

When Do Electoral Power Grabs Increase Support for Election Monitoring? Evidence from a Survey Experiment in Turkey

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Abstract

How do citizens respond when incumbents manipulate electoral rules before an election? I test this question with a survey experiment in Turkey that compares an institutional electoral intervention, an extra-institutional unilateral intervention, and a procedural reform framed around European Union harmonization. The results reveal a heterogeneous response rather than a general mobilization effect. Opposition supporters exposed to the extra-institutional intervention show greater support for election-monitoring resources than opposition supporters in the EU-framed control condition, while government supporters show no comparable increase. This pattern is concentrated in support for election-monitoring resources rather than broader participatory intentions. The findings suggest that electoral power grabs can increase opposition support for monitoring-oriented accountability, while leaving broader participation and the precise mechanism more uncertain.

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Introduction

How do citizens respond when elected incumbents manipulate electoral rules before an election? A large literature suggests that perceived electoral unfairness discourages participation by reducing trust in electoral integrity and making political action appear less effective (Birch 2010; Norris 2014; Martinez i Coma and Trinh 2017). Yet citizens do not respond uniformly to all pre-election power grabs. In some cases, opposition groups remain discouraged and inactive. In others, they become more willing to monitor elections, protest, or otherwise contest the incumbent’s actions (Cleary and Öztürk 2022; Svulik 2021; Haggard and Kaufman 2021). This variation raises a basic question: do citizens respond only to the presence of electoral manipulation, or also to how that manipulation is carried out?

Recent work also suggests that citizens do not respond uniformly to democratic transgressions even when those transgressions are visible (Krishnarajan 2023; Frederiksen 2024; Jacob 2025b; Wunsch, Jacob, and Derksen 2025; Yeung 2025). By contrast, earlier work on electoral unfairness has more often emphasized demobilization driven by reduced trust, lower perceived efficacy, and withdrawal from an electoral arena seen as unfair. This article complements both strands by focusing on whether different procedural forms of manipulation provoke different reactions.

I argue that the mode of manipulation matters. Citizens may distinguish between electoral changes pursued through ordinary institutional procedures and those pursued through extra-institutional, unilateral intervention. Even when both kinds of intervention advantage the incumbent, they may not send the same political signal. Changes enacted through ordinary channels may appear unfair but politically routine. By contrast, interventions pursued through extraordinary or unilateral means may appear less constrained and more clearly at odds with accepted procedure.

This distinction should matter most for opposition supporters. When incumbents rely on extra-institutional means, the same electoral advantage may appear more unilateral, less constrained, and more threatening than a comparable institutional reform. That difference may make opposition supporters more willing to support accountability-oriented action. In this sense, citizens may respond not only to whether an incumbent seeks electoral advantage, but also to how that advantage is presented and justified.

I test this argument with a survey experiment conducted in Turkey, where electoral competition has increasingly taken place under conditions of democratic backsliding and recurring concern over the fairness of electoral institutions (Esen and Gumuscu 2016; Esen and Gümüŝçü 2017; Öztürk 2020). Respondents were randomly assigned to one of three vignette conditions: an institutional electoral intervention, an extra-institutional electoral intervention, or a procedural control condition. The institutional treatment described an electoral change pursued through ordinary legislative approval. The extra-institutional treatment

described the same electoral advantage pursued through an extraordinary decree-law without parliamentary authorization. The control condition described a procedural reform framed in connection with European Union harmonization.

The main outcome captures support for election-monitoring resources. After exposure to the vignette, respondents allocated a hypothetical donation across several nongovernmental organizations, including an independent election-monitoring organization. The main finding is that opposition supporters exposed to extra-institutional manipulation allocate more of a hypothetical donation to an election-monitoring organization. By contrast, government supporters do not show a comparable response. Evidence for broader participation outcomes is weaker, and the exploratory analyses do not identify a single clear mechanism. The clearest result is therefore not a general mobilization effect across outcomes, but a more focused increase in accountability-oriented support among opposition supporters.

This article contributes to research on electoral manipulation and citizen response in two ways. First, it shows that pre-election manipulation should not be treated as politically uniform. Citizens may react not only to whether incumbents pursue electoral advantage, but also to how that advantage is enacted and justified. Second, it distinguishes support for election-monitoring resources from broader political mobilization. In the Turkish case, opposition supporters respond most clearly by prioritizing monitoring-oriented accountability, while broader participatory intentions remain weaker and less consistent. This distinction helps clarify why some electoral interventions may generate targeted accountability responses without producing a generalized participatory backlash.

