğrencilere bir öğün ücretsiz yemek sağlamayı planlamaktadır
Yasa Önerisi	Mahkemelerin iş yükünü azaltacak bir yasa önermektedir	Kamu hizmetlerini hızlandırmak için yargının hükümeti daha az denetleyeceği bir yasa önermektedir

FIGURE C.1: A profile example presented to respondents in the survey experiment

Table C.11: Descriptive statistics for some important variables

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Pctl(25)	Pctl(75)	Max
Age	509	38.045	13.455	18.000	26.000	49.000	73.000
Female	510	0.490	0.500	0	0	1	1
Life satisfaction	510	4.775	3.341	0	1	8	10
Importance of Democracy for the Respondents	506	8.522	2.226	0.000	8.000	10.000	10.000
Respondents' Democracy Ratings of Turke	501	4.126	3.223	0.000	1.000	7.000	10.000
The share of AKP voters	443	0.479	0.500	0.000	0.000	1.000	1.000
The share of Erdoğan voters	436	0.541	0.499	0.000	0.000	1.000	1.000
Ideology	478	6.031	3.320	0.000	3.000	9.000	10.000
Health	510	3.980	0.888	1	4	5	5
Private Health Ins.	499	1.892	0.311	1.000	2.000	2.000	2.000
Education	510	4.578	1.374	1	3	5	8
Kurdish	510	0.141	0.349	0	0	0	1
Income	438	8.208	3.118	1.000	6.000	10.000	16.000
Religiosity	448	3.685	2.357	0.000	1.000	6.000	7.000
Full-Time Workers	510	0.529	0.500	0	0	1	1
Household Size	490	4.092	1.465	1.000	3.000	5.000	9.000

Table C.12: Balance table across two groups

	variables	treatment	control	pval
1	Age	37.525	38.567	0.383
2	Female	0.465	0.516	0.251
3	Life Satisfaction	4.582	4.969	0.192
4	Importance of Democracy for the Respondents	8.573	8.470	0.605
5	Respondents' Democracy Ratings of Turkey	3.854	4.405	0.056
6	The share of AKP voters	0.445	0.514	0.147
7	The share of Erdogan voters	0.495	0.588	0.053
8	Ideology	5.708	6.366	0.030
9	Health	4.027	3.933	0.231
10	Private Health Insurance	1.876	1.907	0.269
11	Education	4.539	4.618	0.516
12	Kurdish	0.156	0.126	0.327
13	Income	8.327	8.087	0.421
14	Religiosity	3.519	3.862	0.125
15	Full-Time Workers	0.574	0.484	0.042
16	Household Size	4.126	4.058	0.608

C.5.1 Diagnostic checks

Since the respondents are presented hypothetical candidate pairs for five rounds, it is essential to have “no carryover effects” (Hainmueller et al., 2013). To have a valid inference, we need to make sure that potential outcomes take the same value as long as presidential candidate profiles are the same. In our case, this assumption holds if respondents choose the same presidential candidate that has the same profile regardless of what respondents had seen or would see in the rest of the experiment. “No carryover effects” would be violated, for instance, if a respondent uses information from previous rounds to decide in the subsequent rounds. This assumption is similar to SUTVA (stable unit treatment value assumption) in that there should be no interference between observation units and the potential outcomes remain stable across different rounds (Hainmueller et al., 2013). To see whether “no carryover effects” holds in our case, I conducted the same analysis for each round separately for each version (treatment and control). The results can be found in Figure C.2 and Figure C.3 below for treatment and control groups separately.

By looking at the figures, we can conclude that the effects are reasonably stable across rounds, although some point estimates seem to be different from the rest. For instance, in the control group, the impact of authoritarian characteristic is not statistically significant at conventional levels in the first round. Note that the sample size in each round is tiny, which might explain the non-significant result. To test the carryover effect more formally, I test whether the impact of judiciary positions are stable across rounds. Following Hainmueller et al. (2013), I first regress the choice outcome, which is “selection” in this case, on indicators for the judiciary position, indicators for each round, and their interactions. Then, I conducted an F-test for the joint significance of the interaction terms. The result suggests that we cannot reject the null that the effects of the judiciary position are identical across rounds both in

control and treatment groups (p-value: 0.12 and 0.15, respectively). Therefore, our inspection yields no carryover effects which suggests a valid inference.

