

A loyal base? Authoritarian support in times of crisis: Evidence from Turkey*

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Abstract

Does citizen support for the norms and principles of nondemocratic regimes help stabilize authoritarian rule? While a large literature recognizes that authoritarian regimes depend on popular support to lower the costs of staying in power, existing research mainly views mass support for nondemocratic regimes as instrumental, fuelled by performance. We know relatively little about the effects of normative support for authoritarian rule. Using novel experimental evidence from online surveys fielded in Turkey and observational data, we find high levels of normative support for the political system, translated into congruence between the views and values of individuals and those of the regime. Normative support is significantly more stable to an economic crisis treatment than instrumental support, especially among government voters. We also show that normative support for authoritarian rule mitigates the electoral consequences of poor economic performance. Findings, which revisit the importance of normative support for regime instability and resilience, have implications for research on mass opinion and defection cascades in electoral autocracies.

Keywords: Authoritarian regimes; public opinion; economic crises; survey experiments; Turkey.

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1 Introduction

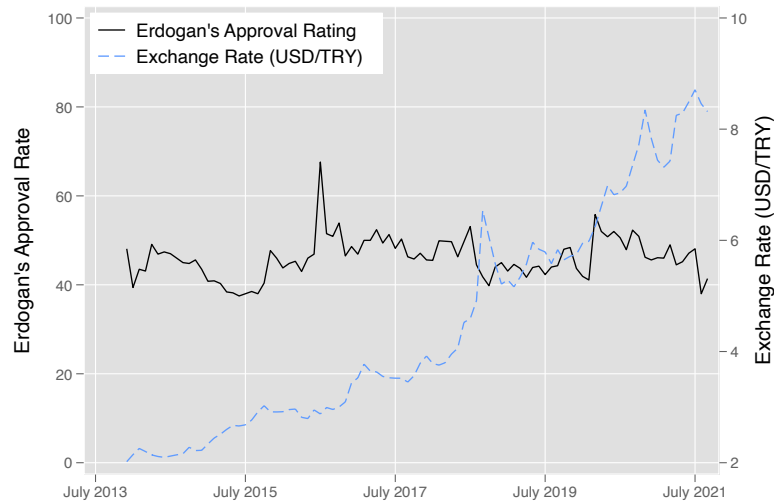
In recent years, it has become increasingly clear that - like for the democratic counterpart - popular support plays a critical role in authoritarian regimes as well. In particular, the modal type of contemporary authoritarianism, electoral autocracies, depend on such popular support to lower the costs of staying in power and win elections. Besides, popular support helps prevent elite defections and allows incumbents to signal legitimacy to audiences abroad (Magaloni 2006). Managing public opinion has hence become a key challenge confronting illiberal incumbents (Hale 2015) while declining popular support represents a key source of regime vulnerability and predictor of unrest.

Given the centrality of popular support, comparative authoritarianism faces a paradoxical situation. For decades, this line of research viewed citizen support for authoritarian rule as predominantly instrumental - fuelled by the provision of economic growth and public goods. This scholarship has generated the expectation that illiberal regimes should be sustained when the economy grows, and lose support when performance deteriorates. According to Geddes (1999), while economic growth enables illiberal incumbents to exchange patronage and public goods for loyalty and support, economic downturns make material resources difficult to mobilize.

However, case-based empirical evidence suggests that mass support for illiberal incumbents often remains resilient. The expectation that poor performance such as economic downturns should undermine mass support for incumbents under electoral autocracies has been repeatedly proven to be false. Citizens in autocracies have remained surprisingly loyal. For example, during a protracted period of economic contraction throughout 2014-16, Russia's Vladimir Putin made headlines for enjoying approval ratings as high as 89% - even as the value of the national currency collapsed. Turkey's Recep Erdogan has also continued to enjoy high approval, even as Turkey's growth declined and youth unemployment and inflation increased. Protracted economic decline coincided, paradoxically, with sustained support for the ruling regime, as shown in Figure 1. Despite dramatic declining valuation of the Turkish Lira to the US Dollar, which caused a severe economic crisis, the approval rating of Erdogan remained unchanged between 40-50%. This suggests that there is more to popular support in autocracies than instrumental forms. Rather, there seems to be a reservoir of normative convictions that illiberal incumbents can rely on and that makes these regimes more crisis-resilient than often assumed.

In this work, we ask whether normative support for authoritarian rule - citizens' acceptance of

Figure 1: Erdogan's approval and Turkish Lira exchange rate over time



Source: Metropoll Survey Company, Turkey's Pulse surveys. This figure relies on monthly survey data from Metropoll, one of Turkey's most reputable public opinion firms. Exchange rate data is monthly, and it is received from the Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey (TCMB).

the norms and values of the political system - can dampen the (electoral) consequences of poor performance in contemporary electoral autocracies. Electoral autocracies are regimes that combine authoritarian practice with multiparty-elections. With the costs of brutal force and coercion rising, contemporary authoritarians find it increasingly important to persuade the masses that they are competent and need support in order to lower the costs of staying in power and win elections (Guriev and Treisman 2020a). Indeed, failure to produce legitimacy based on performance, might well be fuelling contemporary authoritarians' incentives to produce legitimacy and mass support based on normative acceptance of regime norms, values, and principles.

Drawing on the distinction between instrumental and normative forms of support for the political system (Easton 1965a), we propose that studies of support for authoritarian rule as simply instrumental in nature, i.e. driven by performance alone, are perhaps narrow in scope. Our argument suggests that, like in democracies, normative support for authoritarian rule mitigates the electoral consequences of poor performance. We theoretically propose and empirically explore several inter-related mechanisms that could drive this effect. We explore whether normative support for the regime colours assessments of economic performance and whether it compromises the link between poor performance and attributions of responsibility.

We empirically test our theoretical propositions using novel experimental data from online sur-

veys of public opinion in Turkey. Turkey, an electoral autocracy, has in the last decade gained the characteristics of a personalist authoritarian regime and provides a helpful setting for testing our expectations (Cleary and Öztürk 2020; Yilmaz and Bashirov 2018). To tap into each concept of interest, we design and field new survey items well-tailored to the Turkish context. The ability to rely on new survey measures, well tailored to the local context, is a distinct advantage of our approach. We probe the external validity of experimental findings using a nationally representative survey of voting-age respondents conducted face-to-face in 2018. To preview the results, we find that authoritarian regimes may enjoy both normative and instrumental forms of support, largely concentrated among government voters. We also show that normative forms of support are especially impervious to poor economic performance, and that that higher levels of system support dampen the electoral consequences of poor performance.

Our work joins several classic studies in building on Easton's political system support framework (Dalton 1999; Norris 1999; Klingemann and Fuchs 1995), and, in line with Mauk (2020), extends that agenda to nondemocracies. We draw renewed attention to the importance of popular support for regime values and principles and highlight their importance in preventing voter defections from the dominant party (e.g. Hale and Colton 2017). While we are not the first to emphasize the importance of normative support for authoritarian rule, (Mauk 2020; Geddes and Zaller 1989), ours is one of the first studies to experimentally test whether normative support contributes to the resilience of contemporary nondemocratic regimes.¹ Findings have implications for our understanding of authoritarian stability and democratic transitions. Evidence that identification with the political community or regime norms and principles helps prevent voter defections in the context of poor performance suggests another avenue that could hinder electoral punishment in authoritarian settings (Rosenfeld 2020; Beazer and Reuter 2019).

For research on democratic transitions, our results imply that the congruence between the views and principles of citizens and those that the old autocratic regime embodied may survive longer after the fall of the ancient regime. (Carter et al. 2016; Neundorf et al. 2020; Pop-Eleches and Tucker 2017). Indeed, as Mauk (2020: 34) reminds us, as long as citizens in electoral autocracies remain committed to political values and norms in line with the authoritarian regime, the likelihood of a successful transition toward democracy is compromised.

¹ Existing research on the resilience of different forms of support in democracies and nondemocratic regimes has relied mainly on observational data (Dalton 1999; Norris 2011; Mauk 2020)

Finally, for empirical research on political support in authoritarian settings, our work underlines the importance of relying on survey indicators that better capture the principles, norms, and structures of contemporary electoral autocracies. Influential research that seeks to compare political system support across regime types using observational data is often limited by the fact that comparative survey data have been primarily designed to study political system support in established democracies (Booth et al. 2009). Survey items sensitive to the idiosyncrasies of individual political systems and to the local understanding of key terms may arguably offer a more rounded and nuanced picture of political system support (Hale 2011).

2 Instrumental and Normative Support for Authoritarian Rule

Authoritarian politics scholarship agrees that managing public opinion is a key challenge confronting electoral authoritarian regimes (Hale 2015) and shows that several authoritarian regimes are genuinely popular with citizens (Guriev and Treisman 2020a). Novel survey techniques, including item count methods, have enabled scholars to show that the popularity of authoritarian incumbents does indeed reflect public opinion. In a series of experiments that took place in Russia in 2015, for example, Tim Frye and his co-authors documented that Putin’s approval accurately reflects the views of ordinary Russians (Frye et al. 2017). Elsewhere, Shen and Truex (2020) have shown that in many authoritarian systems, especially those with electoral competition for the executive, citizens display similar rates of non-response in regime assessment questions as their counterparts do in democracies.

Yet, for decades, political science research has understood support for authoritarian rule as instrumental (Magaloni 2006). Instrumental support hinges on a quid-pro-quo relationship in which the citizens support the political system as long as it delivers. According to Dalton (1999), instrumental support “involves a judgment about the performance, or appropriateness of an object”. While incumbents are able to remain securely in power when they deliver, their tenure is challenged when performance deteriorates. This line of research generates the expectation that when the system fails to deliver, or when its ability to meet citizen demands wavers, citizens withdraw support.

We know comparatively less about the origins and consequences of normative support for authoritarian rule. Also referred to as “affective” (Dalton 1999), normative support for the political system represents adherence to a particular set of values that the political system embodies. Affective beliefs stem from one’s identification with the various objects that constitute the political system as

whole - the community, the regime, and the authorities, as well as congruence between individuals' privately held beliefs and those of the political system. Normative support, which aligns with what the system stands for and refers to normative congruence, is more resilient to short-term fluctuations in performance. For example, patriotic feelings of attachment to the wider political community can help counteract the negative effects of poor performance and bolster loyalty to the dominant party (Koesel et al. 2020). Democratic orientations of citizens help facilitate democratization by encouraging citizen compliance even with difficult policy decisions (Norris 2011: Ch. 11). Also strong partisan attachments mitigate economic voting (Gerber and Huber 2010).

Normative supporters, those whose views and attitudes are congruent with the norms of the regime, display a sense of loyalty and commitment to the system that can resist setbacks. As Easton (1965b) reminds us, resilient normative support may function as a bulwark against short-term fluctuations in performance. Normative support, according to Easton, represents a "reservoir of favorable attitudes or good will that helps members accept or tolerate outputs to which they are opposed" (Easton 1965b: 273).

Arguably, the norms and principles of electoral authoritarian regimes, which blend democratic and authoritarian practices, are difficult to theoretically identify and empirically conceptualize. While electoral authoritarian regimes claim legitimacy from holding elections and declaring themselves democratic, they violate core principles of liberal democracy. For example, the key principles of tolerance of dissent and politics as deliberation that define pluralist liberal democracy (Crick 2002, 2005) are sacrificed in favor of other goals such as law and order or economic growth, which are deemed best achieved through majority rule and a strong, unconstrained leader. Although today's electoral authoritarian regimes are varied in their character, one of their key characteristics and core principles is the regime's ability to exercise powers beyond any constitutional constraints (Svolik 2019).

For authoritarian regimes, this relates often to an undisputed political leader, often of charismatic colour, who has a sense of a national mission, as well as other variants of strongman rule. Skepticism towards the powers of pluralist national parliaments and pluralistic deliberation more generally is another common characteristic of electoral autocracies. The understanding of regime principles and the structures that flow from them can take on varied forms. Russians for example are best understood as perhaps 'delegative democrats' rather than 'authoritarians' in the sense they support a system that

protects individual rights and freedoms but has a strong, popularly elected leader who can deliver growth and stability (Hale 2011).

Of course extensive research on public opinion in electoral authoritarian regimes shows evidence of instrumental forms of support such as approval with economic performance and leadership (Treisman 2014a) and more generally confidence in regime institutions (Mauk 2020). The more limited research on popular support for various understandings of democracy that do not conform to standard conceptualisation of liberal democracy (Fuchs 2007; Schedler and Sarsfield 2007; Booth et al. 2009; Hale 2011; Carlin and Singer 2011; Shin 2021) as well as support for specifically authoritarian forms of rule (Mauk 2020; Rose and Mishler 1996)² also suggests the potential for normative support for authoritarian systems. These expectations form the starting point of our work. We build on them to formulate theoretical expectations regarding the relationship between normative support and voter loyalty in the context of poor performance.