The rest of the article proceeds as follows. The next section develops expectations about why extra-institutional manipulation should provoke a stronger response among opposition supporters than a more legitimating reform frame, while remaining cautious about sharper distinctions from institutional manipulation. I then describe the survey experiment and outcome measures. The empirical section presents the main treatment effects and partisan heterogeneity. A final section discusses exploratory evidence on possible pathways and the limits of the findings.

Theory and Expectations

Existing work often treats pre-election manipulation as demobilizing. When citizens come to see the electoral arena as unfair or rigged, they may lose confidence in the integrity of the process and become less willing to invest in costly forms of political action (Birch 2010; Norris 2014; Martinez i Coma and Trinh 2017; Frank and Coma 2017). If participation no longer seems likely to matter, withdrawal becomes an understandable response (Birch 2010; Kostadinova 2009; Stockemer, LaMontagne, and Scruggs 2013; Sundström and Stockemer 2015).

This expectation captures an important part of the story, but it does not exhaust it. Citizens do not necessarily respond in the same way to every attempt to tilt the electoral playing field. Some interventions may appear politically routine, while others may signal a more serious breach of accepted procedure (Gehlbach and Simpson 2015; Luo and Rozenas 2018).

This conditional view of democratic accountability has gained support in recent work. Citizens are more willing to tolerate democratic violations when co-partisans benefit, when desirable policy outcomes are at stake, or when they interpret democracy in less liberal terms (Frederiksen 2024; Krishnarajan 2023; Kaftan and Gessler 2025; Jacob 2025a; Aarslew 2026). These findings help explain why democratic accountability is often weaker than abstract commitments to democracy would suggest. The argument here adds that citizens may also react differently depending on whether electoral advantage is pursued through routine institutional procedures or through more visibly unilateral means.

The argument of this article begins from that distinction. Electoral manipulation can be pursued through ordinary institutional channels, such as legislation passed by a parliamentary majority or reforms justified within a recognizable legal framework. Citizens may still regard such measures as unfair, but they may also view them as part of ordinary political struggle carried out within familiar rules (Haggard and Kaufman 2021; Svolik 2018). Extra-institutional manipulation carries a different meaning. When incumbents rely on unilateral intervention or extraordinary authority, the same substantive electoral advantage may appear less constrained and more clearly at odds with accepted procedure. In that setting, the form of intervention itself may shape how citizens interpret the threat.

Recent experimental work suggests that unilateral action does not necessarily trigger a broad public backlash in the abstract (Goehring and Lowande 2025). The expectation here is narrower and more conditional. When unilateral action is used to pursue electorally advantageous rule change, it may carry different implications than unilateral policymaking in general. In that setting, citizens may interpret the mode of enactment not simply as procedural deviation, but as evidence of a less constrained and more threatening attempt to tilt the electoral playing field.

This response should be concentrated among opposition supporters. For these respondents, an incumbent-backed electoral change is not only a procedural event but also a direct threat to their side's ability to compete. A reform that increases the government's expected seat share may therefore raise the perceived value of monitoring the electoral process, especially when the intervention is presented as unilateral and weakly constrained. Government supporters face a different tradeoff. They may recognize that an extraordinary intervention is normatively troubling, but strengthening independent monitoring also means empowering constraints on their own side. The same institutional signal should therefore produce a stronger allocation response among opposition supporters than among government supporters (Przeworski, Rivero, and Xi 2015;

Gehlbach and Simpser 2015; Luo and Rozenas 2018).

Several pathways could underlie such a response. Extra-institutional intervention may appear less legitimate and therefore generate stronger grievance than a more routine institutional reform (Birch 2010; Norris 2014; Martinez i Coma and Trinh 2017). It may also provoke more aversive emotions, such as anger, disgust, or frustration, which can encourage action rather than withdrawal (Brader and Marcus 2013; S. Erdem Aytac, Rau, and Stokes, n.d.; S. Erdem Aytac and Stokes 2019; Leach, Iyer, and Pedersen 2006; Pagano and Huo 2007). Finally, it may convey information about the incumbent's weakness or about a greater willingness to manipulate the electoral process further. Citizens may infer that an incumbent relying on extra-institutional means either lacks the support needed to secure advantage through ordinary procedures or is prepared to erode the electoral playing field even further (Gehlbach and Simpser 2015; Luo and Rozenas 2018; Przeworski, Rivero, and Xi 2015).

