The London School of Economics and Political Science

Electoral Integrity in Unconsolidated Democracies

Challenges and Potential Remedies

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Declaration

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Abstract

The thesis studies challenges to electoral integrity in unconsolidated democracies and seeks to examine possible strategies or remedies that can alleviate these. I present three empirical studies on the topic. The first empirical study focuses on female electoral participation and disenfranchisement in Pakistan and examines whether the presence of election observers at female-only polling stations can influence this. The study makes use of the random allocation of domestic observers to individual polling stations during the 2008 Pakistan general elections, to estimate causal effects of observer presence on turnout in female-only polling stations. The second study analyses electoral malpractices in individual polling stations in Ukraine and examines the association between existing local support for the fraudulent party and the use of malpractices to either inflate or suppress votes. The study compares polling station data between two consequent presidential elections in 2004 in Ukraine and uses election forensics methods to measure the occurrence and type of different malpractices. The third and final study considers politicians' evaluations of electoral integrity in Malawi and analyses the impact of partisanship and concerns raised by election observer in determining these evaluations. To gauge politicians' evaluations on electoral integrity, the study makes use of an elite-level survey in Malawi with an embedded experiment. The findings of the empirical studies point to some potentials but also trials when it comes to alleviating challenges to electoral integrity in unconsolidated democracies.

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Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Elections, as is often emphasised, are a central part of representative democracy. While not perfect, elections are the best way to deliver the 'will of the people'. When elections work, they can ensure that different groups and views in society are adequately represented. They also provide legitimacy in the eyes of the public for the elected representatives and the government's right to rule. And crucially, they enable citizens to hold elected representatives to account and to 'throw the rascals out' if needed (Powell 2014). While there are various ways for citizens to participate in politics, the most widespread and available way to do so for most people is through voting in elections (Hooghe 2014). In fact, for many, voting still represents that most fundamental exercise of citizenship: "the right to express one's preference, to be counted, to be part of the conversation, to be considered worthy of persuading" (Kelley 2012, XV). The role of elections should not be exaggerated, however. By themselves, they are not sufficient to make democracy function. Other institutions are needed as well, such as robust parliaments, independent courts and the rule of law, pluralistic and independent media, as well as an active civil society. Nevertheless, elections are the foundation upon which democracies rest. Without elections, democracies cannot work (Norris 2017, 1, Schmitter and Karl 1991).

For elections to support democratic governance, they also need to be sufficiently 'free and fair'. This means that elections must be inclusive, in that all citizens of adult age have the right and the opportunity to vote and stand in elections; voters need to be able to make informed choices between different policy alternatives and must be able to freely express their preferences; and their choices must be respected and accurately and unbiasedly recorded and aggregated (Birch

2011, 17-26). In addition, for elections to work properly, the electoral outcome should also be accepted and honoured by all parties, including the losing side, with the knowledge that another opportunity to win will arise in the next election (Norris 2014, Andersson, et al. 2005).

All too often, however, elections fail to achieve these criteria, especially in so-called *unconsolidated democracies;* regimes that have adopted formal democratic institutions, but in which democratic practices have yet to become "the only game in town" (Linz and Stepan 1996, 5). In unconsolidated democracies electoral procedures often fall short of ideals in a multitude of different ways. In some cases, voters are denied their most basic rights to participate in elections and are thus effectively disenfranchised. While this may be the result of erroneous registers and lack of training or resources on the part of election officials, it is frequently an intentional strategy involving both threats and violence, aimed at excluding certain groups from the political arena. Groups that are often targeted are opposition supporters, ethnic minorities, and women.

In other cases, when voters can cast their ballots, the election result does not accurately represent their votes. For instance, after voting is completed, the number of votes for particular parties or candidates may be grossly inflated or suppressed during counting at individual polling stations or during tabulation at the central electoral commission, leading to results and electoral outcomes that few believe are accurate or credible. Finally, trust in electoral authorities can often be so limited, and partisan views so polarised, that the election outcome is automatically dismissed by the losing side who accuse the winners of cheating, regardless of whether malpractices actually occurred or not in the election. Or, conversely, the results of a clearly faulty election are directly applauded by the winning side, despite severe shortcomings in the electoral procedures (Norris 2015, Lehoucq 2003, Calingaert 2006, Birch 2011, Moehler and Lindberg 2009).