2.1 Political Support Resilience and Voter Defections

We start from the assumption that political support is distributed heterogeneously among voter groups in autocracies. We introduce a broad distinction between government and non-government voters and set forth that government voters should have higher shares of both normative and instrumental support for the authoritarian regime than non-governmental voters. Based on this distinction, we are interested if the different forms of political support, the normative and the instrumental one, prevent pro-government voters from defecting when performance is poor? In other words, does political support inspire voter loyalty among pro-government voters to such an extent that it dampens the probability to defect from the dominant party in times of crisis? And if yes, what are the potential mechanisms behind it?

In a first step, we compare the extent to which instrumental and normative forms of support respond in general to deteriorating policy outputs. Easton (1975: p444) explicitly notes that the different forms of support do not move together in response to discontent generated by poor performance. The genesis of the different forms of support, normative and instrumental, differs: normative support arises out of childhood and adult socialization, or out of experience over a very long period of time.

² Although these areas of research are growing, there is yet limited effort to match the indicators of support for specific forms of authoritarian rule or types of limited democracy to the actual regime in place at a given time. In this sense the level of convergence between citizen demands and what the regime offers is not captured.

Attachments to various elements of the political system the national community, namely a sense of national identity, commitments to certain political values, as well as partisan identities are largely shaped through parental influences as well as early life socialization processes like education and formative events.³ Instrumental support, on the other hand, is fundamentally evaluative, tied to real-time fluctuations in performance. As a result, existing research generates the expectation that instrumental support is more responsive to policy outputs than normative support. Yet, no tests exist that explore the comparative resilience of normative and instrumental forms of support in nondemocratic regimes. Building on [Easton \(1975: p444\)](#), we formulate this expectation as follows:

Hypothesis 1 (H1) - Resilience of forms of support: Instrumental forms of support are more responsive to policy outputs than normative forms of support.

We now arrive at what lies at the heart of Easton's theory and debates regarding the 'crisis of democracy debates' in the 1960s and 1970s: the puzzle of how political systems can survive periods of poor performance. These debates were informed by the understanding that political systems cannot meet all popular demands and that they will experience performance shocks hindering their ability to deliver from time to time. [Easton \(1965a\)](#) proposes that normative forms of support, especially for higher order objects, act as a reservoir of support and help mitigate the negative effects of poor policy performance. Building on this discussion, in our work we ask whether in electoral autocracies, normative support in general might prevent ruling party voters from defecting when performance is poor. The extensive economic voting literature in democracies shows that when performance is poor, electoral support for incumbents may be compromised ([Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2007](#)). Economic conditions affect incumbent and dominant party support under electoral authoritarianism as well (e.g. [Rosenfeld 2020](#); [Beazer and Reuter 2019](#); [Treisman 2011](#)).

³ According to [Easton \(1975\)](#), support for higher order objects (such as the regime or community) is more resilient to policy outputs than support for lower objects (such as political authorities). Such an upward process of "experience generalization" is most clearly shown in Fuchs' simplified version of Easton's theory ([Fuchs 2007](#); [Fuchs and Klingemann 2011](#)): direct experiences of day-to-day policy outputs colour evaluations of the authorities' performance which in turn, *in the long run*, (our emphasis) affect support for the institutional structures of the regime. As such, we could anticipate support for lower order objects to be more responsive to policy outputs than higher order objects. Yet it is also possible that these distinctions do not occur in authoritarian system, due to the 'blending' of different objects. When incumbents become synonymous with the regime, and indeed the nation, their policy failures could affect support for all other objects. For these reasons, we follow [Dalton \(1999\)](#) and we create measures of normative and instrumental support for all levels of political objects and use these throughout the analysis. We explore the resilience of support for distinct objects in the Appendix, but we find no evidence variation in resilience.

As such, while we expect poor performance to dampen electoral support for the dominant party, we also anticipate that this effect could be conditional on prior levels of system support. Voters with high levels of support for the political system may be less likely to defect from the dominant party, and more likely to remain loyal to it. Indeed, as existing research reminds us, loyalty, a subset of support ([Gerschewski 2018](#)), becomes most obvious in times of crisis.⁴ As such, we expect that political system support might condition the effect of poor performance on voter defections. The higher dominant party voters' levels of system support, the lower the probability of them defecting. We articulate individual hypotheses for forms of support.

Hypothesis 2 (H2) - Direct effect of negative performance: Poor performance reduces electoral support for the dominant party.

Hypothesis 2a (H2a) - Performance effect conditional on forms of support (I): Instrumental and normative forms of support moderate the electoral consequences of poor performance.

In line with [Easton \(1965a\)](#), we also expect that normative support conditions the effect of poor performance more strongly than instrumental support does. As Fuchs argues in his simplified formulation of Easton's theory, 'an overflow of values,' namely a normative commitment to the principles, norms, and structures of a regime, can generate a positive downward flow of support for the authorities. Normative support trickles down to generative support for the authorities, counteracting the negative effects of poor performance ([Fuchs 2007](#); [Fuchs and Klingemann 2011](#)). We formulate this expectation as follows:

Hypothesis 2b (H2b) - Performance effect conditional on forms of support (II): Normative support moderates the electoral consequences of poor performance more strongly than instrumental support does.

Lastly, having claimed that voters with high system support will not defect from the ruling coalition under moments of economic crisis, we explore cognitive mechanisms behind this behavior. Our goal here is to better understand how voters with high system support understands and interprets economic

⁴ Already Hirschman has argued that loyalty – together with the more analyzed options of exit and voice – should be seen as the title indicates as a “response to a decline in firms, organizations, and states” ([Hirschman 1970](#))

problems. Our entry point is blame assignment: We argue that voters' ideas on which political actors are responsible for economic problems of the country have an important role in determining their responses to the economic crisis. We define two groups of political actors that can be blamed for economic problems: government (Erdogan and ministers) and non-government (external factors and Central Bank of Turkey). We first explore whether blame assignment really plays a key role in voter response to economic crisis:

Hypothesis 3a (H3a) - Mediating role of blame assignment: Blame assignment mediates the impact of poor economic performance on vote for the regime. Blame assigned to government (Erdogan or ministers), as a response to poor economic performance, decreases likelihood to vote for the regime

Hypothesis 3a tests the role of blame assignment as a mechanism regulating voter behavior. Building on this, we argue that reservoirs of normative support play an important role in determining who is to blame. Voters who have low levels of normative support put the blame for economic crises on political actors who rule the country, as we would expect. Voters whose values are congruent with those of the ruling regime, on the other hand, might choose to shift blame for poor performance away from the regime to external factors or institutions less tied to the regime such as the central bank.

Hypothesis (H3b) - Moderating role of system support on blame assignment: Levels of normative support moderate the attribution of responsibility for poor economic performance.

3 Research Design

3.1 Case Selection: Background to the Turkish Context

We test theoretical expectations using original public opinion data collected in Turkey. Turkey, currently classified as an electoral autocracy, combines authoritarian practices with multi-party elections. Despite a history of national elections going back to 1950, democratic institutions have failed to consolidate in the country. Frequent military interventions and tutelary bureaucratic institutions have limited the space for electoral competition, while liberal and political rights have been regularly violated by state actors. During the last decade, a personalist authoritarian political system has been institutionalized in the country, with power highly concentrated in hands of Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

It is estimated that personalist regimes, like Turkey, account for 40% of all electoral autocracies worldwide.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and the Justice and Development Party (AKP) founded by him, came to power through free and fair elections in 2002. During his first term in power, Erdogan benefited from the favorable international economic conditions of the early 2000s. Historically high growth rate and positive relations with neighbouring countries and international organisations, such as the EU, helped Erdogan boost his popularity. Having consolidated popular support, Erdogan gradually dismantled Turkey's fledgling democratic institutions and existing horizontal checks to the executive power. As already noted in the introduction, illiberal incumbents' ability to erode democracy with the support of the governed constitutes the most common source of democratic decline in the post Cold War period (Svolik 2019).

By the second half of 2010s, Erdogan brought the entire state apparatus, including the judiciary, under the control of the executive. Opposition party leaders, journalists, and civil society activists are often faced with arrests and imprisonment in Turkey, while the AKP government has nearly full control over the traditional media and civil society. While elections are still in place, they are neither free nor fair. Furthermore, even electoral victories do not guarantee political power for opposition parties. For example, 94 out of 102 mayors selected from the Kurdish opposition party, the HDP, were removed and replaced with state-appointed trustees between 2016 and 2018 (Whiting and Kaya 2021). When the secular opposition party, the CHP, won the office of mayor of Istanbul with a slim margin, the AKP did not accept the defeat and forced the judiciary to repeat the elections (Demiralp and Balta 2021; Svolik 2021).

Despite democratic erosion, Erdogan and his party continue to enjoy widespread popular and electoral support, reflected in opinion polls and at times of elections. The AKP received 47% of the national vote in the 2007 election and has since maintained a vote share of over 40%. Recep Tayyip Erdogan won the presidential election of 2014 and 2018 in the first round, each time receiving more than 50% of the national vote.

The recent economic downturn, which can be traced back to 2013 but has become especially painful since 2018, makes Turkey a suitable case for testing expectations about the impact of economic decline on autocratic system support. In sharp contrast with the economic growth rate of the early 2000s, Turkey's GDP per capita has constantly decreased since 2013. Youth unemploy-

ment and inflation have instead increased, while the Turkish lira's value fell from \$0.5 in October 2013 to \$0.12 in June 2021. Protracted economic decline coincided with democratic erosion and, paradoxically, sustained support for the ruling regime.

3.2 Data collection

To empirically test our expectations, we ran two original online surveys in Turkey. Data collection was conducted between May 9 and 24, 2021.⁵ Respondents to our surveys were recruited through paid Facebook advertisements, which invited Facebook users to participate in "a survey on current issues in Turkey." We used twelve different advertisements, varying on the use of material incentives, advertisement text, and advertisement image.⁶ Facebook users who clicked on the advertisements were directed to a survey page hosted on Qualtrics. Before taking the survey, respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, their rights, and the length of the survey (about 10 minutes). In total, we recruited 5,841 respondents through Facebook advertisements.⁷

Although our sample was formed through an online opt-in recruitment process, we used Facebook targeting tools and material incentives to increase the extent to which the sample is representative of the Turkish population. The distribution of respondents in the sample closely follows the population distribution with respect to geographic regions, age categories, the proportion of non-college voters, and voting behavior. However, females and non-high school respondents are underrepresented: 36% of our sample is female, compared to 50% of the population. 26% of the sample has education levels lower than high school while this amounts to 55% in the Turkish population. To correct these imbalances in our descriptive analyses, we created a post-stratification weight taking into account the distribution of the Turkish population according to cross-categories of sex, education, and geographical region based on 2020 official census data. Details of the original and weighted sample

⁵ We received ethical approval and submitted a pre-analysis plan for the study before data collection commenced. The pre-analysis plan was submitted on May 7, 2021 can be accessed here: <https://osf.io/kj8zh>. Divergences from the registration are discussed and reported in Appendix A14. The study received ethical approval (number: 400200111) from the Ethics Committee of the College of Social Sciences at the University of Glasgow on March 24, 2021.

⁶ More information on our Facebook recruitment strategy can be found in the Appendix A2.

⁷ 6,237 survey responses were recorded on our Qualtrics page, 373 of whom shared the same IP address with at least one previous survey response. We dropped these observations to ensure that each completed questionnaire comes from a different respondent. This left us with 5,841 unique Facebook users, who remained engaged in the survey long enough to take part in the experiments and who had responses on all key variables. 1,871 of these Facebook users were directed to Study 1 and 3,970 of them were directed to Study 2. The analysis relies on this subset of respondents. Power calculations are in Appendix A1.

characteristics are presented in Table A.1 in Appendix A3.

3.3 Measuring normative and instrumental support

The chief advantage of fielding our own survey is the opportunity to design and field detailed items tapping into all theoretical concepts of interest. To measure political support, we employed survey items commonly used to capture different types of support (e.g. policy evaluations) and newly designed questions that directly derive from the theoretical concepts introduced in earlier sections. This exercise allowed us to design items well tailored for capturing instrumental and normative support in Turkey for three objects - the community, the regime, and the authorities, which tap into different levels of abstractions of support. The full battery of survey items used, is listed in Appendix A4.⁸

To measure normative support, we combine ten survey items. Firstly, we rely on the standard item on national pride as well as a question that taps into the government's emphasis on a form of Turkish nationalism that primes the Ottoman past as well as Islam (Yavuz 2020). To capture normative support for the regime principles we also created new items that reflect the electoral authoritarian nature of the current Turkish regime along with characteristics of personalism and delegative democracy (Taş 2015; O'Donnell 1994). As such, we include the question asking about support for strongman rule, which is commonly used in other electoral authoritarian contexts such as Russia (Hale 2011). This item captures one of the defining characteristics of electoral authoritarianism which is a strong executive leader, or *caudillismo* (O'Donnell 1994). To further capture support for regime principles which in democratic contexts would include freedom, tolerance of minorities, and pluralism, we created indicators that tap into support for majoritarianism which only allows religious and nationalist parties to compete in elections (Karagiannis 2016) as well as limits on free media (Waldman and Caliskan 2017).

We further designed four items that capture the normative support for the AKP - the main ruling party - and Erdogan, as the powerful leader. The items were designed not to tap into any performance evaluation, but rather represent a more general commitment to the mission of the party and the leader.