This perspective also connects to a broader logic of bundling and justificatory cover. Citizens may be less reactive when electorally consequential change is embedded in a broader, normatively attractive frame rather than presented as a direct power grab (Mortenson and Nisbet 2025; Kaftan and Gessler 2025). The EU-harmonization condition in the present study does not identify bundling in a pure sense, but it suggests that legitimating frames can dampen reactions to substantively similar institutional change.

The purpose of this article, however, is not to adjudicate definitively among these pathways. The core claim is broader and more interpretive: extra-institutional enactment may make electoral intervention appear less constrained and more politically threatening to opposition supporters. In empirical terms, this implies that extra-institutional manipulation should increase opposition support for election monitoring relative to the EU-framed control, while the sharper distinction from institutional manipulation is more demanding to detect. More broadly, the argument fits with work showing that citizens do not react uniformly to all forms of democratic erosion and that opposition responses depend in part on how institutional violations are perceived (Cleary and Öztürk 2022; Svulik 2021; Haggard and Kaufman 2021).

I also expect the response to vary by partisanship. Opposition supporters are more likely to interpret incumbent intervention as threatening or illegitimate, whereas government supporters may be less inclined to sanction a co-partisan leader for using aggressive means to secure electoral advantage. This asymmetry is consistent with research on the winner-loser gap, partisan bias in evaluations of democratic procedures, ideological polarization, and majoritarian attitudes (Cantú and García-Ponce 2015; Mochtak, Lesschaeve, and Glaurdić 2021; Svulik 2018, 2021; Grossman et al. 2022). Government supporters may still view unusually aggressive procedures negatively, but that does not necessarily imply support for accountability-oriented action against their own side. In particular, respondents may register normatively troubling conduct without concluding that an independent election-monitoring organization should be strengthened in response.

I therefore evaluate the following expectations:

Expectation 1: Extra-institutional electoral manipulation increases support for election-monitoring resources relative to the procedural control condition.

Expectation 2: The effect of extra-institutional electoral manipulation is stronger among opposition supporters than among government supporters.

A secondary comparison assesses whether extra-institutional manipulation produces a stronger response than institutional manipulation. I treat this comparison more cautiously because both treatments describe an electoral change that benefits the incumbent, and the empirical distinction between them may therefore be harder to detect than the contrast with the procedural baseline. A broader conceptual discussion of how this stylized contrast relates to wider typologies of electoral manipulation appears in Online Appendix A.

Research Design

Case, Recruitment, and Assignment

Turkey provides a useful setting for this study because electoral competition has increasingly taken place under conditions of democratic backsliding, repeated controversy over electoral fairness, and growing concern over executive efforts to reshape the institutional environment of elections (Esen and Gumuscu 2016; Esen and Gümüşçü 2017; Öztürk 2020; Haggard and Kaufman 2021). Turkey is also a demanding and substantively relevant setting for this design because extraordinary decree-law rule was not an abstract possibility for respondents. Following the 2016 coup attempt, emergency rule and decree-laws became central features of Turkish political conflict, and debates over electoral fairness remained salient before the 2023 election. The extra-institutional vignette therefore evokes a recognizable political repertoire rather than a purely hypothetical institutional device. This is a strength for external relevance, but it also limits interpretation: the treatment may capture reactions to a familiar recent mode of executive intervention as much as reactions to procedural form in the abstract. These features make Turkey an appropriate case for examining how citizens respond to different modes of pre-election manipulation. Additional discussion of case selection and context appears in Online Appendix B.

Participants were recruited through Meta advertisements shown on Facebook and Instagram across Turkey between August 24 and August 30, 2022. Following recent work on online political recruitment, I used advertisement campaigns designed to recruit adult respondents into a Qualtrics survey (Neundorf and Öztürk 2021). To reduce the risk of politically motivated self-selection tied to foreign sponsorship, the advertisements

did not foreground my home university. Instead, respondents were recruited through a locally branded research account and invited to complete a survey in exchange for entry into a raffle for digital discount coupons. Additional details on recruitment implementation and advertisement materials appear in Online Appendix B.