When the electoral process is flawed, it seldom contributes to either democratic legitimacy, representativeness, or accountability. Instead, it often severely undermines democratic governance in several ways. Elections with limited integrity increase citizen distrust both in politicians and electoral authorities, dampen voter turnout in future elections, and even reduce the number of political parties

willing to contest them (Norris 2014, Birch 2012, Donno and Roussias 2012). Post-election disputes and accusations of malpractices and fraud may further deter foreign investments and development aid, potentially jeopardising economic growth and development (Birch 2011, 6, Collier 2009, von Soest and Wahman 2015). Elections with limited integrity also heighten social tensions and are often followed by demonstrations and protests and, in extreme cases, lead to outbreaks of deadly violence and the overthrow of those in power (Norris 2014, Beaulieu 2014, Doyle and Sambanis 2006).

Given the importance of "getting elections right", considerable efforts have been expended on strengthening electoral integrity. Election observation, in particular, has become one of the main instruments by which the international community, including both intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations, and influential donor countries, seek to strengthen electoral integrity in developing countries and unconsolidated democracies (Norris 2017). Today nearly all elections held in unconsolidated democracies are closely monitored by international or domestic election observers, and often both. Election observers monitor the pre-electoral environment, deploy teams of observers to individual polling stations on Election Day, and report on their findings in press briefings and in in-depth reports after the election (Hyde 2011, Kelley 2012, Bjornlund 2004). The academic study on democracy and elections has also increasingly focused on issues pertaining to the integrity of elections and how to overcome challenges. Recent research in this field has sought to reach a better understanding of how and why elections in unconsolidated democracies are often flawed and how electoral integrity can best be strengthened. Furthermore, scholars working within the field of *electoral forensics* have applied a range of innovative methods to identify and detect malpractices when they occur (Alvarez, Hall and Hyde 2009).

This thesis seeks to build on, and contribute to, this overall field of research and presents three empirical studies that examine electoral integrity in countries that have transitioned from closed authoritarian regimes but have yet to fully consolidate democracy. There are different ways to identify such regimes. One often-used measure is the *Freedom House* democracy index (Puddington and Dunham 2019) and its classification of countries as *Not Free*, *Partly Free* and *Free* based on the respect

of central political rights and civil liberties. On this index, unconsolidated democracies can be understood as those countries that fall within the broad category of *Partly Free* countries; that is, countries that are neither closed autocracies nor fully consolidated liberal democracies (Diamond 2002). Focusing on these regimes is motivated as electoral malpractices and other challenges to electoral integrity are often more widespread and severe in these types of regimes, as is the potential consequences of flawed electoral procedures for their prospects to democratise. In addition, most efforts to strengthen electoral integrity, and in particular election observer missions, are often centred specifically on these types of regimes (Kelley 2012, Hyde 2011).

The core ambition of this thesis is to explore possible solutions or remedies that could help strengthen electoral integrity in unconsolidated democracies. In doing so, I will highlight common malpractices and challenges to electoral integrity in unconsolidated democracies. Specifically, in the empirical studies, I examine issues such as intentional disenfranchisement of voters, fraudulent manipulation of votes at polling stations, as well as problems relating to limited trust in, and partisan disagreement over, the integrity of the electoral process. All these issues present serious challenges in unconsolidated democracies that detract from the core principles of democratic elections or hinder elections from fully contributing to democratic governance.

The core ambition of the thesis as stated above, is to examine possible remedies or solutions to these problems. There are several different possible strategies to combat electoral malpractices. In very broad terms, these could be categorised into three groups. The first group of strategies focuses on enhancing *transparency* in the electoral process. A starting assumption here is that electoral malpractices often occur in the hidden, away from public scrutiny and kept secret from outsiders (Lehoucq 2003). The lack of transparency enables malpractices to occur in the first place, as perpetrators can carry them out without fear of getting caught. Lack of transparency also fuels suspicion and tensions following controversial elections, as accusations of malpractices in contexts of limited transparency are difficult to either substantiate or refute (Hyde and Marinov 2014). One common strategy to enhance transparency in the electoral process involves the deployment

of election observers to monitor electoral procedures and voting. The presence of election observers at individual polling stations may deter local actors and corrupt officials from engaging in electoral malpractices. Non-partisan information about the electoral process can also help local actors to reach agreements on the level of integrity in the election (Norris and Nai 2017). Other transparency related strategies involve the forensic analysis of election results to determine whether malpractices really did occur or not, where they were carried out, and who potentially benefited or were hurt by them. Such forensic efforts can help substantiate or dismiss accusations regarding electoral malpractices following controversial elections and help develop more robust systems to make malpractices more difficult to carry out.