⁸ In Table A.2 we further present the results of an explorative factor analysis of all items used to measure normative and instrumental support. The results show that the two dimensions of support are highly correlated and load on one key dimension. The overall correlation between the final two indices is 0.86. If we divide this into government and non-government voters, then $R=0.75$ (gov) and $R=0.69$ (non-gov). This is an interesting finding in itself and demonstrates some blending between normative and instrumental support for the regime. However, for theoretical and conceptual reasons, we treat the two dimensions as separate in the empirical analysis presented below.

For example, we asked whether respondents agree that “those who fight against the AKP in fact fight against the Turkish nation and state” or that “Recep Tayyip Erdogan is an inspiring political leader”.

In contrast, our six items that tap into instrumental support were aimed to capture a performance evaluation of various objects. Firstly, we asked a very general question whether “Turkey is a country that provides high quality life for its citizens”, which taps into the national community object. Further, we directly asked respondents to evaluate the success of Erdogan and the economic minister, as two key political figures, as well as evaluations in three key policy areas - the economy, the fight against poverty and internal security.

Responses to all survey items range on a scale from 1-5, with higher values denoting greater support or agreement with each of the statements provided. To construct the normative and instrumental support indexes used in the analysis, we calculate the average score for each list of items, and then multiply this value by 20. Using 0-100 scales allows us to interpret changes in percentage points.

3.4 Experimental design

To explore how policy outputs impact system support (Hypotheses 1), and the extent to which political system support moderates the electoral consequences of poor performance (Hypotheses 2 and 3), we design a priming experiment that manipulates information about the state of the Turkish economy, a salient performance indicator.

The experiment consisted of two experimental groups, control and treatment. Respondents were randomly assigned to each of them. The control group did not see any information about the economy, while we primed respondents in the treatment group on the on-going economic crisis in Turkey. Our vignette read as follows:

“Turkey is dealing with an economic crisis for several years now. Since the beginning of 2020, the value of the dollar has increased from 6 TL (Turkish Liras) to 8.3 TL as the Turkish lira’s value decreased around 25%. As a result of these economic problems, the Turkish economy has dropped three places in the ranking of the world’s biggest economies. Turkey’s economic problems reveal themselves in the daily life too. Many citizens complain about the continuous increase in prices. Another issue is unemployment, which is especially common among the youth.”

After reading the vignette, respondents in the treatment condition were asked: “What do you think

is the biggest economic problem in Turkey”)? Response options included the decline of the Turkish lire, unemployment, increases in the cost of living, or any other issue that respondents could report. The goal in this question was to strengthen the treatment and make respondents think further about Turkey’s economic troubles.

The framing experiment described here was fielded in both of the surveys we conducted online. In the first of the surveys, the experiment was introduced *before* respondents were asked questions about political support. In line with hypothesis 1, this set-up allows us to test the extent to which different forms of support respond to information about policy outputs.⁹ In the second survey, the framing experiment was shown *after* respondents answered the support questions. This set-up allows us to test Hypotheses 2, exploring whether system support moderates the electoral consequences of poor performance.¹⁰ We discuss the set-up of the two different surveys in more detail below.¹¹

Survey 1: As noted, the first of the two surveys allows to experimentally test hypothesis 1, focusing on the effect of policy outputs on political system support. In survey 1, respondents participate in the framing experiment just before they answer questions about system support. Comparing differences in support between respondents in the treatment and control groups, we are able to test whether, and to what extent, information about economic performance affects different forms of support. As discussed, we expect normative support to be less affected by information about poor performance than instrumental support (H4).

Survey 2: The second of the surveys we ran allows us to test whether support for the political system conditions the electoral consequences of poor performance (Hypothesis 2), and to explore whether system support mediates responsibility attributions (Hypothesis 3). In this second survey, respondents answer questions about system support first, and are subsequently presented with the framing experiment. Following the experiment, they answer a battery of questions that helps capture electoral support for the dominant party.

⁹ Design of survey 1: Economic treatment → System support

¹⁰ Design of survey 2: System support → Economic treatment → Regime loyalty

¹¹ In both surveys, respondents were asked a battery of standard demographic controls. They reported their age, gender, education, religiosity, domicile (urban/rural), political interest, partisanship, income, and retrospective economic evaluations. In both surveys, these questions were asked before the experiment. Retrospective economic evaluations were asked after the treatment as well to measure whether our treatment successfully shifted economic expectations, reported in Appendix A12. For a full list of questions used, please see Appendix A4.

To begin with, we asked questions that measure electoral support, or loyalty, post-treatment. A question asks how likely respondents are to vote for each of the following: (1) the AKP or the MHP, the two government parties; (2) the Nation Alliance (CHP and IYI), two of the opposition parties, (3) the HDP, another opposition party,¹² and (4) not to vote at all.¹³ From this list, we separately analyze the likelihood to vote for the regime parties, to vote for any of the opposition parties (HDP and Nation Alliance), and to abstain.

We combine information about respondents' intended vote (asked after they participate in the experiment) with information on how they voted in the 2018 election. The 2018 vote question was asked before the experiment.¹⁴ The combination of the two survey items, regarding past vote and vote intention, allows us to classify 2018 government voters into loyal and 'fleeting' government supporters, defectors to the opposition, and defectors to a non-vote (e.g. [Hale and Colton 2017](#)) (see also Appendix A8).

Respondents who voted for one of the government parties in 2018, the AKP or the MHP, were additionally asked about participation in different forms of pro-government mobilization by joining rallies, campaign contributions, or other forms of pro-government agitation.¹⁵ We create an index of these three items using the average score of responses to each question.

Respondents participating in the second survey were finally asked to what extent they blame (1) Recep Tayyip Erdogan, (2) External factors, (3) the Central Bank, and, finally (4) Ministers responsible for the economy for Turkey's economic decline. This question allows us to empirically test Hypothesis 3, which anticipates system support to mediate attributions of responsibility for poor performance.¹⁶

¹² We treated the HDP as a separate opposition party, as it is the main party representing Kurdish interests. Due to the ethnic polarization in Turkey, other opposition parties are careful to distance themselves from the HDP, and the HDP and the Nation Alliance do not form a uniform block of opposition.

¹³ The question is asked as follows: "How likely are you to vote for one of the parties listed below if the election is held in one week" (1=Not likely at all; 4=undecided; 7=certainly)

¹⁴ Respondents were asked to report whom they voted for in the 2018 Turkish Parliamentary election. Based on answers to this question, we split voters into three groups. *Government voters* are those who in 2018 voted for either the AKP or the MHP. *Opposition voters* are those who voted for the National Alliance (CHP and IYI), or the HDP, or another opposition party. *Nonvoters* are those who in the 2018 election chose to abstain.

¹⁵ These questions read as follows: How likely are you to do the following: (1) Joining AKP's rally; (2) Encouraging friends and family to vote for the AKP; (3) Contributing to the AKP's election campaign. Responses to all items are measured on a 7-point scale. A value of 1 means 'not likely at all', 4 is undecided, and 7 means that respondents would definitely engage in the activity

¹⁶ The wording of this question was as follows: "Some people say that Turkey is having economic troubles recently. To what extent do you think actors listed below are responsible from Turkey's recent economic

As shown in Table A.4 in the Appendix A6, across the two surveys, we achieved good balance between the treatment and control groups based on the following pre-treatment variables: age, gender, education, political interest, partisanship, religiosity, urban, income and retrospective economic evaluations. Balance tests are shown separately, for all respondents and government voters. We run most of the analysis on this sub-sample of respondents. As balance tests show, we only have one imbalance in the full sample of survey 1. In the full sample of Survey 1, urban respondents are over-represented. Furthermore, income is significant at the 10% level in the government voter sample in Survey 2. To account for these imbalances we include the respective control variables when analysing each of the respective samples - the full sample in Survey 1, and the sub-sample of government supporters in Survey 2.

4 Results

This section presents empirical tests of our hypotheses. We first explore normative and instrumental support descriptively, before presenting the results of how reactive these two forms of support are to our economic crisis treatment. In a next step, we present the impact of our treatments on behavioral support for the government and whether these effects are conditional on the level of system support. We further present evidence of blame shifting, before replicating our key findings using existing representative survey data.

4.1 Descriptive analysis: Instrumental and normative system support

We start by descriptively examining the distribution of instrumental and normative political system support and whether support varies across government and non-government voters. We expect that in authoritarian regimes, political system support might follow different patterns for each group. Table 1 displays the average levels of normative and instrumental support. Figure 2 further plots the distribution of the support variables for government voters versus non-government voters, clustering together opposition and non-voters, as the number of non-voters in the sample is small.

Looking first at Table 1, we note that both normative and instrumental forms of support are particularly high among government voters. For this group of respondents, the average score for normative

troubles? (1=Completely responsible, 2=significantly responsible, 3=somewhat responsible, 4=not much responsible, 5=not responsible at all)

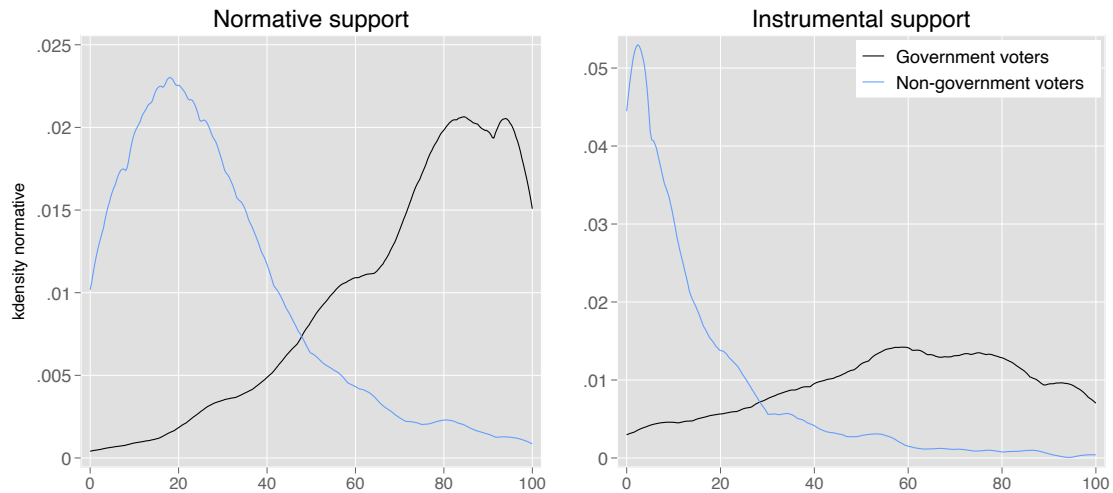
Table 1: Descriptive results: Average autocratic system support by 2018 votes

	Vote in 2018			
	All	Government	Opposition	Abstention
Normative	51.9	73.3	24.1	37.4
Instrumental	37.9	59.3	10.7	21.5
N of obs	3,738	1,792	1,5186	389

Note: All variables range from 0 - no support to 100 - complete support. The results are based on survey 2, in which the regime support variables were asked before the introduction of the economic treatment. The results are weighted by a population weight, which was calculated based on the 2020 census data.

support is 73.3 on a 0-100 point scale. Instrumental support is slightly lower at 59.3. Descriptive results are presented in Table 1 and Figure 2. They imply that authoritarian political systems enjoy normative and instrumental forms of support. However, support is significantly higher among government voters who agree with the regime's principles and norms, as well as are more positive in their instrumental evaluation. This is however not the case for non-government voters who show very low levels of overall system support. This evidence lends support to our assumption of political polarization between voters of the governing parties and opposition voters, anticipating divisions in political system support.

Figure 2: Autocratic system support by 2018 votes



Note: All variables range from 0 - no support to 100 - complete support. The results are based on survey 2, in which the regime support variables were asked before the introduction of the economic treatment. The results are weighted by a population weight.