Meta advertisements reached 78,500 users, and 1,151 respondents completed the survey. After removing duplicate entries, incomplete submissions, and responses in the top and bottom 1% of the survey-duration distribution, the final analytic sample includes 1,099 participants. Additional details on sample construction, balance, implementation checks, and comparison to population benchmarks appear in Online Appendix D.

After consenting to participate, respondents completed a short pre-treatment questionnaire that measured basic demographics and political characteristics. They were then randomly assigned to one of three vignette conditions: an institutional electoral intervention, an extra-institutional electoral intervention, or a procedural control condition. After reading the assigned vignette, respondents answered post-treatment questions on perceptions, emotions, and political behavior. The study was approved by the [REDACTED], and the design was preregistered before fielding. Preregistration details, deviations, and ethics information appear in Online Appendix H.

Treatment Design

The experiment varies the mode through which the incumbent seeks electoral advantage while holding the substantive electoral consequence constant. In all three conditions, respondents read a short hypothetical news article describing a proposed change in electoral districts that would benefit the government by increasing its expected parliamentary seat share. The treatments differ in how that change is enacted and justified.

In the **institutional** condition, the government seeks to implement the electoral change through an ordinary legislative proposal that would require parliamentary approval. This condition captures an electorally advantageous reform pursued through a more routine and legitimate-seeming institutional procedure. In the **extra-institutional** condition, the government seeks to implement the same electoral advantage through an extraordinary decree-law that would allow unilateral action without parliamentary authorization. This condition captures a more unilateral, less constrained, and less legitimate-seeming mode of intervention. In the **control** condition, respondents read about an electoral change framed as part of a broader European Union harmonization process. This condition presents the reform in a more externally justified, more exogenous-seeming, and less overtly power-seeking frame while keeping the subject of electoral reform constant.

This design therefore compares alternative presentations of electorally consequential institutional change

rather than a political treatment against a neutral placebo. The institutional and extra-institutional conditions both describe executive attempts to secure electoral advantage, but they differ in whether that advantage is pursued through ordinary legislative approval or through unilateral extraordinary authority. The control condition, by contrast, presents a comparable reform in a more legitimating frame. The main comparison should therefore be interpreted as a contrast between alternative modes of electoral intervention rather than as a pure test of unilateral procedure alone.

More specifically, the extra-institutional treatment should be understood as a bundled procedural cue combining unilateralism, extraordinariness, and weaker institutional constraint rather than as a purified manipulation of any single attribute. This bundled cue may also be interpreted in more than one way. In some settings, going around parliament could signal executive overreach, but it could also reflect anticipated legislative resistance or deadlock. The design therefore identifies how respondents react to this broader procedural signal rather than to a single purified informational content.

The design also does not fully separate procedural form from justificatory framing. Instead, it isolates a substantively important contrast between a more routinized institutional power grab, a more exceptional extra-institutional power grab, and a more externally justified frame for comparable electoral change. This choice was deliberate. The vignettes were designed to reflect politically plausible institutional scripts rather than unrealistic or strategically impossible scenarios. A broader conceptual discussion of how this stylized contrast relates to wider typologies of electoral manipulation appears in Online Appendix A.

Outcome Measurement

The main outcome captures support for election-monitoring resources. After the vignette, respondents were asked to allocate a hypothetical donation of 500 Turkish Lira across four nongovernmental organizations: organizations working against violence against women, organizations protecting stray animals, organizations fighting poverty, and an independent election-monitoring organization. The amount allocated to the election-monitoring organization serves as the principal dependent variable.

This measure should be interpreted as a structured stated allocation, not as observed political behavior. Its advantage is that it asks respondents to make a constrained allocation across competing social causes rather than simply report agreement with a political statement or intention to participate. This makes it useful for studying whether electoral interventions shift relative support toward monitoring-oriented accountability. At the same time, the task is hypothetical and not incentive-compatible, so it cannot establish that respondents would donate, volunteer, protest, or otherwise act in the field.

The fixed-sum structure also shapes interpretation. Because respondents allocated a constant total

amount across four organizations, an increase in election-monitoring support necessarily implies a relative decrease elsewhere. The estimand is therefore best understood as a shift in the priority assigned to election monitoring within a constrained allocation task. This pattern is consistent with increased support for accountability-oriented monitoring, but it could also reflect the heightened salience of a politically relevant organization relative to less directly political alternatives. I therefore interpret the outcome narrowly as support for election-monitoring resources, not as broad political mobilization.