The second group of strategies to combat malpractices focuses on *capacity-building* measures. These include various forms of electoral assistance, skills development, and technical, infrastructural, and economic support aimed at strengthening electoral integrity. The core assumption behind such strategies are that it is the lack of material or human resources and skills in many unconsolidated democracies that amplify problems related to electoral integrity and enable electoral malpractices to occur. By strengthening professional skills, improving operational knowledge, highlighting best practices, and enhancing the long-term capacity of the agencies involved in managing elections, as well as civil society organisations, media and judiciaries that provide important support structures for elections, it is hoped that the integrity of elections can gradually be improved upon, and the instances of electoral malpractices reduced (Norris 2017).

A third group of strategies or remedies to strengthen electoral integrity can be described as coercive. Such strategies may involve the international community naming and shaming countries that fail to uphold sufficient levels of electoral integrity; collective dismissal of the electoral outcomes in flawed elections, thus also questioning the legitimacy of the election winner; and withdrawal of development aid and other forms of international sanctions. These types of strategies assume that electoral integrity cannot really be strengthened unless there are some form of repercussion for perpetrators following flawed elections (Donno 2013, von Soest and Wahman 2015).

The three groups of strategies or remedies described above – *transparency-enhancing*, *capacity-building* and *coercive* – are not necessarily competing. Ideally, efforts to strengthen electoral integrity in unconsolidated democracies would encompass all three groups of strategies, thus emphasising increased transparency throughout the electoral process, providing technical, financial and human resource assistance where needed, and ensuring that governments and local actors cannot engage in electoral malpractices with impunity. To provide an exhaustive examination of all measures among all three groups of strategies would however be too extensive to do them proper justice here. Instead, the studies presented in this thesis will focus only on the first group; that is, transparency-enhancing strategies or remedies.

There are two key reasons why focusing on transparency-enhancing strategies is important. Firstly, enhancing transparency in the electoral process is often a precondition for carrying out other strategies. Effective capacity-building or coercive actions aimed at strengthening electoral integrity rely on having sufficient and credible information about the quality of the electoral process in unconsolidated democracies. Outsiders need to have insight into where and how electoral malpractices occur, and who are the potential perpetrators. Only when these issues can be determined with some confidence is it possible to effectively mitigate problems through either capacity-building or coercive action. Secondly, as will be discussed further below, transparency-enhancing measures may also in themselves deter malpractices from occurring in the first place. Malpractices become more costly to carry out and perpetrators easier to identify and hold to account if election observers are present at individual polling stations on Election Day; if results are subjected to forensics analysis once they are in; and if detailed observer reports of malpractices are published after the elections. Providing neutral and credible information assessments about the electoral process can also help support rival parties to reach some agreement over the integrity of elections and the results, which is a first but necessary step towards democratic consolidation.

The research questions set out in each empirical study will examine different aspects of these transparency-enhancing measures and how these can strengthen electoral integrity in unconsolidated democracies. The first study focuses on election

observers monitoring the vote at individual polling stations on Election Day. Past research has documented that observers can deter malpractices from occurring in individual polling stations, (Hyde 2007, Asunka, et al. 2019). Building on this body of research, this study asks whether the presence of election observers can safeguard the rights of women to vote. Women often become targets of electoral malpractices and disenfranchisement. Does then the presence of election observers at individual polling stations reduce such incidents? Can observers even increase female participation? Or does the presence of observers potentially have unexpected consequences in this regard? The second empirical study looks further into different types of electoral malpractices that occur on Election Day at individual polling stations and seeks to understand how perpetrators decide or trade-off between these. In particular, this study examines how local support for the fraudulent party impacts on incentives to either inflate votes, through for example ballot-box stuffing, result-sheet forgery, and multiple voting, or by suppressing votes, through for example intimidation and violence, other forms of voter disenfranchisement, or intentional invalidation of their votes. This study uses *electoral forensics* methods to identify different types of malpractices when they occur. Finally, the third empirical study examines whether objective assessment of the electoral conduct has any impact on the evaluations of electoral integrity among domestic elites in unconsolidated democracies. When election observers report on the electoral process and raise concerns about potential malpractices and fraud, do domestic elites update their own evaluations of the electoral process? Past studies have especially emphasised partisanship as a driving factor when it comes to ordinary voters' perceptions regarding the integrity of elections (Andersson, et al. 2005, Moehler and Lindberg 2009). This study therefore asks whether similar partisan divides are also found among political elites, and whether independent reporting by election observers can overcome such divides and contribute to greater agreement on the quality of the electoral process?