It is reasonable to ask whether respondents in Turkey feel free to answer political system support

questions honestly. The fact that opposition respondents clearly state their dissent with the political system and the authorities suggests that they did not feel constrained to give only answers favourable to the regime. To systematically test the extent of preference falsification in the survey, we implemented a series of list experiments, using one survey item to measure normative support for three different objects. The results and more details about the analysis are presented in Appendix A5. The extent of preference falsification detected in the survey is similar to preference falsification detected in similar studies in Russia and China, where estimates of desirability bias ranged between 10% and 25% (Robinson and Tannenberg 2019; Frye et al. 2017).¹⁷

4.2 Political System Support and Policy Outputs

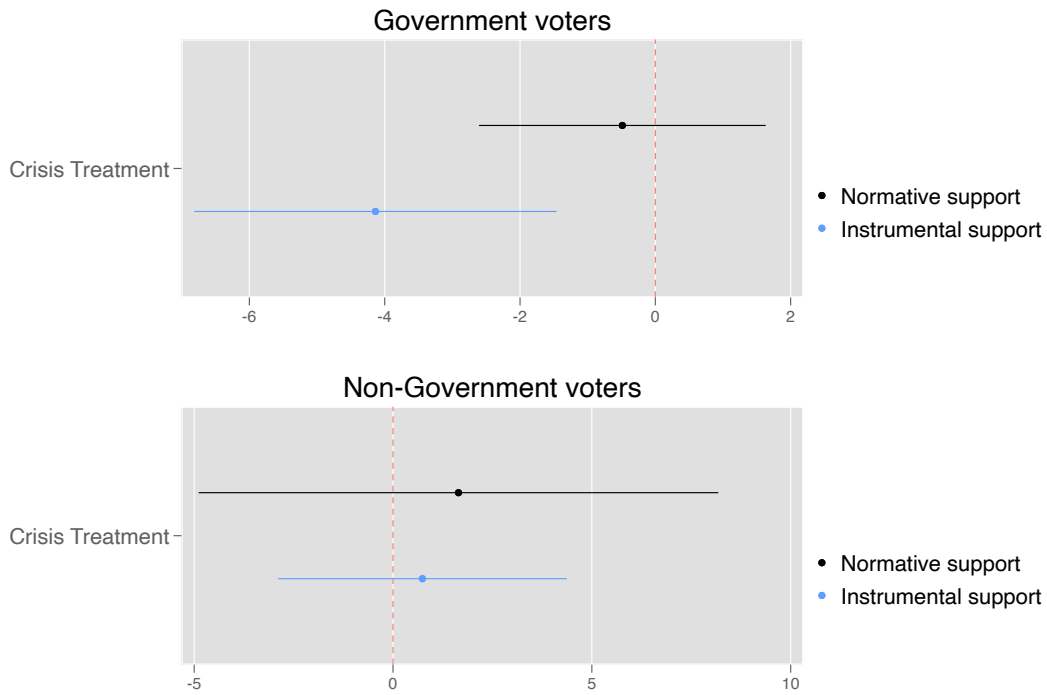
Relying on evidence from Survey 1, Figure 3 shows how the framing experiment, which provides respondents in the treatment group information about economic performance in Turkey, influence different forms of support. Figure 3 reports the regression coefficients and 95% confidence intervals of the crisis treatment on the different forms of political support for both government (top panel) and non-government (bottom panel) voters. Each outcome was estimated separately using linear regressions and do not include any pre-treatment controls. In this analysis we test the resilience of system support when respondents are primed on the economic hardship experienced in the country.

We theoretically anticipated (H2) that normative support will be less responsive to policy outputs, here information about poor performance, than instrumental support. Figure 3 shows this to be the case for government voters. Government voters that got primed on the economy have 4.1 points *lower* instrumental support compared to the control group. This effect is significant on the 1% level. Figure 3 also presents the results for separate models including only respondents who did not vote for the governing parties. None of the effects of the economic crisis treatments on the different forms of support are significant.

Overall, the results of this analysis indicate that, with the exception of instrumental support, system support might be resilient to poor economic performance. Figure A.1 in the Appendix additionally reports the results for each of the 16 survey items used in the analysis, only for the sub-sample of

¹⁷ We are, however, not concerned that preference falsification affects the estimation of the causal effects of the economic treatment, testing H1 and H2. As we have a balanced experimental design between control and treatment groups, we expect that any preference falsification that might exist either on our measures for system support or even over-reporting of vote for the government parties will be distributed equally between the treatment and control groups and hence the impact will cancel each other out.

Figure 3: Impact of crisis treatment on autocratic system support: Regression coefficients and 95% confidence intervals.



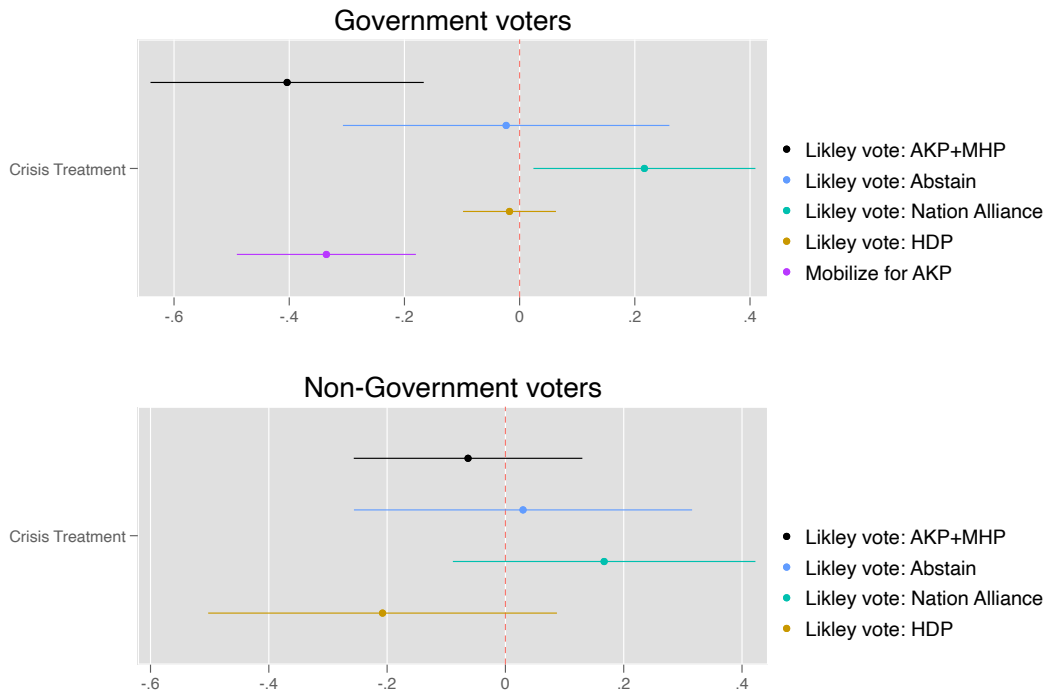
Note: The graph displays the regression coefficient of the economic crisis treatment on system support - outcome variables. Support variables range from 0 - no support to 100 - complete support. The results are based on survey 1, in which the regime support variables were asked *after* the introduction of the economic treatment. The analysis are based on linear regression models with no control variables. Number of observations: 1,048 (government voters) and 799 (non-government voters). Clustered standard errors by region.

government voters. The only items that show a significant (on the 5% level) negative impact of the treatment relate to instrumental support items: the evaluation of the quality of life in Turkey, the rating of the economy minister, and the policy rating of the economy and internal security. Evaluations of Erdogan himself however seem to be resilient to the crisis treatment. None of the items that measure normative support is significantly moved by the economic crisis treatment.

4.3 System Support, Policy Outputs, and Electoral Support for the Governing Parties

This section presents the analysis testing H2. In a first step, we look at the direct effect of the crisis treatment on behavioral support for the regime. Figure 4 shows the coefficients of the treatment (compared to the control group) on the likelihood to vote for the governing parties - AKP or MHP -

Figure 4: Impact of crisis treatment on vote likelihood and AKP mobilization: Regression coefficients and 95% confidence intervals.



Note: The graph displays the regression coefficient of the economic crisis treatment on behavioural outcome variables of government or opposition support. All outcome variables range from 1 - not likely at all to 7 - very certain. The results are based on survey 2, in which the system support variables were asked *before* the introduction of the economic treatment. The analysis are based on linear regression models, controlling for income. Clustered standard errors by region.

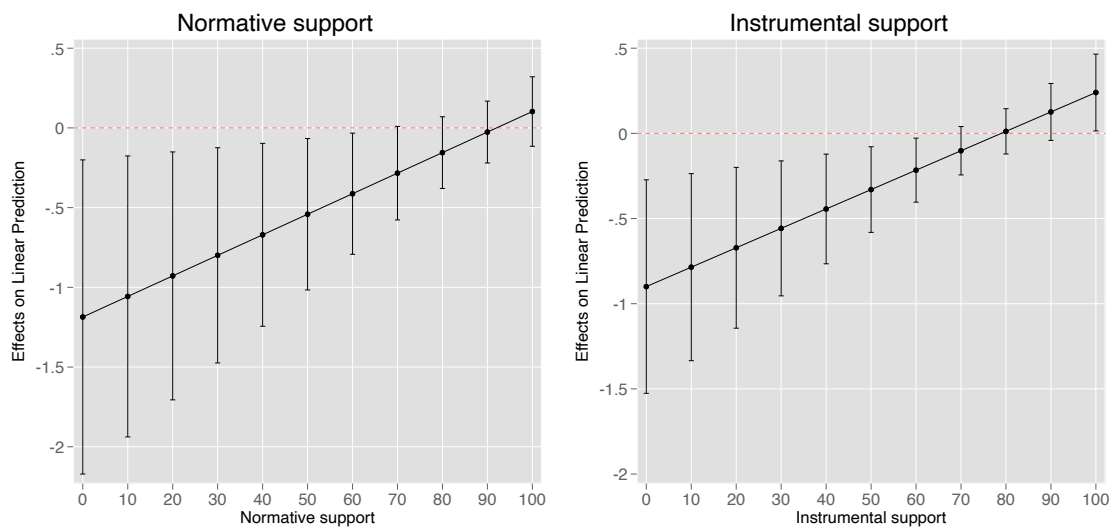
(black), to abstain (blue), to vote for the Nation Alliance (opposition 1, green), or the HDP (opposition 2, yellow). We further regress on the likelihood to mobilize for the AKP in an upcoming election. The top panel of Figure 4 focuses on government voters and the bottom panel on non-government voters (based on vote cast in the 2018 election).

The results lend support for hypothesis 2. Information about poor performance significantly suppresses support for the AKP - whether at the ballot box or through mobilization. The treatment further significantly increases the likelihood to vote for the Nation Alliance. This is however only the case for government voters.¹⁸ We do not find behavioral changes for non-governmental voters.

¹⁸ Table A.6 in Appendix A8 additionally presents results, which look at vote switching between the 2018 election and vote intention today. The results confirm that the treatment has a significant and positive effect on defection of government voters who switch from the governing to opposition parties. None of the other possible vote change categories is significant.

For electoral authoritarian regimes it is certainly very important that they are able to remain popular at the ballot box. Our results however confirm that these regimes are at risk of being voted out of office by losing support among their voters, getting punished for bad economic performance. The results also show that opposition parties can win votes from government supporters at times of crisis. These findings follow classic economic voting, established in advanced democracies, and research on economic voting under electoral authoritarianism (e.g. [Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2007](#); [Rosenfeld 2020](#); [Treisman 2011](#)).

Figure 5: Interaction between economic crisis treatment and system support on likelihood to vote for government parties. Marginal effects and 95% confidence intervals. Government voters only!



Note: The graph displays the marginal effect of the economic crisis treatment. Outcome ranges from 1 - not likely at all to 7 - very certain. The results are based on survey 2, in which the regime support variables were asked *before* the introduction of the economic treatment. The analysis are based on linear regression models, controlling for income. Clustered standard errors by region.

However, electoral authoritarian regimes might not lose their core group of supporters. We expect that some supporters will remain loyal due to their underlying support for the political system. In a next step, we therefore condition the economic crisis treatment on the form of support, which were measured before respondents were exposed to the treatment. Figure 5 plots the marginal effects of the treatment and its impact on the likelihood to vote for the governing parties by the level of system support. The results confirm that general support for the regime’s principles has a resilience effect. For all forms of support - whether normative or instrumental - the crisis treatment does not have a significant impact (or even a small positive impact - for instrumental support) at high levels of

support, but is negative at low levels of support. For example, if regime voters have no normative support, poor economic times as primed in our experimental treatment reduce the likelihood to vote for the governing parties by 1.2 points on a 1 to 7 scale, which is a strong effect.

Figure A.2 in Appendix A9 further displays the interaction effects for each of the 19 included survey items separately. The results confirm that all items follow the same pattern as displayed in Figure 5, which uses our two latent indices. Figure A.3 in the Appendix A10 further presents results of the interaction effect between the crisis treatment and the support variables on the likelihood to mobilize for the AKP. The results follow a similar pattern than for vote intentions, but are generally weaker.

4.4 Mechanisms behind the lack of defection: blame attributions

In the last step we explore further why respondents who have high system support do not react to the economic treatment. As a first step in this analysis, we test whether blame assignment is one of the mechanisms through which voters punish poor economic performance. We conduct a mediation analysis, following the method developed by Imai et al. (2011), in which we test whether blame assigned to Erdogan mediates the relationship between poor economic performance and voter defection. The analysis is done

Table 2 presents the results of this analysis. In addition to a direct effect between economic crisis treatment and decreased likelihood of voting for ruling parties among 2018 government voters (as shown in Figure 4), there is an indirect effect mediated through blame attributed to Erdogan ($b = -0.109$, $p < 0.05$), which captures the Average Causal Mediation Effect (ACME), representing the magnitude and significance of the treatment effect via blame attribution. This indirect effect emerges as the economic crisis treatment increases blame attributed to Erdogan ($p < 0.05$) and blame attributed to Erdogan decreases likelihood to vote again for regime parties ($p < 0.01$).