I also examine self-reported behavioral intentions and post-treatment attitudinal measures as secondary outcomes. These include willingness to protest, vote differently, volunteer at the polls, and other forms of political engagement, as well as post-treatment perceptions and emotions. These outcomes assess whether the allocation pattern generalizes beyond election-monitoring support. They play a secondary role because the article's main empirical claim concerns the prioritization of monitoring resources, not a broad increase in political participation. Exact question wording and coding rules appear in Online Appendix E, and the full survey instrument is reproduced in Online Appendix J.

Empirical Strategy

The design supports two related but distinct comparisons. The first is a broad contrast between an extra-institutional electoral intervention and a procedural reform framed around European Union harmonization. This comparison captures whether a unilateral and electorally self-serving intervention increases support for election monitoring relative to a more legitimating reform frame. The second is a sharper procedural comparison between extra-institutional and institutional manipulation, holding constant the incumbent's electoral advantage while varying the mode of enactment. This second comparison maps more directly onto the procedural-form argument, but it is also more demanding because both treatment arms describe an incumbent effort to secure the same electoral benefit. I therefore report both comparisons throughout. The article's strongest evidence comes from the broad extra-institutional-versus-control contrast, while the sharper extra-institutional-versus-institutional contrast is interpreted more cautiously. Additional estimation details, alternative specifications, and robustness checks appear in Online Appendix F, while detectable-effects calculations appear in Online Appendix I.

Results

Main Outcome: Support for Election-Monitoring Resources

The main outcome is the amount respondents allocated to the independent election-monitoring organization. This measure captures the priority respondents assign to election-monitoring resources within a constrained hypothetical allocation task. The central question is whether extra-institutional manipulation increases the relative priority assigned to election-monitoring resources compared with the EU-framed control condition.

The paper’s central empirical result is straightforward: opposition supporters exposed to extra-institutional manipulation allocate more to the election-monitoring organization than comparable respondents in the procedural control condition. In the pooled interaction specification, this increase is concentrated among opposition supporters rather than government supporters. Figure 1 shows this pattern visually, and Table 1 reports the corresponding estimates.