The thesis follows a paper-based structure in that it contains three separate empirical studies each focusing on a separate research question, each using different methodological approaches and analysing different empirical data. The three studies are also based in different countries: in Pakistan, Ukraine, and in Malawi. All these

countries are classified by Freedom House as Partly Free and are characterised in the scholarly literature as unconsolidated democracies. They share common attributes with regards to holding regular and competitive, but ultimately flawed, elections, as well as generally weak and corrupt governmental institutions, and widespread public mistrust in these. Elections in all these counties are also regularly monitored by large contingents of both international and domestic election observers.

Before presenting the three empirical studies in subsequent chapters, this introductory section will first seek to situate them in the broader theoretical and empirical literature on electoral integrity. Below, building on past work in this field, I start with defining the core concepts used in this thesis, such as electoral integrity and unconsolidated democracy. I then further provide a review of relevant past research with regards to electoral integrity. Here I focus on research that has considered how and why electoral integrity in many unconsolidated democracies is undermined; scholarly endeavours to identify or detect malpractices in elections in these regimes; as well as research on strategies and interventions to strengthen electoral integrity in unconsolidated democracies, in particular election observations. Following this literature review, I discuss the three studies that I present in this thesis in more detail, including the overall research questions, case selection, the use of empirical data and research methods. Finally, I provide an outline for the remainder of the thesis.

1.2 Literature Review

1.2.1 Core Concepts

The conceptualisation of electoral integrity applied in this thesis builds on that of Birch (2011). Drawing on democratic theory, she argues that for elections to qualify as democratic, they must satisfy three core principles. Firstly, democratic elections should allow for the participation of all members in the community deemed competent to decide. This is termed the principle of *inclusiveness*. Secondly, citizens should be able to make free and informed choices amongst those candidates and respective policies on offer; a principle entitled *policy-oriented voting.* And thirdly,

citizens' choices should be translated into seats and policies in ways that guarantee accuracy and congruence with public opinion; the principle of *effective aggregation* (Birch 2011, 17-25)*.* These principles are largely in line with Robert Dahl's democratic ideals, which require that all citizens enjoy unimpaired opportunities to formulate their political preferences, to signify them to one another, and to have them weighted equally in public decision making (Dahl 1971, 2, Schedler 2002).

The three core principles – inclusiveness, policy-oriented voting, and effective aggregation – further call for specific procedural conditions that need to be present in all elections for them to be considered democratic. The principle of inclusiveness, firstly, incorporates the right to elect and be elected. In practical terms this means not only that the franchise needs to be universal (typically extended to all adult citizens deemed cognitively able to vote) but also that all voters are provided with adequate opportunities to access polling stations and to cast their votes. In addition, the principle of inclusiveness requires that all citizens have the right to stand as candidates in elections, which also goes some way in ensuring that there is a wide range of different candidates and policies to choose from.

Secondly, the principle of policy-oriented voting requires that all eligible voters have access to adequate information about the candidates and policy alternatives on offer. This is often ensured through classical rights of freedom of information and expression, such as rights to access different sources of information and media, and the right for individuals and for example journalists to criticise the government, as well as rights for parties to campaign freely and to enjoy fair and balanced access to mass media. Furthermore, this principle also requires that voters be able and willing to vote according to their own preferences. This means that they need to be able to cast their ballots free of threats or coercion and that their votes are not secured in exchange for direct financial rewards. Finally, the principle of effective aggregation requires that the electoral administration records and counts all cast votes both honestly and accurately. The mechanisms by which votes are translated into seats and policies need also be neutral and unbiased (Birch 2011, 17-25). These core principles and procedural conditions have also been emphasised in other recent conceptualisations of electoral integrity based either on democratic

theory or on international commitments and global norms surrounding elections (Schedler 2002, 39-41, Munck 2009, 88, Norris 2014, 21-39).