Building on Hypothesis 3b, we explore how blame attribution is shaped based on normative support. Our expectation is that voters with lower levels of normative support will put the blame for economic crisis on political actors ruling the country: Erdogan and economy ministers. Voters with higher levels of normative support, on the other hand, will need to shift the blame for an economic crisis to external factors that are not associated with the government. Hence, they will not blame nor punish the governing parties in economic hardship. To test this argument, we asked respondents

Table 2: Mediation analysis: Blame attribution and economic crisis treatment on vote for governing parties

	coef.	s.e.	95% C.I.	
Direct Effect				
Treatment → Likelihood to Vote for Gov.	-0.273***	0.102	-0.473	-0.074
Indirect Effect				
Treatment → Blame to Erdogan → Vote for Gov.	-0.109**	0.056	-0.218	-0.000
Total Effect				
Treatment → Likelihood to Vote for Gov.	-0.382***	0.116	-0.609	-0.156

Significance levels: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. Governing voters only, using survey 2. Analysis was conducted in Stata 17 using gsem command.

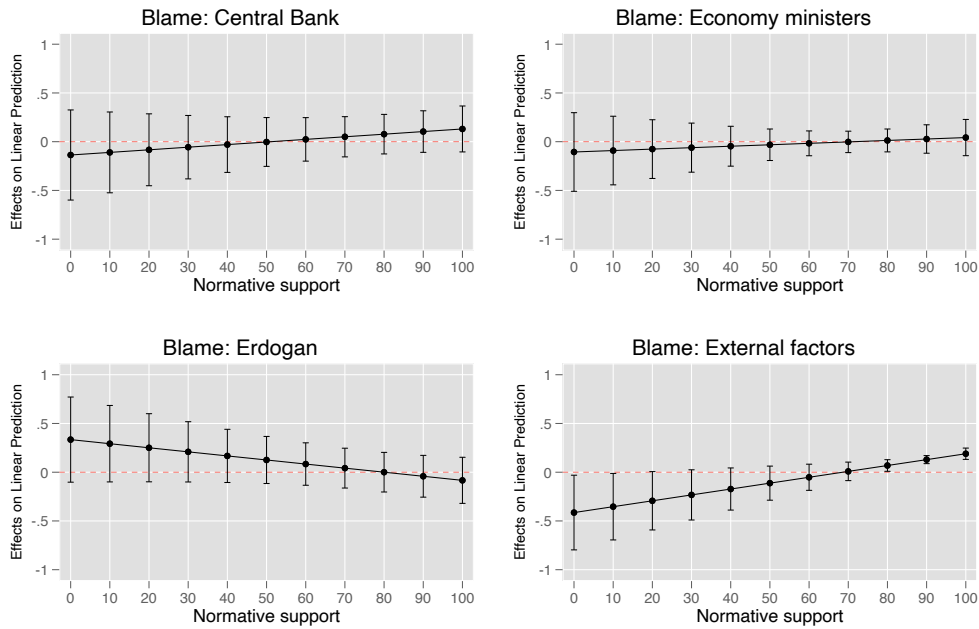
to what extent they blame Central Bank of Turkey and external factors, in addition to Erdogan and economy ministers, for Turkey's economic troubles. As discussed earlier, Erdogan is at the center of Turkey's current political system. The relationship between Central Bank and the political system is more ambiguous: the Central Bank is legally independent from the regime, but in practice it is just another institution that Erdogan has full control over. Economy ministers are also regime actors, but they are not as central to the regime as Erdogan is. Finally, putting the blame on external factors is, by definition, a way to avoid blaming the government for national economic troubles.

Figure 6 presents how levels of normative support conditions the effect of the crisis treatment on blame assignment. The most interesting finding of this analysis is the change in the blame assigned to external factors: When exposed to the economic crisis treatment, government voters with higher levels of normative support increase the blame they assign to external factors. To the contrary, government voters that have lower levels of normative support increase the blame assigned to Erdogan, although this relationship is not statistically significant. We do not see any significant changes with respect to blame attributed to the central bank or economy ministers. These results probably follows from the ambiguous and very limited role that these actors play under the personalist regime of Turkey.

4.5 Evidence from observational data

Our empirical analysis has so far relied on findings from online surveys, which are based on convenient samples, using a survey experiment to artificially frame the treatment of the economic crisis.

Figure 6: Interaction between economic crisis treatment and normative support on blame assigned for poor economic performance. Marginal effects and 95% confidence intervals. Government voters only!



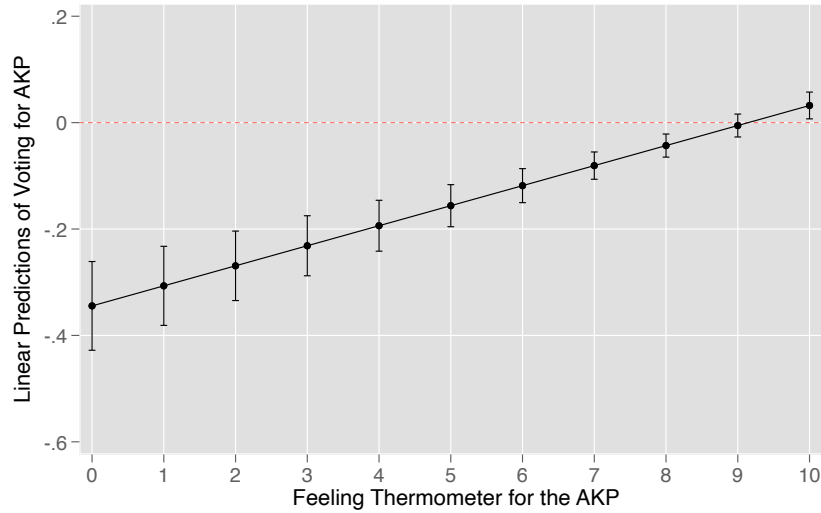
Note: The graph displays the marginal effect of the economic crisis treatment. Outcome ranges from 1 - no blame at all to 5 - complete blame. The results are based on survey 2, in which the system support variables were asked *before* the introduction of the economic treatment. The analysis are based on linear regression models, controlling for income. Clustered standard errors by region.

To test whether these findings are generalizable to the Turkish public, we replicate our analysis with face-to-face, representative survey data, collected after 2018 General Election in Turkey, as part of Comparative Study of Election Studies (CSES) project.

2018 was a year of economic hardship for Turkish voters. One month before the election, for example, official economic confidence index had declined to the lowest point of last fifteen months as the value of Turkish lira was in constant drop. CSES survey data demonstrates that only half of AKP voters, and six per cent of the remaining electorate, believed that the economy had improved compared to the previous year. Yet, the ruling AKP-MHP coalition won 2018 General Election in Turkey, receiving 54% of votes. Thus, the relationship between economic evaluations and vote choice in this election deserves careful scrutiny.

Our analysis, presented in Figure 7, explores how the relationship between these sociotropic economic evaluations and vote choice in the 2018 General Election was moderated by normative attach-

Figure 7: Impact of negative economic evaluations (marginal effects and 95% confidence interval) by feeling thermometer score for the AKP on 2018 vote for the AKP.



Note: The graph displays the marginal effect of sociotropic economic evaluations, which ranges from 1 - the state of economy has gotten much better over the past year to 5 - state of economy has gotten much worse over the past year. The analysis is based on linear regression model, controlling for age, education, gender, and household income. Sample is limited to people who voted for the AKP in the previous national election in 2015.

ments to the AKP.¹⁹ We operationalize normative attachments through feeling thermometer scores for the AKP. Feeling thermometers are widely used to measure voters’ affective reactions to political parties (Druckman and Levendusky 2019). Following the design of experiments, our sample is limited to people who voted for the AKP in the previous election in 2015. We hence model whether AKP voters remain loyal to the party in the subsequent 2018 election, which happened during a severe economic crisis.

In line with findings from our experiments, we find that normative considerations affect the relationship between economic perception and support for the governing parties. Negative economic evaluations do not lead to defection among AKP voters who “strongly like” the party. If anything, those who like the party very strongly (score of 10), a negative economic evaluation even increases the probability to vote for the AKP again. For AKP voters who lack these affective ties to the party, on the other hand, negative economic evaluations decreases the likelihood of voting again for the party. Thus, the AKP needs voters harboring strong affective attachments to the party to survive the

¹⁹ Kernel density distributions for AKP voters’ feeling thermometer scores and sociotropic economic evaluations are provided in Appendix A11.

economic crisis, without losing crucial electoral support.

5 Discussion and conclusion

The current dominant view in the literature is that while authoritarian regimes can have popular support (Frye et al. 2017), regime support in autocracies is performance-based or instrumental (Huhe and Tang 2017). Autocrats have to earn support from rational citizens by showing competence (Guriev and Treisman 2020b); whereas value-based or normative support mainly exists in democracies (Huhe and Tang 2017). Furthermore the logic goes that unlike democracies where there is a turnover of power and clear distinction between elected incumbents and the wider political system (Duch and Stevenson 2008), policy performance and competence affect support for the autocrat and the regime itself as the 'authorities' and the 'regime' are hard to distinguish (Brancati 2014). Part of the reason for the current direction of research is the reliance on existing survey data that focuses more on measuring support for democracy in established democracies or for future democratization rather than the political systems *in situ* (Booth et al. 2009: 14).

In this paper we use a mix of established and new survey indicators to capture all possible aspects of normative and instrumental system support (Dalton 1999) in Turkey including coverage of all objects in the system - the political community, the regime, and the authorities. Furthermore we created context specific survey indicators that tap into the regime values specific to the contemporary Turkish regime. In our findings, we show that among government voters both instrumental and normative support exists. Furthermore forms of support, except for national pride, are polarized between government and opposition voters. These findings show that normative support does exist in autocracies and that this normative support reflects the values specific to the particular authoritarian system.

Next we show that as expected based on Eastonian theory, normative support is less influenced by poor economic performance than instrumental support. But even instrumental system support is less affected than expected. However, concrete behavioral support for incumbent authorities, such as the likelihood of voting for the AKP or mobilizing family and friends to vote for the AKP, government voters are negatively affected by poor economic performance, on average. But these negative effects are conditional on prior system support: government voters who already have high normative and instrumental support for the political system are unaffected by negative economic performance and

less likely to desert the AKP. In other words pre-existing normative and instrumental support very much acts ‘as a reservoir’ of support that can help tide a regime over in poor economic times as proposed theoretically by Easton. Authoritarian regimes can rely on a group of core loyal voters who will continue to support the regime even if performance falters.

Our findings have several important implications. Firstly, from an empirical and methodological point of view, our findings show the value of creating new survey indicators that are more tailored to authoritarian contexts that better capture the distinct authoritarian regime principles, norms, and structures. Current research that seeks to compare political system support across democracies and autocracies (Mauk 2020) is hampered by the reliance on social survey data that was original designed to study political system support in established democracies (Booth et al. 2009). From a theoretical point of view, our findings revive the original Eastonian intuition that political systems can have and need diffuse support to tide them over in times when policy performance will inevitably suffer. The original ‘crisis of democracy’ debates of the 1960s and 1970s culminating surrounding the 1973 Trilateral Commission, which inspired Easton’s work, stemmed from the realisation that democratic systems cannot rely purely on performance-based support. Because of the lack of control over exogenous circumstances, policy performance cannot be maintained at a high level by definition; instead political systems need to invest in building reservoirs of normative support. Bringing back the focus on the studying the presence and role of normative support in autocracies can help us make sense of the continued resilience of contemporary authoritarian regimes in the face of dwindling performance (Treisman 2014b) and the revived interest in political education across many authoritarian regimes ranging from China to Russia and others, which are the expected channel to build build system support.

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Supplementary Analysis

A1. Power Analysis

We focused on number of regime voters (based on 2018 vote) to calculate minimum required sample size, as we needed enough power to conduct sub-group analysis (H4).

Our targeted sample size was informed by power calculations and expectations derived from the scholarly literature on sample size requirements of statistical models that will be used in this study. We calculated the required sample size for a two-sample comparison of means using *sampsi* command in Stata. We relied on group means estimates from a pre-test that we conducted before finalizing our study plan, using the same treatment and question design with our original survey. The outcome variable in this pre-test was the difference between post-treatment and pre-treatment scores of economic evaluations among regime voters. In the treatment group, the mean change was -0.14 (sd: 0.61) while in the control group, the mean change was 0.08 (sd: 0.52). Based on these numbers, here is the sample size requirements calculated by Stata:

- Required sample size for 0.05 alpha and 0.8 power: 210
- Required sample size for 0.05 alpha and 0.9 power: 280
- Required sample size for 0.05 alpha and 0.95 power: 346

This analysis demonstrated that the sample required to detect the effects of our treatment with 0.80 power should include at least 210 respondents. However, we will not be able to measure pre-treatment levels in other variables in the original survey, meaning that there will be less precision in our estimates (Clifford et al. 2021). Furthermore, we will be testing interaction effects and conducting factor analysis in Survey 2, which will also increase the required minimum sample size. Based on these, we decided to increase our targeted sample around four times for Survey 1 and around eight times for Survey 2.

A2. Recruitment through Facebook

We paid Facebook to circulate 12 different recruitment ads on its social media platforms varying based on following characteristics: 1) incentive, 2) advertisement text, and 3) advertisement image. In all ads, social media users were invited to participate in an online survey.