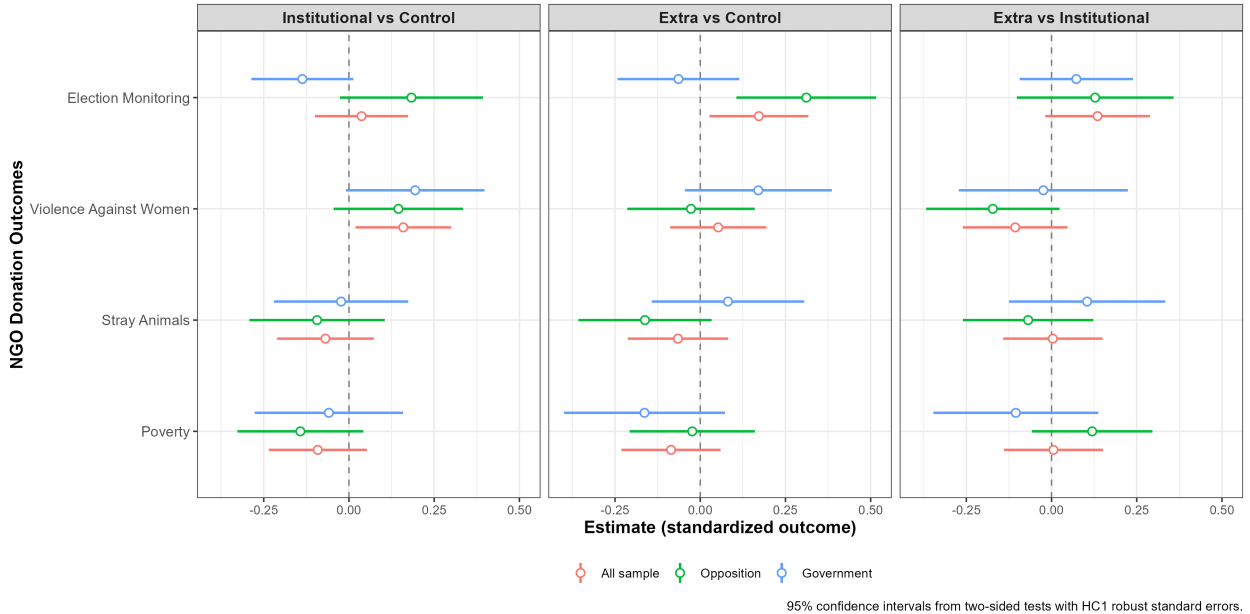


Figure 1: Treatment effects on donations to four nongovernmental organizations by partisan subgroup. Outcomes are standardized; estimates are OLS coefficients with 95% confidence intervals from HC1 robust standard errors.

The sharper procedural comparison is weaker. Opposition supporters in the extra-institutional condition allocate more to election monitoring than those in the institutional condition, but the estimate is imprecise and the randomization-inference result does not support a strong distinction between the two treatment arms. This limits the article’s ability to claim that procedural form alone explains the result. The evidence is more decisive for the broader contrast between an extra-institutional power grab and a legitimating reform

frame than for the narrower claim that extra-institutional procedure independently outperforms institutional manipulation.

The pattern is also outcome-specific. The clearest shift appears for donations to the election-monitoring organization, whereas the other donation categories do not display a similarly consistent pattern. Because respondents allocated a fixed total amount across the four organizations, however, the non-monitoring donation outcomes are mechanically linked to the main outcome. They should therefore be interpreted as compositional counterparts to the election-monitoring allocation rather than as fully independent allocation outcomes. Although donations to organizations working against violence against women show some movement in a few specifications, those shifts are not consistent across treatments or partisan subgroups and are especially difficult to interpret independently given the fixed-sum nature of the allocation task. The full set of donation-outcome estimates appears in Online Appendix F3.

As a further robustness check, I recode the outcome as a binary indicator for whether respondents allocated any positive amount to the election-monitoring organization. The same qualitative pattern appears in this specification: opposition supporters exposed to extra-institutional manipulation are more likely to donate at all, while government supporters do not show a comparable increase. The binary specification therefore reinforces the main interpretation of the donation results.

Taken together, the donation evidence supports the paper’s main expectation in a qualified form. Extra-institutional manipulation increases the relative priority assigned to election-monitoring resources compared with the EU-framed control, and this response is concentrated among opposition supporters. At the same time, the evidence is stronger for the comparison against the control condition than for the sharper claim that extra-institutional manipulation consistently produces a larger response than institutional manipulation.

Table 1: Unadjusted Pooled Interaction OLS Model for the Election-Monitoring Donation Outcome.

term_label	Election Monitoring
Constant	-0.036 (0.066)
Extra-institutional	0.311*** (0.105)
Institutional	0.183* (0.107)
Government supporter	-0.079 (0.088)
Institutional x Government	-0.320** (0.132)
Extra-institutional x Government	-0.375*** (0.139)
N	1,099
R-squared	0.035

Notes: Entries are OLS coefficients with HC1 robust standard errors in parentheses. The outcome is the amount allocated to the independent election-monitoring organization, standardized using the full-sample distribution. The omitted treatment category

is the procedural (EU-framed) control condition; the omitted partisan category is opposition supporters. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Secondary Outcomes

I also examine a battery of self-reported political behavior outcomes, including protest participation, protest voting, vote switching, political contact, costly voting, and volunteering as an election observer. These outcomes are useful for assessing whether the treatment pattern generalizes beyond the donation measure, but the evidence is weaker and less consistent than for the main outcome.

Overall, the self-reported measures do not reveal a clear or uniform increase in political participation under extra-institutional manipulation. Most estimates are imprecise, and the broader pattern is mixed across outcomes, including the protest-related items. For that reason, I treat the self-reported participation measures as secondary evidence rather than as an independent basis for the article’s main claim. A coefficient plot and full regression tables for the self-reported participation outcomes appear in Online Appendix F2 and Appendix F3.

These null and mixed results are substantively informative. They suggest that the treatment did not produce a generalized participatory response across the wider outcome battery. Instead, the response appears concentrated in the relative prioritization of election-monitoring resources. This distinction matters because support for election monitoring is narrower than protest, vote switching, contacting politicians, costly voting, or volunteering as an observer.