Another critical assumption is to have a “no profile order” effect. That is, the impact of judiciary position or social policy should not depend on whether they are presented under Candidate A or Candidate B. While we have no expectation that such profile order effect exists, it might be plausible if, say, some respondents only pay attention to the one on the left, i.e., Candidate A. To test this formally, I regressed selection variable on indicators for the judiciary position, indicators for candidate name (whether A and B), and their interactions for both treatment and control groups. The results suggest that we do not have any profile order effect (p-values: 0.5 and 0.25 for treatment and control groups, respectively).

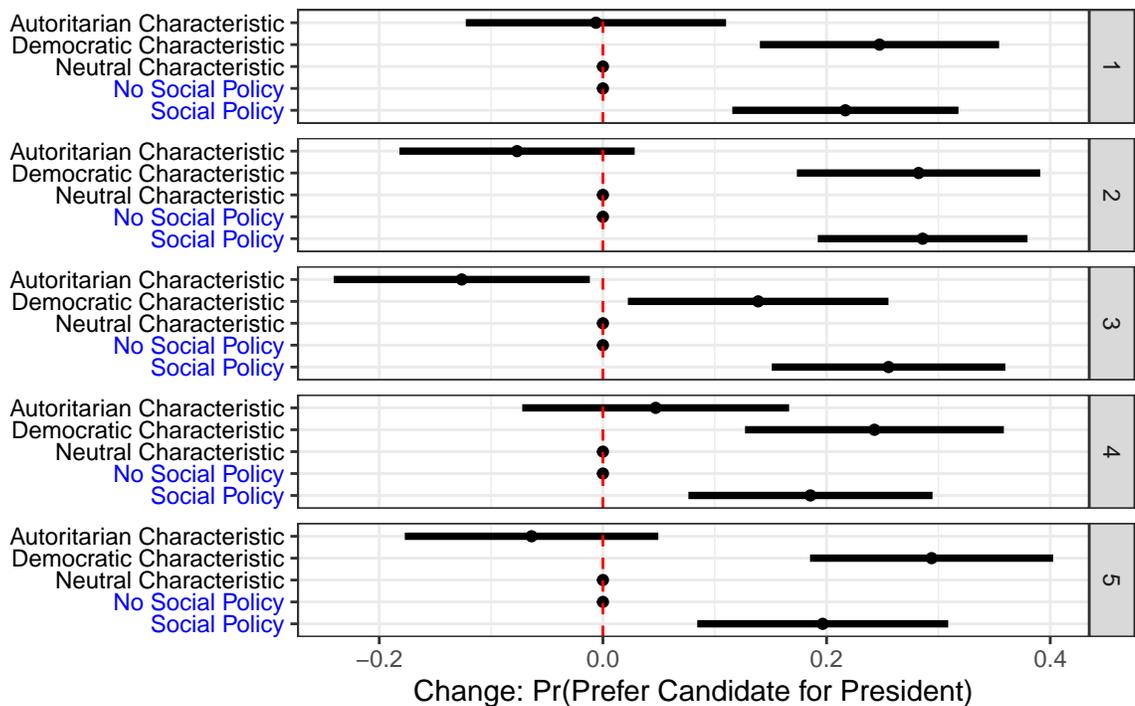


FIGURE C.2: Effects of judicial position and social policy on candidate selection in each round (Treatment Group)