Incentives:

1) No incentives: One group of participants saw ads not mentioning any incentives.

2) Direct payment (7 TL/£0.6 to everyone): One group of participants were offered Turkish discount store vouchers. In this group, only regime voters (voted for AKP or MHP in the 2018 elections) were eligible. This group was set to a maximum of 500 completed surveys.

3) Low lottery (draw for 50TL/4.3£ discount store voucher): One group of participants were offered access to a lottery for one of seventy vouchers. This group was set to a maximum of 500 completed surveys.

4) High lottery (one iPad, worth £300): Finally, a group of participants were offered access to a lottery for one iPad, worth £300. This group was set to a maximum of 500 completed surveys.

Participants were eligible to get paid the direct payment or enter the lotteries only if they complete the survey and provide contact details, as otherwise we would not be able to make the payment or contact them in case, they won the lottery. Vouchers will be sent via SMS messages.

Advertisement text: 1. Vague frame: “Would you like to participate in our survey?” 2. Political frame: “We would like to hear your opinions about politics!” 3. Egotistic frame: “You have been specifically selected among Facebook users.”

Advertisement Images: 1. Neutral image (microphones) 2. Image of the incentive 3. Human photos: These images will show images of individuals, varying the gender of the person in the picture.

To recruit participants, we used the Facebook Business Manager, which allowed us to manage the ads and to see progress in recruitment (e.g. how many people have seen our ad and have clicked on it). We used conversion as campaign objective choice, which helped us to optimize Facebook’s algorithm through people completing our surveys. Except age (minimum of 18), we did not constrain the recruitment to any specific parameters, which implies that theoretically any adult using these platforms could see our ad and is hence invited to participate. Samples recruited through Facebook usually end up over-representing college-educated and male people. To create a more balanced sample, we spent additional campaign budget to show our advertisements to a larger number of non-college graduates and female Turkish voters, using Facebook’s targeting algorithm.

A3. Comparing sample characteristics with 2020 Census Data

Table A.1: Percentages for demographic and political properties in the Turkish population, original sample, and weighted sample

		Population ¹	Sample	Weighted ²
Regions	Istanbul	18.93	23.81	18.48
	Aegean Region	13.58	15.21	13.53
	Ankara	7.01	7.91	6.91
	Mediterranean Region	12.65	13.7	12.68
	Southeastern Anatolia Region	9.01	5.93	9.47
	Eastern Anatolia Region	6.63	3.77	6.87
	Black Sea Region	10.1	8.21	10.05
	Marmara - excluding Istanbul	12.8	12.4	12.73
	Central Anatolia - excluding Ankara	9.28	9.07	9.27
Age Groups	18-34	36.59	31.54	29.63
	35-54	38.18	41.62	45.2
	55-65+	25.23	26.83	25.17
Gender	Female	50.32	35.79	50.18
	Male	49.68	64.21	49.82
Education	Under High School	55.26	26.04	55.26
	High School	25.09	52.26	25.09
	College	19.65	21.69	19.65
Election Turnout (2018 Election)	Voted	86.22	88.83	91.15
	Not voted	13.78	11.17	8.85
Vote Choice (2018 Election)	AKP	42.56	45.45	49.25
	MHP	11.1	11.43	12.21
	CHP	22.65	24.84	21.76
	IYI	9.96	7.12	5.87
	HDP	11.7	6.42	6.46
	Others	2.03	4.74	4.46

¹ Population data is based on 2020 Address Based Population Registration System data provided by the Turkish Statistical Institute.

² Sample is weighted for region, gender, and education, based on the population data, using Stata's `survwgt` command.

A4. Measurement of key variables

A4.1. Normative and instrumental system support

As a guide to identifying measures that tap into all possible forms of support, we began by using Dalton's framework that identifies specific beliefs corresponding to instrumental and normative support for various political object (Dalton 1999: 58). In selecting survey items well-tailored to the Turkish context, we were guided by the need to capture support for the political system *in situ* not for more democratic alternatives.²⁰ Some of the standard survey items, commonly used in comparative surveys of public opinion, carry different connotations in the Turkish context. For example, the direct reference to 'Turkish' identity in the standard World Values Survey (WVS) wording on national pride "*How proud are you to be a [citizen of this country]?*" is likely to trigger social desirability bias, as nationalism is a value promoted by both the Turkish national education system (Sen 2020) and the current government's propaganda. Additionally criticising Turkishness can lead to prosecution (Tate 2008), suggesting additional incentives for people to avoid answering a question honestly. As such, we avoid the word 'Turkish' in our question wording.

We employ established survey items, commonly used to capture support for the political system, only where the wording of the questions was compatible with the Turkish political system, and well applicable in the local context. For example, we employed the standard WVS wording for the national pride item, to measure affective orientations towards the political community. Likewise we used WVS questions to measure trust in regime institutions, an indicator of instrumental support.²¹ Below is a full list of variables used to measure system support in Turkey.

Normative support

- The Ottoman Empire period is the most glorious period in Turkish history.
- Is it ever the case that you feel proud in your daily life because of the religion you belong to?
- Is it ever the case that you feel proud in your daily life because of your national identity and the nation you belong to?
- Approval: Strong leader who does not need to bother with the parliament;
- Approval: A political system in which only Turkish nationalist and religious parties are allowed to run in election.
- The government should have the right to ban media organizations that it thinks to be broadcasting against national interests.
- Those who fight against the AKP in fact fight against the Turkish nation and state.
- Only AKP defends the Muslim way of living and Muslims' interests in Turkey.
- Recep Tayyip Erdogan is a political leader with a sense of mission.
- Recep Tayyip Erdogan is an inspiring political leader.

²⁰ As already noted, many of the standard survey items commonly used in surveys such as the World Values Survey (WVS) ask about support for democracy in general rather the principles, procedures and structures of each country's political system (see Booth et al. (2009: 11-14) for a discussion)

²¹ WVS: "To what extent do you have confidence in these institutions: Directorate of Religious Affairs, military, police, justice system, parliament, elections, presidency, political parties [...]"

Instrumental support

- Turkey is a country that provides high quality life for its citizens.
- Job approval of Recep Tayyip Erdogan
- Job approval of Lutfi Elvan (Minister of Treasury and Finance)
- Policy evaluation: Economy
- Policy evaluation: Fight against poverty
- Policy evaluation: Internal security

Excluded items

We decided to exclude the following items from the final index on instrumental support, as these have been considered to lie between normative and instrumental support and therefore might blur the conceptual clarity of the two key concepts.

- Trust in elections
- Trust in the presidential system
- Trust in the parliament
- Trust in the military
- Trust in Directorate of Religious Affairs

A4.1.1 Explorative factor analysis of system support items

Table A.2: Explorative factor analysis and pairwise correlations for political support items and government voters

Variable	Government voters			Non-Government voters			Corr Gov. voters
	Factor1	Factor2	Factor3	Factor1	Factor2	Factor3	
NORMATIVE SUPPORT							
Pride: Nation	0.428	0.645	0.287	0.239	0.762	0.089	0.364
Pride: Religion	0.389	0.694	0.195	0.384	0.679	-0.005	0.453
Ottoman nostalgia	0.430	0.286	-0.129	0.477	0.203	-0.099	0.566
Strong leader	0.646	0.111	-0.297	0.618	0.051	-0.234	0.604
Elections limited	0.524	0.339	-0.307	0.491	0.461	-0.127	0.568
Government media ban	0.585	0.137	-0.192	0.586	0.195	-0.153	0.585
Erdogan: Mission	0.824	-0.048	0.022	0.610	-0.089	-0.150	0.623
Erdogan: Inspiring	0.867	-0.054	-0.055	0.815	-0.152	-0.123	0.726
AKP: Support nation	0.719	0.004	-0.277	0.670	-0.079	-0.238	0.639
AKP: Defend Muslims	0.741	0.006	-0.248	0.738	-0.103	-0.222	0.649
INSTRUMENTAL SUPPORT							
Turkey life quality	0.767	-0.133	-0.022	0.739	-0.070	-0.010	0.607
Trust: Religious leaders	0.779	-0.079	0.232	0.753	-0.020	0.151	0.691
Trust: Elections	0.683	-0.220	0.390	0.522	-0.265	0.393	0.580
Trust: Presidency	0.891	-0.056	-0.026	0.811	-0.082	-0.116	0.737
Trust: Parliament	0.621	-0.223	0.475	0.368	-0.082	0.751	0.475
Trust: Military	0.561	0.146	0.396	0.449	0.283	0.518	0.487
Success: Econ. minister	0.767	-0.154	-0.056	0.702	-0.072	0.164	0.653
Success: Erdogan	0.874	-0.052	-0.076	0.846	-0.137	-0.080	0.734
Policy: Economy	0.851	-0.149	-0.059	0.788	-0.117	-0.051	0.666
Policy: Poverty	0.832	-0.159	-0.037	0.808	-0.144	-0.031	0.648
Policy: Security	0.763	-0.100	-0.001	0.691	-0.081	0.188	0.626

Note: Only factors that have at least an eigenvalue of 1 are retained. The last column reports the pairwise correlation between government voters in 2018 (vs all else) and each support item.

A4.2. Pro-government behavioral support

In order to test H5 we use two types of measures to capture behavioural support for the government parties. The first taps into electoral behaviour, captured through a voter intention item as well as change in vote from the 2018 election, which is presented in Appendix A8. The second refers to the probability of individuals engaging in pro-government mobilization by joining rallies, campaign contributions, or other forms of pro-government agitation.

Vote intention: Firstly, we will directly ask “How likely are you to vote for one of the parties listed below if the election is held in one week” (1=Not likely at all; 4 =undecided; 7=certainly).

- I would vote for the AKP or MHP [government parties]
- I would vote for the Nation Alliance (CHP and IYI) [opposition parties]
- I would vote for the HDP [opposition party]
- I would not vote at all.

From this list, we analyze the regime the vote intention for the regime parties, the (combined) average score for the opposition parties and abstention separately.

Election mobilization for the AKP: Voters of the government parties in 2018, additionally saw a battery of questions that relates to election mobilization for the government, including the following items (1=Not likely at all; 4 =undecided; 7=certainly).

- Joining AKP’s election rally
- Encouraging friends and family to vote for the AKP
- Contributing to the AKP’s election campaign

We create an index of these three items using the average score.

A4.3. Moderator and control variables

Government voters (H3): In order to distinguish between voters of the government, the opposition and non-voters, we rely on the vote choice in the 2018 national election, using the following classifications:

- Government voters: AKP, MHP
- Opposition voters: Nation Alliance (CHP and IYI), HDP, Other
- Abstention

Blame attribution (H6): We use a set of four variables on how much respondents blame government-internal authorities (Erdogan or the economy minister) versus non-government relevant authorities (the Central Bank or external factors). The variables are based on the following question:

“Some people say that Turkey is having economic troubles recently. To what extent do you think actors listed below are responsible from Turkey’s recent economic troubles? (1=Completely responsible, 2=significantly responsible, 3=somewhat responsible, 4=not much responsible, 5=not responsible at all)

- Recep Tayyip Erdogan
- External factors
- Central Bank
- Ministers responsible from the economy

Control variables We ask respondents about their age, gender, education, religiosity, domicile (urban/rural), political interest, partisanship, income, and retrospective economic evaluations. These questions were asked before the treatment.

A5. Additional analysis: List experiment

In order to assess whether respondents are truthful about their reported levels of political system support we additionally incorporated a list experiment in our survey. Given the authoritarian nature of Turkey, we might expect that respondents may try to hide their true opposition to the regime in fear of repercussions. As we are interested in mapping different types of support in an authoritarian context, we need to understand the level of preference falsification.

The surveys include three list experiments. The sensitive item in each list measures normative support for the community, the regime, and the authorities, focusing on the leader component. The question of the list experiment was included at the start of the survey, before regime support is measured using our question batteries. All respondents participated in all three list experiments. Each time, they were randomly allocated to either the control or treatment conditions.

A5.1. Full list of items used in list experiment

“Below you will read a group of items. Can you please tell us how many of these items you agree with. You don’t need to tell us, which statements you agree with, just how many.” [0 to 4/5]

Support for community

1. Historical mosques should be kept as museums for better protection.
2. It is important to teach national history to next generations.
3. Most of what we learn in schools in terms of the national history is not correct.
4. Historical TV series and movies help people to better understand history.
5. **The Ottoman Empire is the most glorious period in Turkish history.** [a group of respondents, randomly chosen, will not see this statement]

Support for regime principles

1. It is important to follow religious norms and ceremonies.
2. Private ownership of business should be increased.
3. Women make equally good political leaders as men.
4. When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women.
5. **The government should have the right to ban media organizations that she thinks to be broadcasting against national interests.** [a group of respondents, randomly chosen, will not see this statement]

Support for authority

1. Generally speaking, most politicians can be trusted.
2. The government is like a parent and should tell us what to do.
3. The government is the employee of the people and should do things according to the wishes of the people.
4. Most politicians work for their own self-interests.
5. **Recep Tayyip Erdogan is an inspiring leader.** [a group of respondents, randomly chosen, will not see this statement]

A5.2. Results list experiment using different

As we are using a 5-point likert scale to measure observed system support, we have different options on how to create binary, observed support with the three items used in the list experiments. Table A.3 below, displays three options on how to code the neutral category (=3): 1) Setting neutral (=3) to not agree; 2) setting neutral (=3) to missing; and 3) setting neutral (=3) to agree.