Combined with the salience-based interpretation of the donation result discussed above, the most defensible reading is that extra-institutional intervention shifts opposition supporters’ stated priority toward election-monitoring resources, without evidence of a corresponding shift in self-reported willingness to engage in costly political action.

Robustness

The main donation result is robust to several alternative specifications. First, the same qualitative pattern appears when the outcome is recoded as a binary indicator for whether respondents allocated any positive amount to the election-monitoring organization. Second, adding pretreatment covariates does not materially alter the main result. Third, randomization inference yields the same substantive conclusion: the strongest evidence continues to concern the extra-institutional versus control contrast, especially among opposition supporters. Finally, the principal donation result remains stable across alternative duration-trimming and outlier rules. Taken together, these checks suggest that the article’s main conclusion does not depend on a

particular coding decision or estimation choice. Full robustness results appear in Online Appendix F, including the randomization-inference analyses in Appendix F4, the covariate-adjusted comparison in Appendix F5, the alternative-outcome specifications in Appendix F6, the partisan-coding robustness check in Appendix F7, and the duration-robustness analyses in Appendix F8.

Exploratory Pathways

Why does extra-institutional manipulation increase the priority opposition supporters assign to election-monitoring resources? The post-treatment measures provide only limited leverage on that question, so I treat them as exploratory rather than definitive tests of mechanism. This limitation is not that these measures are post-treatment. Rather, because they are themselves affected by treatment and are not experimentally manipulated, they cannot by themselves identify a causal mediation pathway without stronger assumptions than the article is designed to support.

One possibility is that extra-institutional intervention appears less legitimate than a more routine institutional intervention or the procedural control condition (Birch 2010; Norris 2014). The policy-evaluation measures offer only partial support for that interpretation. Relative to the control condition, both treatment conditions tend to reduce policy approval and perceived democratic consistency, but these measures do not cleanly distinguish extra-institutional from institutional intervention among opposition supporters. At the same time, some government supporters also evaluate the extra-institutional intervention negatively, especially relative to the procedural control, yet they do not show a comparable increase in election-monitoring allocation. This divergence is substantively useful. It suggests that perceiving a reform as less legitimate is not by itself sufficient to shift allocation toward election monitoring. The legitimacy-based interpretation therefore remains plausible, but the evidence is not sharp enough to identify it as the main pathway. Figure 2 is included as descriptive support for this exploratory discussion rather than as a co-equal test of the article's main claim.