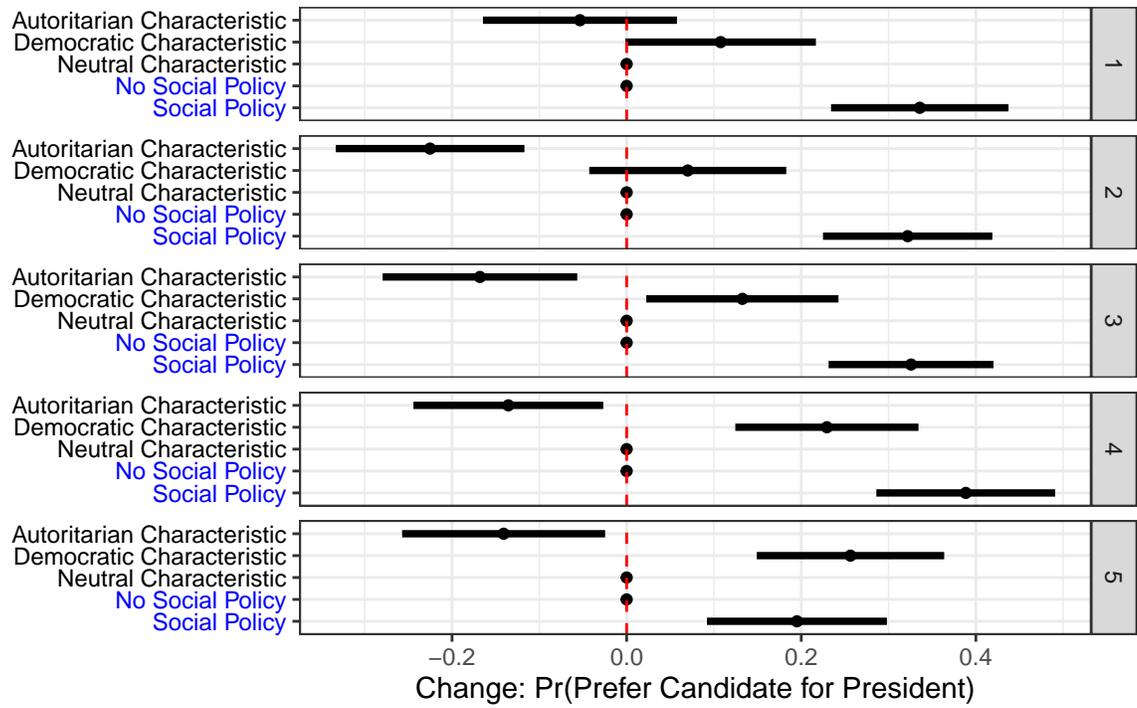


FIGURE C.3: Effects of judicial position and social policy on candidate selection in each round (Control Group)

C.5.2 *Extra results from the survey experiment*

Table C.13: The determinants of gridlock concerns

	Judiciary			Legislature			Media		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
AKP voters	0.201*** (0.046)	0.194*** (0.048)	0.137** (0.061)	0.287*** (0.045)	0.299*** (0.047)	0.267*** (0.060)	0.239*** (0.046)	0.236*** (0.048)	0.159*** (0.061)
Education level		-0.013 (0.019)	0.005 (0.025)		0.011 (0.019)	-0.005 (0.025)		-0.004 (0.019)	-0.000 (0.025)
Age		-0.001 (0.002)	-0.002 (0.002)		0.001 (0.002)	-0.001 (0.002)		-0.002 (0.002)	-0.003 (0.002)
Kurdish		-0.036 (0.065)	-0.062 (0.076)		-0.041 (0.064)	-0.059 (0.074)		-0.008 (0.065)	-0.031 (0.076)
Student		-0.026 (0.089)	0.021 (0.105)		0.037 (0.088)	0.021 (0.102)		0.084 (0.089)	0.082 (0.104)
Housewife		-0.008 (0.061)	0.024 (0.070)		-0.035 (0.060)	-0.040 (0.069)		0.018 (0.061)	0.032 (0.070)
Religiosity			0.021 (0.015)			0.018 (0.014)			0.026* (0.015)
Income			-0.012 (0.010)			0.008 (0.010)			-0.003 (0.010)
Enumerator FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Num.Obs.	443	442	338	443	442	338	443	442	338
R2	0.104	0.105	0.112	0.175	0.177	0.178	0.136	0.141	0.147
R2 Adj.	0.070	0.061	0.047	0.144	0.136	0.118	0.103	0.098	0.084