Table A.3: Results list experiment: Normative support for regime objects. % of respondents agreeing with support item.

Variable	All	Gov. voters	Non-gov. voters
LIST EXPERIMENT			
Community: Ottoman nostalgia	37.14%	59.70%	9.57%
Regime: Government media ban	27.79%	46.46%	4.22%
Authorities: Erdogan inspiring	33.85%	56.08%	4.60%
OBSERVED VARIABLES: Setting neutral (=3) to not agree			
Community: Ottoman nostalgia	54.20%	77.24%	27.07%
Regime: Government media ban	39.22%	62.66%	12.42%
Authorities: Erdogan inspiring	42.32%	72.29%	7.10%
<i>Rate of preference falsification</i>			
Community: Ottoman nostalgia	17.06%	17.54%	17.50%
Regime: Government media ban	11.43%	16.21%	8.20%
Authorities: Erdogan inspiring	8.47%	16.21%	2.51%
OBSERVED VARIABLES: Setting neutral (=3) to missing			
Community: Ottoman nostalgia	62.35%	87.94%	31.87%
Regime: Government media ban	45.01%	75.41%	13.87%
Authorities: Erdogan inspiring	47.25%	83.52%	7.70%
<i>Rate of preference falsification</i>			
Community: Ottoman nostalgia	25.21%	28.23%	22.30%
Regime: Government media ban	17.22%	28.96%	9.65%
Authorities: Erdogan inspiring	13.41%	27.44%	3.10%
OBSERVED VARIABLES: Setting neutral (=3) to agree			
Community: Ottoman nostalgia	67.39%	89.44%	41.60%
Regime: Government media ban	52.15%	79.61%	21.05%
Authorities: Erdogan inspiring	52.59%	85.68%	13.70%
<i>Rate of preference falsification</i>			
Community: Ottoman nostalgia	30.26%	29.74%	32.04%
Regime: Government media ban	24.36%	33.15%	16.83%
Authorities: Erdogan inspiring	18.74%	29.60%	9.10%

A6. Balance test

Table A.4: Balance test of economic priming treatment allocation (ref: control group): Logistic regression

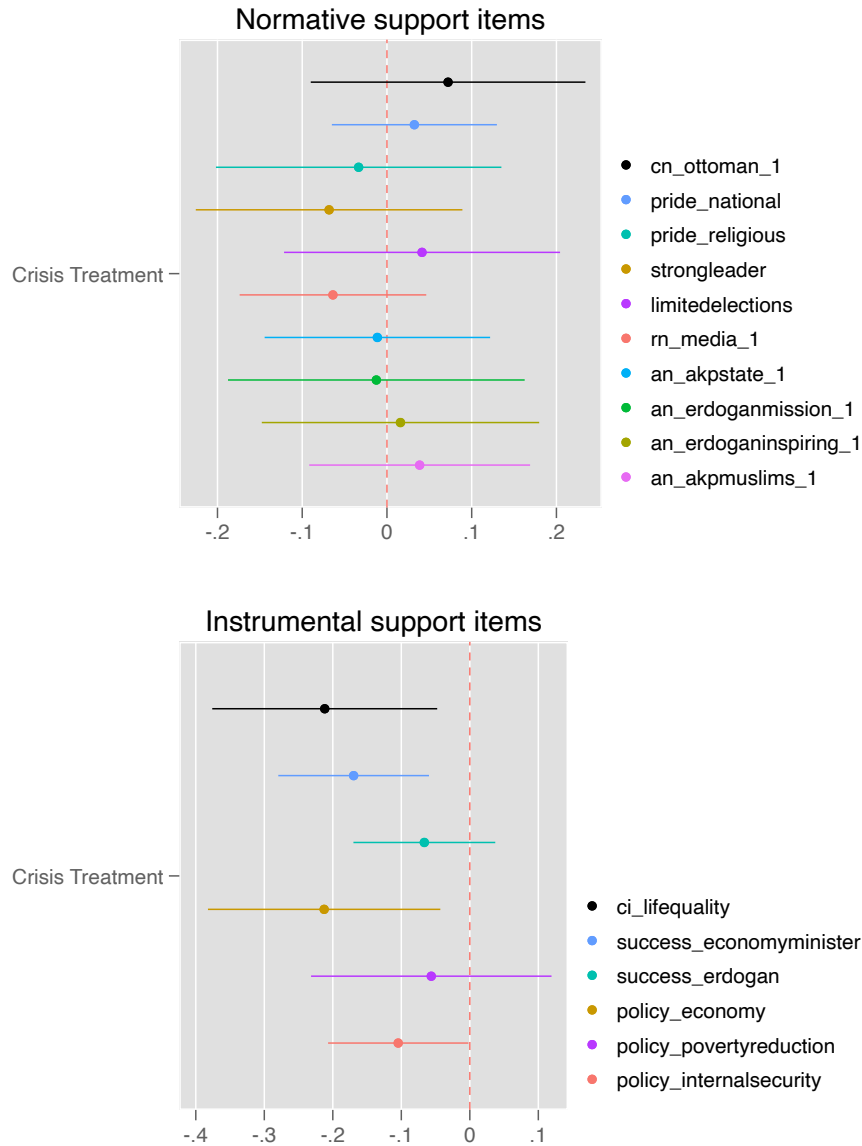
Sample	Study 1		Study 2	
	All resp.	Regime voters	All resp.	Regime voters
Age	-0.002 [0.004]	-0.007 [0.006]	-0.002 [0.002]	0.000 [0.004]
Female	-0.11 [0.113]	-0.104 [0.155]	-0.018 [0.078]	0.046 [0.110]
Education (ref: Primary/secondary)				
High school	0.043 [0.127]	0.049 [0.165]	0.061 [0.090]	0.073 [0.125]
University	0.125 [0.163]	-0.082 [0.222]	-0.019 [0.114]	0.102 [0.165]
Other	0.291 [0.466]	0.607 [0.652]	0.322 [0.253]	0.289 [0.392]
Pol. Interest	0.018 [0.069]	-0.016 [0.093]	0.001 [0.049]	-0.056 [0.069]
Partisan	0.111 [0.137]	0.01 [0.200]	0.007 [0.090]	-0.160 [0.144]
Religious (ref: none)				
Not very religious	0.06 [0.244]	1.082 [1.171]	-0.097 [0.121]	-0.322 [0.518]
Very religious	0.01 [0.240]	0.911 [1.164]	-0.051 [0.118]	-0.294 [0.511]
Urban	0.266** [0.125]	0.226 [0.166]	0.067 [0.084]	-0.145 [0.122]
Income	0.017 [0.042]	0.046 [0.062]	0.017 [0.027]	0.071* [0.042]
Econ. Eval.	-0.038 [0.036]	0.013 [0.048]	-0.038 [0.026]	-0.037 [0.036]
Constant	-0.281 [0.402]	-1.049 [1.247]	0.036 [0.242]	0.484 [0.578]
Observations	1,468	845	3,220	1,560

Significance levels: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Note: The table reports logit regression coefficients and standard errors.

A7. Results H4: Single survey items for regime support

Figure A.1: Impact of crisis treatment on autocratic system support: Regression coefficients and 95% confidence intervals. REGIME VOTERS ONLY!



Note: The graph displays the regression coefficient of the economic crisis treatment on regime support - outcome variables. All support variables range from 0 - no support to 100 - complete support. The results are based on survey 1, in which the regime support variables were asked *after* the introduction of the economic treatment. The analysis are based on linear regression models with no control variables.

A9. Results H5: Vote change variable as outcome

We further create a categorical variable for vote change, combining the responses to a question on how respondents voted in the 2018 election and their vote intention now, as follows:

Table A.5: Measuring vote switching

<i>Vote 2018</i>	<i>Vote intention now</i>	<i>Vote change</i>	<i>% of obs.</i>
AKP or MHP	AKP or MHP – score 6/7	Loyal gov. voters	69.53
AKP or MHP	AKP or MHP – score 3-5	Fleeting gov. voters	16.65
AKP or MHP	AKP or MHP – score 1/2 Opposition – score 6/7	Defectors to opposition	4.04
AKP or MHP	AKP or MHP – score 1/2 Abstention – score 6/7	Exit of previous gov. voters	4.70
Abstention	AKP or MHP – score 6/7	Gov. mobilization - non-voters	2.29
Opposition	AKP or MHP – score 6/7	Gov. mobilization - opposition	2.79

Table A.6: Multinomial logistic regression of change in vote, baseline = loyal government voters

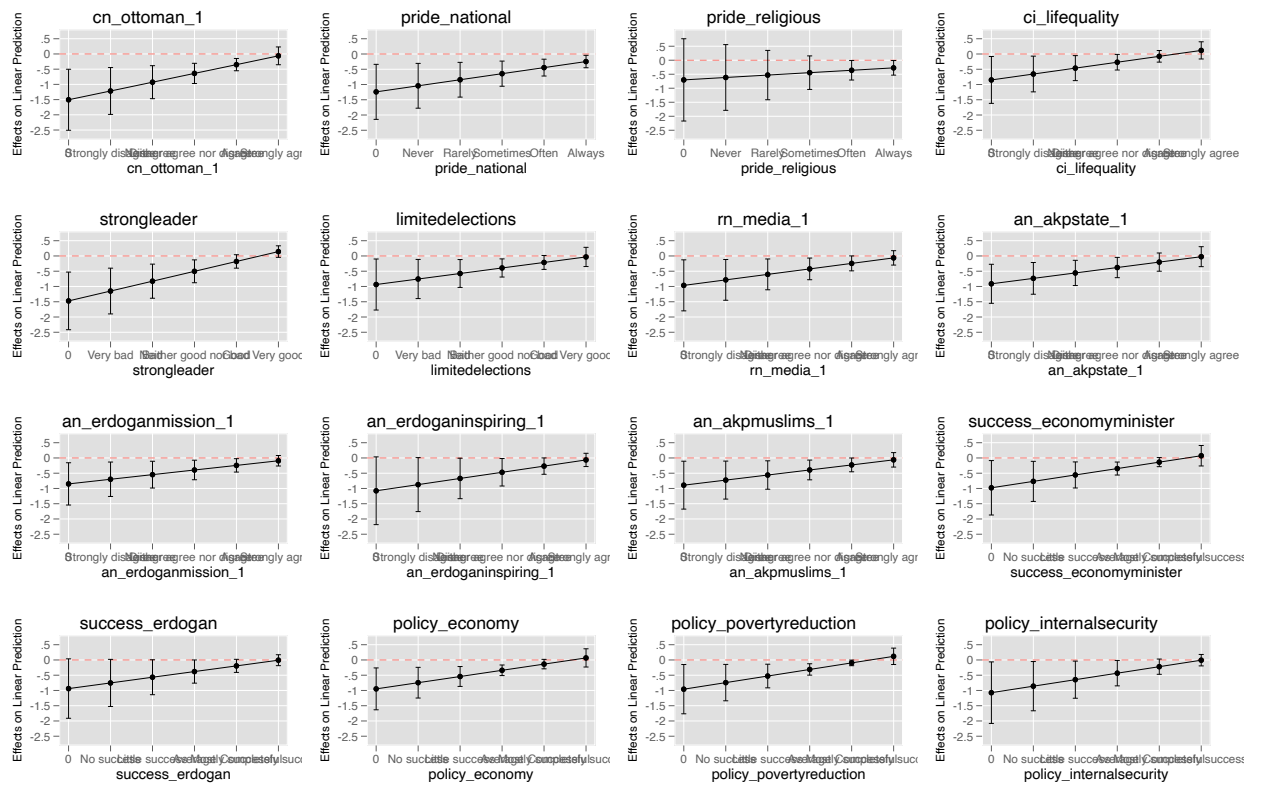
	Coef.	s.e.	95% conf. Intervals	
Fleeting gov. voter				
Treatment	0.185	0.171	-0.150	0.520
Intercept	-1.656***	0.138	-1.926	-1.385
Defecting gov. voter				
Treatment	0.687***	0.264	0.170	1.204
Intercept	-3.094***	0.133	-3.354	-2.834
Exiting gov. voter				
Treatment	0.318	0.205	-0.084	0.719
Intercept	-2.665***	0.168	-2.995	-2.335
New gov. voter from abs.				
Treatment	-0.407	0.296	-0.987	0.174
Intercept	-3.059***	0.180	-3.412	-2.706
New gov. voter from opp.				
Treatment	0.266	0.370	-0.460	0.991
Intercept	-3.131***	0.167	-3.458	-2.803

Significance levels: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Note: The table reports logit regression coefficients and regional clustered standard errors. The results are based on survey 2, in which the regime support variables were asked *before* the introduction of the economic treatment. Number of observations = 1,681.