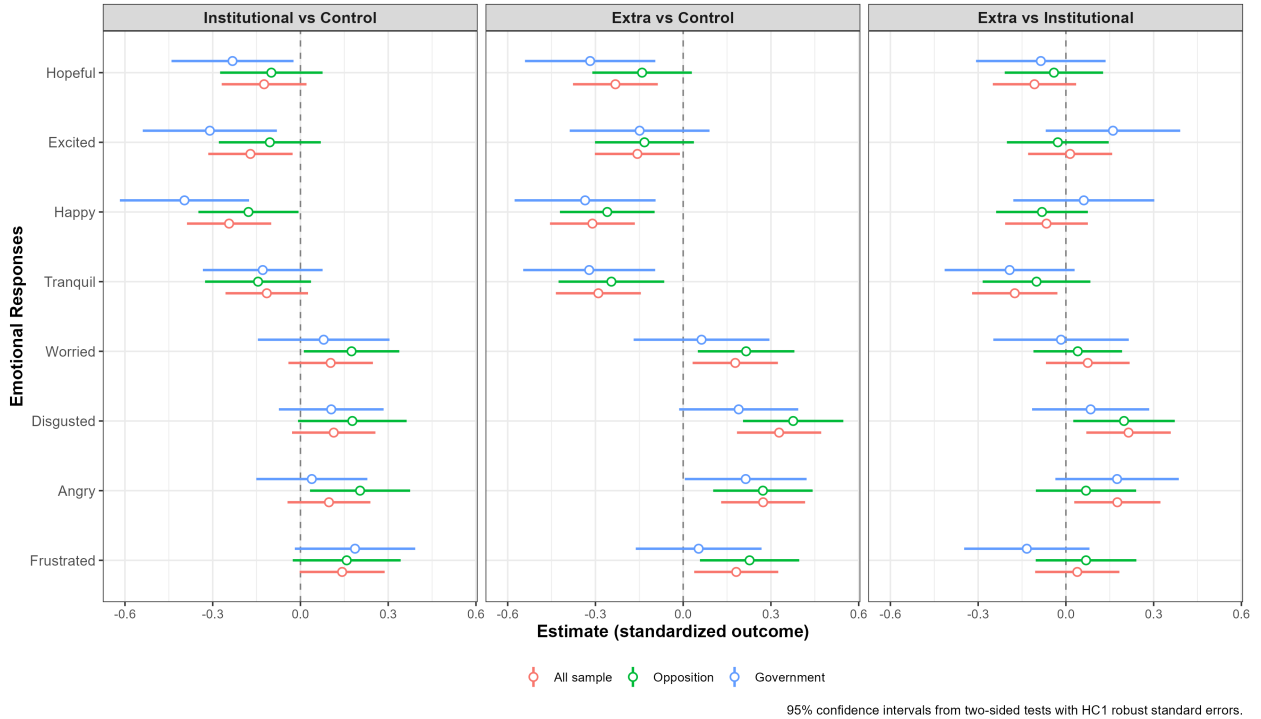


Figure 2: Exploratory emotional-response patterns.

The emotional measures are somewhat more suggestive. Extra-institutional intervention is associated with stronger negative reactions, especially disgust, frustration, and worry, alongside lower positive affect. This pattern is most visible among opposition supporters, which is consistent with the possibility that extra-institutional intervention is experienced as more threatening or normatively troubling than a more routine institutional reform. The government-supporter pattern is also informative. Some government supporters evaluate the extra-institutional intervention negatively and report more negative affect, but these reactions do not translate into greater support for election monitoring. This suggests that negative evaluations of a democratic violation are not sufficient for accountability-oriented response when the incumbent is politically aligned with the respondent. The result is consistent with partisan-accountability arguments in which citizens can recognize troubling conduct without supporting institutional constraints on their own side.

At the same time, these outcomes are measured after treatment exposure and do not by themselves identify a causal pathway. The most defensible conclusion is therefore a limited one: extra-institutional intervention appears to generate a distinct post-treatment emotional profile, but the present design cannot determine whether emotion, procedural concern, or inferred threat is the primary mechanism linking treatment to the main allocation result. Additional exploratory figures and compact regression summaries for the emotional and policy-evaluation outcomes appear in Online Appendix G1 through G3.

Conclusion

How citizens respond to electoral manipulation depends not only on whether incumbents seek electoral advantage, but also on how they do so. Using a survey experiment in Turkey, this article shows that extra-institutional electoral intervention increases opposition supporters' relative allocation to election-monitoring resources compared with an EU-framed control condition, while government supporters do not exhibit a comparable response. The clearest effect is therefore not a broad increase in all forms of political participation, but a narrower increase in accountability-oriented action among opposition-aligned respondents. The contribution of the article therefore lies in identifying a narrower accountability-oriented response rather than a broad participatory backlash.

This finding has two implications. First, it suggests that pre-election manipulation is not politically uniform. Citizens appear sensitive to how electoral intervention is presented and enacted, especially when a unilateral power grab is contrasted with a more legitimating reform frame. Second, it suggests that opposition reactions under democratic backsliding may be especially responsive when an electorally self-serving intervention is presented without a legitimating reform frame, while the present design cannot cleanly isolate responses to procedural form alone. More broadly, the findings suggest that democratic accountability depends not only on whether citizens observe a norm violation, but also on how that violation is framed, sequenced, and interpreted (Jacob 2025b; Yeung 2025; Aarslew 2026).

These conclusions should be interpreted with appropriate caution. The main outcome is a structured donation allocation rather than observed political behavior in the field, and the control condition provides a procedural baseline rather than a neutral placebo. The design is also more informative for the article's principal contrast than for smaller secondary subgroup comparisons, which remain comparatively imprecise. In addition, the analyses of legitimacy, emotion, and inferred threat remain exploratory. The policy-evaluation results also suggest that negative legitimacy judgments are not, by themselves, sufficient to shift allocation toward election monitoring, since some government supporters evaluate the extra-institutional intervention negatively without showing a comparable allocation response. Even with these limits, the results point to an important distinction: citizens do not simply react to electoral manipulation in the abstract. They also react to the political meaning attached to the form and justification of electoral intervention.

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