Electoral integrity then, according to this conceptualisation, is the extent to which elections satisfy the core principles of inclusiveness, policy-oriented voting, and effective aggregation, and the associated procedural conditions. To be considered democratic, or to use the more common phrase *free and fair*, elections need to meet all these principles and conditions, as the absence of even one of them can potentially undermine the entire process. This idea is in accordance with the so-called *Anna Karenina* principle which states that a successful endeavour is one where every possible deficiency has been avoided, while a deficiency in any one of a number of factors dooms an endeavour to failure.[1] For example, the right to vote, even when enshrined in law, means relatively little unless voters are also guaranteed adequate opportunities to vote. Similarly, selecting between different candidates at the ballot box is hardly exercising a democratic choice unless voters can access relevant information about the policies that candidates stands for, or if the ballot is cast under the threat of violence. And, finally, the entire exercise of voting is of course meaningless in case the results are completely made up irrespective of the actual votes that were cast. In sum, therefore, the core principles and procedural conditions described above can, as expressed by Schedler (2002, p. 40), be seen as a "metaphorical chain which, like a real chain, holds together only as long as each of its links remains whole and unbroken".

Satisfying these core principles and procedural conditions goes a considerable way in enabling elections to fulfil democratic functions, such as ensuring that different groups and views in society are represented and allowing voters to hold their leaders to account and to vote politicians and parties out of office if they do not perform in accordance with citizens' expectations and wishes. In addition to procedural conditions, however, scholars also emphasise the importance of peoples' perceptions of electoral integrity, especially when it comes to questions about democratic legitimacy. For elections to contribute to democratic legitimacy it is

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[1] The Anna Karenina principle is derived from Leo Tolstoy's book with the same name which begins: "All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way" (Tolstoy 1878). The association between electoral integrity and this principle is also noted by Birch (2009).

essential that all actors go along with the electoral procedures for determining the winning candidates and parties and that they, after the election, also accept and honour the electoral results. In particular, this requires the losing side in the contest to concede their loss and recognise not only the victory of the other side, but also that the victors have a legitimate right to rule – at least until the next election (Andersson, et al. 2005, 17-32).

Such democratic legitimacy is thought to form the basis for peoples' general confidence in elected institutions, such as political parties, parliaments and governments, their overall satisfaction with democracy, and their voluntary compliance with laws (Norris 104, 113-132, Birch 2008, 308); sentiments that more broadly are viewed as important indicators of a healthy civic and democratic culture (Putnam 1993). But confidence in the democratic system necessitates that people also have some trust in the electoral authorities and that they believe that the contest was free and fair, and that the outcome was not a product of malpractices or fraud.

As stated above, I focus in this thesis on electoral integrity in *unconsolidated democracies.* With unconsolidated democracies I refer to the set of regimes that are categorised as neither closed autocracies nor fully established liberal democracies (Diamond 1999, Diamond 2002). These regimes go by a number of different names in the scholarly literature, such as *semi-democratic regimes*, *illiberal democracies*, *hybrid regimes*, *competitive authoritarian regimes* and *electoral authoritarian regimes* (Ottaway 2013, Zakaria 1997, Diamond 2002, Levitsky and Way 2010, Schedler 2006). As noted above, one way to identify these regimes is with the aid of the Freedom House classification of Partly Free. Since the year 2000, about 90 countries have been classified as Partly Free. Developments in some of these countries has suggested that democracy gradually has become "the only game in town" (Linz and Stepan 1996, 5). Others however seem indefinitely stuck in the grey zone between democracy and autocracy, while yet others are slowly backsliding into more repressive forms of government (Mechkova, Luhrmann and Lindberg 2017). Since 2000, the annual number of countries classified as Partly Free has remained around 60, primarily located in Sub-Saharan Africa, South and Southeast Asia, the

former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe as well as Central and South America (Puddington and Dunham 2019).[2]

Characteristic for unconsolidated democracies is that they feature many of the familiar aspects of democracy, such as regularly occurring multiparty elections and basic rights regarding freedom of assembly and the media. Winning elections are also seen in these regimes as the only legitimate route to gaining and securing political power. Nevertheless, the practice of democracy often falls short in these regimes. Elections are frequently of poor quality and may at times be severely manipulated; opposition parties and supporters are regularly intimidated and harassed; and individual journalists are threatened, and media outlets silenced. These types of regimes also often suffer from widespread corruption and weak enforcement of the rule of law, while public trust and confidence in democratic institutions is typically very low (Levitsky and Way 2010, 6-12, Diamond 2002). Economically, these regimes however vary. Unconsolidated democracies include high income countries, upper middle income, lower middle income, as well as low income countries (World Bank 2020).[3]