A9. Single survey items for pro-government behavioural support: Interaction between treatment and system support

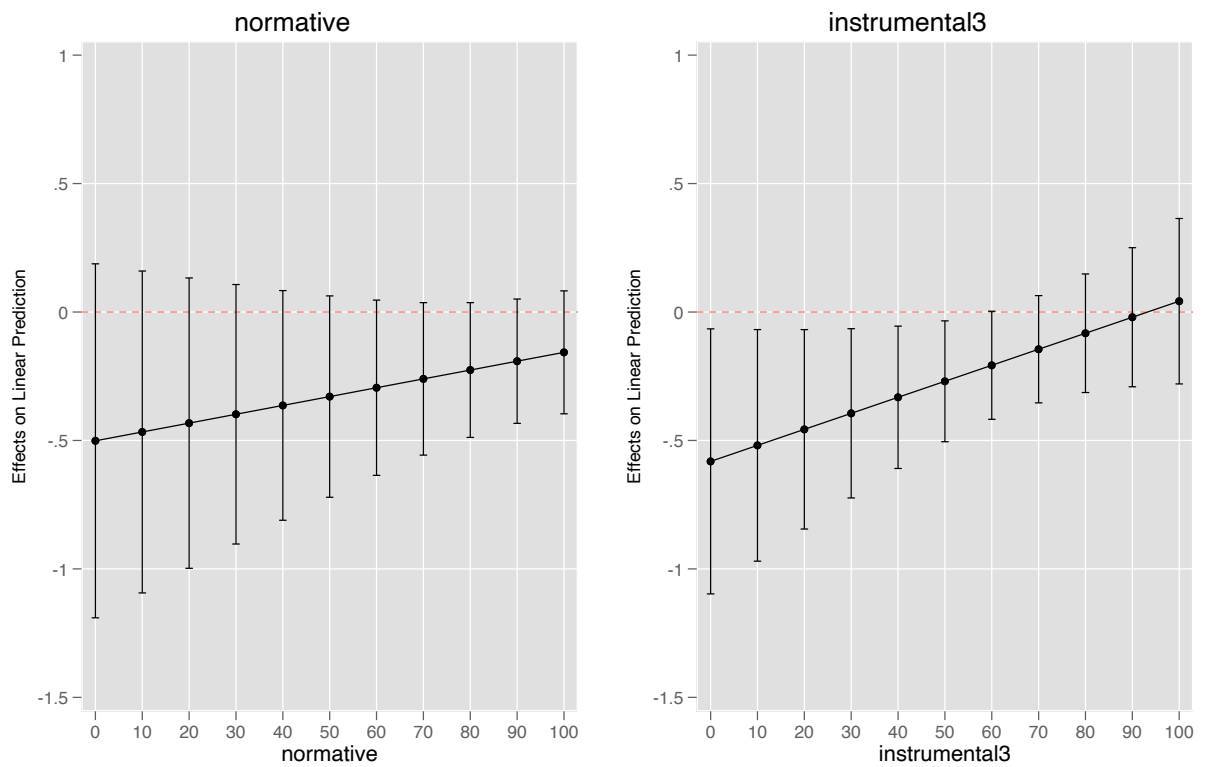
Figure A.2: Impact of crisis treatment on likelihood to vote for government parties. Marginal effects and 95% confidence intervals. REGIME VOTERS ONLY!



Note: The graph displays the marginal effect of the economic crisis treatment. Outcome ranges from from 1 - not likely at all to 7 - very certain. The results are based on survey 2, in which the regime support variables were asked *before* the introduction of the economic treatment. The analysis are based on linear regression models, controlling for income. Clustered standard errors by region.

A10. Conditional of economic treatment on mobilization for AKP by of system support

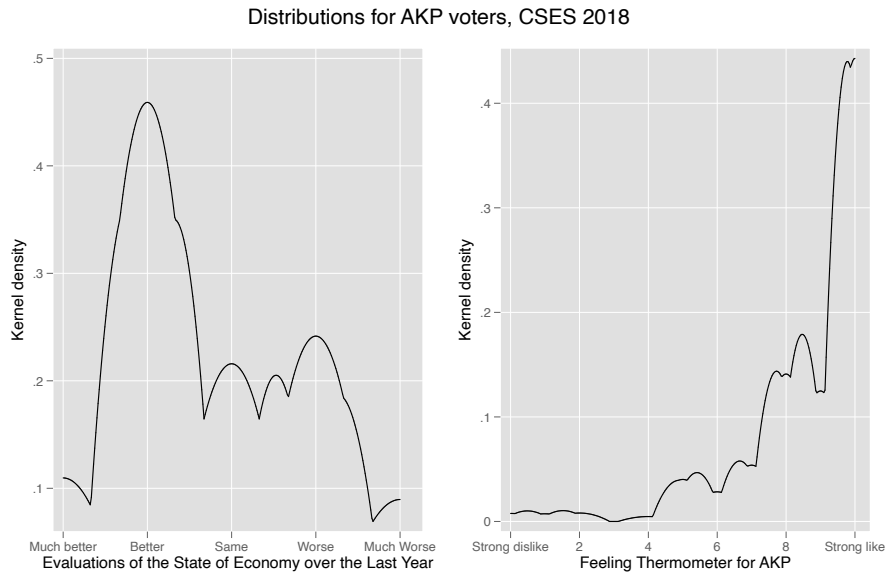
Figure A.3: Impact of crisis treatment on likelihood to mobilize for AKP. Marginal effects and 95% confidence intervals. REGIME VOTERS ONLY!



Note: The graph displays the marginal effects of the economic crisis treatment. The outcome ranges from 1 - not likely at all to 7 - very certain. The results are based on survey 2, in which the regime support variables were asked *before* the introduction of the economic treatment. The analysis are based on linear regression models, controlling for income. Clustered standard errors by region.

A11. Distribution of Variables in Representative Survey

Figure A.4: Kernel density distributions for feeling thermometer scores and sociotropic economic evaluations. Sample limited to AKP voters in 2015

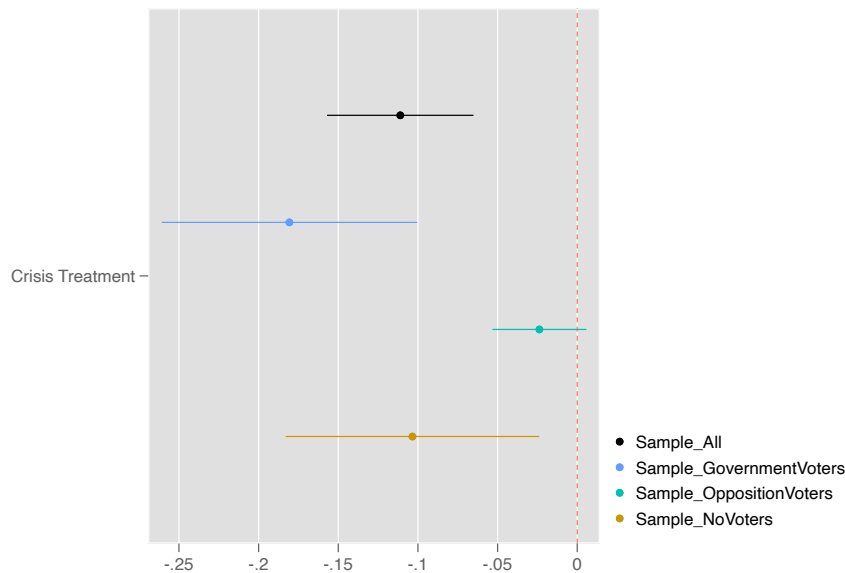


Source: CSES 2018

A12. Treatment Effects on Economic Assessments

In order to test the validity of the treatment, we estimated the impact of the priming experiment on the change in the retrospective economic evaluations, which was asked pre- and post-treatment. The change variable can range from -4 (updated economic evaluation negatively) to +4 (updated economic evaluation positively). If our treatment is effective, we would expect that respondents evaluate the economic situation in Turkey more negatively after being exposed to the treatment. Figure A.5 reports the impact of the treatment (compared to the control group) for four samples: 1) all respondents, 2) government voters (AKP+MHP), 3) opposition voters (Nation Alliance of CHP and IYI, HDP, Other), and 4) non-voters. To classify voters we use the 2018 parliamentary election. As the figure shows, the crisis treatment has a strong and significant effect for government voters who after being exposed to the treatment evaluate the economy more negatively. The effect is significant, but significantly smaller for opposition voters. The treatment does not move the economic evaluation of non-voters, which could be driven by a floor effect, as pre-treatment economic evaluations are already very low for these groups.²²

Figure A.5: Change in pre- and post-treatment economic evaluations for four different samples



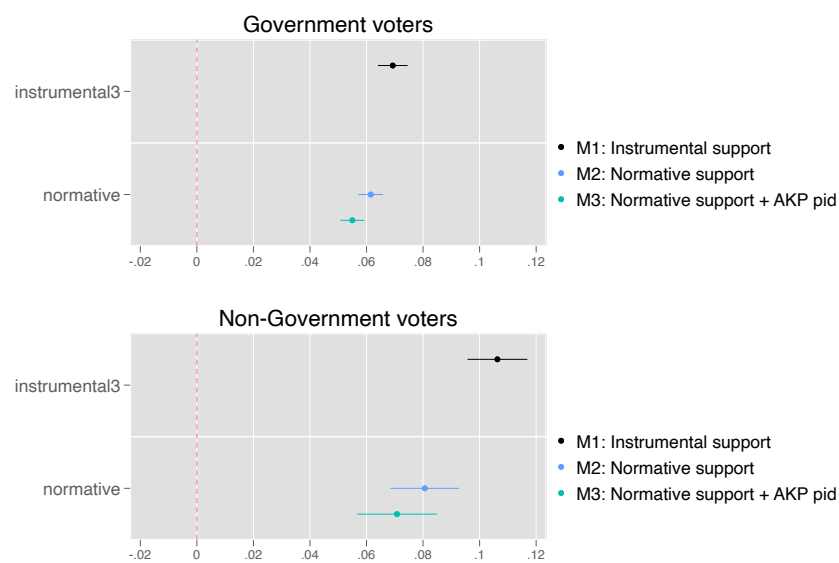
Note: The graph displays the regression coefficient of the economic crisis treatment on the pre-post-treatment change in economic evaluations. Clustered standard errors by region.

²² On a 1 to 5 scale, government voters evaluate the economy pre-treatment on average as 2.96, while the average value for opposition voters is 1.15 and 1.48 for non-voters.

A13. Perceptual screen of regime support on economic evaluations

To test the mechanism that regime support colours the perception of the economic health, we present here additional analyses predicting pre-treatment economic evaluations, which are measured on a five-point scale - 1 = the economy got much worse in the last five years, 5 = the economy got much better. Data was taken from study 2, which asked the items of regime support, before exposing (a randomly selected group of) respondents to the economic crisis treatment. As Figure A.6 shows, both forms of support - whether instrumental or normative - significantly impact the evaluation of the economy. The higher regime support is, the more positive respondents evaluate the economy. The effects are even robust to the inclusion of the powerful effect of partisanship and apply to both government and non-government voters.

Figure A.6: Effect of regime support on economic evaluations



Note: The graph displays the ordered logit regression coefficient of the regime support on the pre-treatment economic evaluations using Study 2 data. The outcome Each model controls for age, gender, education, income, political interest, and urban/rural. M3 additionally controls for AKP partisanship. Clustered standard errors by region.

A14. Divergences to Registration

TBA - discussion of taking out objectives.

In a similar vein, research on political system support in democracies has explored whether support for either political object - the community, the regime, and the authorities - is equally responsive to policy outputs. According to Easton (1975), support for higher order objects is more resilient to policy outputs than support for lower objects. Policy outputs affect support for lower order objects, namely the authorities, first. Sustained poor or positive performance might also affect support for higher order objects, such as regime norms and principles, yet this process materializes over a longer time-frame. Such an upward process of "experience generalization" is most clearly shown in Fuchs's simplified version of Easton's theory (Fuchs 2007; Fuchs and Klingemann 2011): direct experiences of day-to-day policy outputs colour evaluations of the authorities' performance which in turn, *in the long run*,²³ affect support for the institutional structures of the regime. As such, we anticipate support for lower order objects, such as the authorities, to be more responsive to policy outputs than higher order objects, such as the regime or political community. Succinctly put, we anticipate that the more abstract the object at which support is directed is, the more resilient support is to policy outputs. Considering economic performance for example, we expect higher-order objects of support, such as the community and the regime, to be less distressed by economic downturns than lower-order objects, such as the authorities. Yet it is also possible that these distinctions do not occur in authoritarian system, due to the 'blending' of different objects. Higher-order objects, such as the regime, may also be affected by poor performance, resulting from the government's poor economic management for example. When incumbents become synonymous with the regime, and indeed the nation, their policy failures could affect support for all other objects. We set out to explore the responsiveness of each object to policy outputs, and formulate our expectations as follows:

Hypothesis 4b (H4b) - Resilience of objects of support: Support for lower-order objects is more responsive to policy outputs than support for higher order objects.

²³ Our emphasis