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Table C.14: The effect of candidate characteristics on candidate selection and democracy rating

	Selection	Democracy Rating
Authoritarian Characteristic	-0.148*** (0.026)	-1.043*** (0.148)
Democratic Characteristic	0.156*** (0.026)	0.588*** (0.128)
Free meal	0.182*** (0.032)	0.656*** (0.174)
Science lab	0.373*** (0.030)	1.166*** (0.187)
Attending physicians	0.337*** (0.031)	1.142*** (0.173)
Social security coverage	0.321*** (0.032)	1.202*** (0.171)
Version (Treatment=1)	0.007 (0.035)	0.088 (0.266)
Authoritarian Characteristic x (Treatment=1)	0.096** (0.038)	0.439** (0.219)
Democratic Characteristic x (Treatment=1)	0.084** (0.037)	0.345* (0.202)
Free meal x (Treatment=1)	-0.079* (0.044)	-0.347 (0.250)
Science lab x (Treatment=1)	-0.098** (0.044)	-0.396 (0.263)
Attending physicians x (Treatment=1)	-0.072 (0.044)	-0.210 (0.256)
Social security coverage x (Treatment=1)	-0.056 (0.045)	-0.720*** (0.246)
Intercept	0.245*** (0.024)	5.103*** (0.174)
Num.Obs.	4642	4769
R2	0.124	0.076
R2 Adj.	0.122	0.073

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Standard errors are clustered at the individual level.

Table C.15: The effect of candidate characteristics on candidate (5-point likert scale)

	Support
Authoritarian Characteristic	-0.490*** (0.074)
Democratic Characteristic	0.323*** (0.063)
Social Policy	0.629*** (0.069)
Version (Treatment=1)	-0.012 (0.120)
Authoritarian Characteristic x (Treatment=1)	0.204* (0.107)
Democratic Characteristic x (Treatment=1)	0.233** (0.095)
Social Policy x (Treatment=1)	-0.160 (0.098)
Intercept	2.928*** (0.079)
Num.Obs.	4801
R2	0.093
R2 Adj.	0.092

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Standard errors are clustered at the individual level.

Table C.16: The effect of candidate characteristics on candidate selection (with co-variates)

	Selection
Authoritarian Characteristic	-0.148*** (0.029)
Democratic Characteristic	0.161*** (0.030)
Social Policy	0.306*** (0.025)
Version (Treatment=1)	0.012 (0.039)
Authoritarian Characteristic x (Treatment=1)	0.098** (0.042)
Democratic Characteristic x (Treatment=1)	0.087** (0.042)
Social Policy x (Treatment=1)	-0.087** (0.037)
Intercept	0.243*** (0.027)
Num.Obs.	3846
R2	0.110
R2 Adj.	0.108
Controls	Yes

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Standard errors are clustered at the individual level.

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Biography

Fatih Serkant Adiguzel is a Ph.D. candidate in the political science department at Duke University. He is also a predoctoral research fellow at Harvard Kennedy School's Middle East Initiative. He was born in İstanbul, Turkey, in 1990 and spent most of his life there. He holds a BA in Economics, a BA in Political Science & International Relations, and an MA in Economics, all from Boğaziçi University, İstanbul. He also obtained an MA in Political Science from Duke University. During his Ph.D. studies, he worked in Devlab@Duke as part of the Machine Learning for Peace project. His research has been published in journals such as the Journal of Politics, Journal of Political Institutions and Political Economy, and New Perspectives on Turkey. Starting Fall 2022, he will join Sabancı University, İstanbul as an assistant professor of political science, and will be a non-resident fellow at Harvard Kennedy School's Middle East Initiative.