Electoral integrity, as already noted above, is often a central concern especially in unconsolidated democracies. In closed autocracies (countries classified as Not Free by Freedom House) the quality of electoral procedures is largely irrelevant, as these do not hold competitive elections. In long established liberal democracies (countries classified as Free), on the other hand, elections often meet democratic criteria and only sporadically experience problems relating to electoral integrity. Long established democracies are also often able to resolve such problems through robust legal and constitutional channels and deeper reservoirs of public trust that have been built up over successive elections and that can facilitate acceptance of electoral outcomes, even when the process has endured problems. (Norris, Frank and Martinez i Coma 2015, 12-13). In unconsolidated democracies, however,

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[2] In 2018, out of the 58 countries categorised as Partly Free, 13 were in Asia, 12 in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, 9 in Latin America, 3 in Middle East and North Africa, and 21 in Sub-Saharan Africa (Puddington and Dunham 2019).

[3] Out of the 58 countries classified as Partly Free in 2018, four were classified as High Income countries by the World Bank, 19 as Upper Middle Income countries, 20 as Lower Middle Income countries, and 14 as Low Income countries (World Bank 2020).

electoral malpractices are frequently both widespread and severe, and at times decisive for the outcome, i.e. for who won or lost the election. Unconsolidated democracies also tend to lack both proper legal channels to redress these problems or public trust in democratic institutions. Therefore, challenges to electoral integrity in unconsolidated democracies may often result in full blown legitimacy crises or violent conflict that further derails the process of democratic consolidation (Norris 2014, 113-190). Perhaps unsurprising therefore, the bulk of international efforts to strengthen electoral integrity is often focused on these types of regimes (Norris 2017, Kelley 2012).

1.2.2 Electoral Malpractices

Elections can fail to satisfy democratic principles due to a number of reasons, for example due to lack of resources, incompetence or sheer bad luck.[4] Often, however, elections in unconsolidated democracies are hampered by more conscious attempts to distort the electoral process: *electoral malpractices.* Electoral malpractices constitute intentional violations by election officials or other stakeholders that seek to detract from the core democratic principles and procedural conditions described above (Birch 2011, 26-27, Vickery and Shein 2012). Such malpractices serve to "substitute personal or partisan gain on the part of a restricted number of political actors for popular control by all" (Birch 2011, 26). This thesis focuses primarily on the occurrence of such intentional violations, or alternatively on the *perceived* occurrence of such violations.

Research on electoral malpractices have emphasised that these can occur in a variety of different ways and enacted at different time-points during the election cycle. For example, electoral malpractices may involve acts to manipulate institutions, illicit tactics to distort voters' preferences and more direct attempts to rig the act of voting itself (Birch 2011, 29-51). Electoral malpractices may also occur long before the election when voters are registered and when parties carry out their electoral campaign, during Election Day when voters go to their polling stations and

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[4] See for example Morley (2018) on threats from natural disasters and other emergencies that may disrupt elections.

cast their ballots, and shortly thereafter when votes are counted and tabulated, and results are announced (Calingaert 2006).

Typical malpractices that seek to detract from the principle of inclusiveness can involve manipulation of voter registers, discriminatory registration and voter identification requirements, as well as intentional failures to provide specific areas with adequate voting opportunities, including sufficient polling stations or voting material (Calingaert 2006, 139-140, Birch 2011, 36-37, Schedler 2002, 44). Often voters are also discouraged from going to the polls by safety concerns and electoral violence. In fact, several studies highlight how pre-election violence is often used intentionally in many unconsolidated democracies to dampen turnout in specific areas for electoral purposes (Hafner-Burton, Hyde and Jablonski 2014, Collier and Vicente 2012, Daxecker 2014, Bratton 2008, Rauchenberg and Paula 2019). All these malpractices involve some form of *de facto* voter disenfranchisement that deny voters their core rights to express their preferences in democratic elections. Political contestants are similarly often excluded from participating and running in elections through the discriminatory use of laws to disqualify individual candidates or ban entire parties, as well as through intimidation or more direct forms of persecution (Calingaert 2006, 140, Schedler 2002, 44).

The principle of policy-oriented voting, in turn, is undermined by gross imbalances and biases in how and how much different parties and candidates are reported in the media during the campaign period. Frequently in unconsolidated democracies, state media outlets systematically focus an overwhelming majority of their election coverage only on the ruling party, while opposition parties and candidates are denied proper opportunities to get their messages out (Birch 2011, 31-32, Levitsky and Way 2010, 11). The playing field between ruling party and the opposition is also often tilted in favour of the former as a result of misuse of state resources for campaign purposes. Examples of such misuse includes the use of government vehicles and personnel for campaigning or the exploitation of state activities and policies for propaganda purposes (Birch 2011, 32, Levitsky and Way 2010, 9-11). Other common malpractices that detract from this principle also involve undue attempts to influence voters' preferences by offering them financial rewards (i.e. vote buying) or by forcing them to vote for specific parties or candidates through

intimidation and threats of violence (Mares and Young 2016, Collier and Vicente 2012, Birch 2011, 33-34).

Finally, malpractices that detract from the principles of effective aggregation include a range of illicit ploys and strategies to either inflate or suppress votes at the level of individual polling stations, regional counting centres, or at the central electoral commission. These malpractices can include ballot-box stuffing, multiple voting and result-sheet forgery by which more votes are added to a preferred party or candidate. They may also take the form of wanton destruction or the intentional invalidation of votes that would have otherwise benefited opposing parties or candidates. Election Day malpractices may also involve intentionally 'miscounting' votes during the vote counting or tabulation process, or simply publishing completely fictional results that bear no resemblance to the real votes that were cast (Birch 2011, 37-38, Calingaert 2006, 143-147, Callen and Long 2015, Lehoucq and Molina 2002). The effective aggregation of voters' preferences can also be distorted through more subtle manipulation of the electoral law, for example through malapportionment and gerrymandering; practices that occur in many unconsolidated democracies but are not exclusive to these (Boone and Wahman 2015, Norris, Cameron and Wynter 2018).

Scholars have emphasised various factors and dynamics that may explain the occurrence of these different types of malpractices. Socioeconomic factors, such as poverty, high economic inequality and deep social divides, as well as high reliance on natural resources such as oil and gas, have all been shown to correlate positively with the occurrence of electoral malpractices (Norris 2015, 63-68, Birch 2011, 112-114). Institutional factors, such as the electoral system and the rules of electoral governance, have also been shown to be influential. Evidence shows that majoritarian electoral systems more often than proportional systems experience malpractices (Lehoucq and Kolev 2015, Birch 2007) while the presence of autonomous electoral management bodies and effective oversight institutions such as an independent judiciary, an active civil society, and free media tend to make malpractices less likely to occur (Norris 2015, 113-132 and 133-161, Birch and Van Ham 2017, Hartlyn, McCoy and Mustillo 2008).

Electoral competition and tight races have often been seen as factors that increase the likelihood of malpractices. In close races, the argument goes, malpractices have a greater chance of impacting who wins or loses, and less of it is needed, thus making malpractices more likely to occur (Scott 1972, Molina and Lehoucq 1999, Alvarez and Boehmke 2008). Despite this, in many unconsolidated democracies, electoral malpractices often occur even when it is patently not needed to secure victory. Therefore, some scholars argue that "winning" elections is not always the sole purpose of electoral malpractices. Instead malpractices can be used to signal the political dominance of the incumbent party and make apparent the power disparities between the ruling party and the opposition (Simpser 2013).

In addition to the overall level of malpractices, scholars have also sought to explain the use of different types of malpractices. For example, Birch (2011, 53-70) argues that perpetrators often seek to manipulate the electoral rules and institutions typically prior to the election, as the risk and potential costs to legitimacy associated with this are much lower. In contrast, they only engage in direct Election Day fraud, such as manipulation of vote counting and tabulation, if necessary, as the potential costs associated with this, if they get caught, are much higher. Lindberg and Van Ham (2015), following a similar line of argument, theorise that when unconsolidated democracies transition further towards fully liberal democracies, more overt forms of malpractices, such as open harassment of the opposition and obvious manipulation of the electoral administration, become less acceptable and therefore typically decrease in occurrence. The outcome may not however be fully free and fair elections, they argue, but instead overt malpractices are often replaced by more subtle and covert ones, such as vote buying.

Electoral malpractices, such as the ones described above, directly detract from core democratic principles, and have also been associated with peoples' lack of confidence in democratic institutions, increased societal tensions and outbreaks of protests and violence (Norris 2014, 113-190). Often, however, it is enough that people mistrust electoral authorities or simply suspect that the contest may have been rigged to undermine democratic legitimacy, regardless of the actual occurrence of malpractices. Ideally, peoples' perceptions about the integrity of elections would correspond to the actual level of malpractices, so that when elections meet

democratic conditions, people would accept the outcomes and when elections are flawed, they would reject them. However, public opinion research suggests that peoples' views regarding electoral integrity are often heavily biased, especially along partisan lines. When asked about the integrity of a past election, supporters of the parties that lost the election are regularly more critical of the electoral process and more likely to believe that malpractices occurred. Supporters of the winning party, on the other hand, are more likely to think that the election was fully free and fair, and to downplay any problems that may have occurred in it (Andersson, et al. 2005, Cantu and Garcia-Ponce 2015, Kernell and Mullinix 2019, Birch 2008, Rose and Mishler 2009).[5] In fact, research suggests that when people assess the quality of electoral procedures, partisanship may sometimes matter far more for their perceptions than even personally experiencing malpractices (Wellman, Hyde and Hall 2018). Such partisan divides in unconsolidated democracies often lead to fierce reciprocal accusations of fraud, electoral boycotts, and a refusal on the losing side to accept the election results as valid. In extreme cases, they may also result in deadly post-election protests, riots, and violence. Partisan divides regarding electoral integrity therefore often add further strains to the democratic consolidation process (Andersson, et al. 2005, 90-119, Norris, Frank and Martinez i Coma 2015, Hyde and Marinov 2014, Lindberg 2006, Moehler and Lindberg 2009).

1.2.3 Detecting electoral malpractices

One major challenge that faces any study on electoral integrity is how to identify malpractices. Electoral malpractices and fraud are often illegal and politically contentious and therefore perpetrators have strong incentives to keep them secret. Many electoral malpractices tend to occur in individual polling stations or counting centres, often far away from the prying eyes of many election observers or journalists that could provide an objective account of them. Adding further uncertainty is also the fact that potential victims of electoral malpractices may at times have incentives

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[5] Winners also tend to view the state of democracy and rule of law in a better light, democratic institutions such as parliaments as more representative, and authorities including courts and the police as more trustworthy, compared to losers (Andersson, et al. 2005, Moehler and Lindberg 2009).

to exaggerate the occurrence of malpractices (Lehoucq 2003, Cantu and Garcia-Ponce 2015). As a result, it is often very difficult to conclusively determine whether malpractices have actually occurred, who potentially profited from them, and who was harmed by them. It is equally difficult to assess with any certainty where or how the malpractices may have happened and how extensive they possibly were. The question of identifying or detecting electoral malpractices is therefore often a central focus in studies on electoral integrity (Alvarez, Hall and Hyde 2009).

A common approach used in many cross-national studies is to rely on some form of aggregate measures of electoral integrity. These can be measures constructed by consulting electoral experts in different countries on the quality of recent elections (Norris and Gromping 2019, Coppedge, et al. 2019) or by analysing reports issued by international observer organisations that monitored a given election (Birch 2011, Kelley and Kolev 2010, Hartlyn, McCoy and Mustillo 2008, Donno 2013). Some measures also rely on electoral complaints or on media reports and events data (Lehoucq and Molina 2002, Hyde and Marinov 2012), and some combine many different sources (Lindberg 2006, Simpser 2013, Bishop and Hoeffler 2016).[6]

These types of measures have the advantage of covering a large number of countries often over substantial time periods, allowing for cross-national examination into the possible determinants of the overall level of electoral integrity in different elections. On the other hand, aggregate measures of electoral integrity often provide only approximations of the level of malpractices in an individual election and it is seldom clear from these alone how extensive certain malpractices may have been, if they affected the outcome, or who carried them out, or where exactly they occurred (Norris 2014, 40-72).

In order to more conclusively and in more detail verify the occurrence of different malpractices, therefore, scholars also rely on other methods. One approach is to examine disaggregated election data in order to determine whether official results have been manipulated in some way. This research field, which is often termed *election forensics*, applies statistical methods to analyse electoral data, often

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[6] For overviews of different measures on electoral integrity see Norris (2014, 40-54) and Simpser (2013).

right down to the level of individual polling stations, looking for different anomalous patterns that could indicate malpractices and fraud. Many studies in this field start with some assumptions about what elections absent any malpractices should look like, for example in terms of turnout and vote shares or the frequency of different digits in tabulation sheets. They then proceed to look for patterns that deviate from the assumptions that are unlikely to have been produced through non-fraudulent means (Hicken and Mebane 2015).

Such deviating patterns may include suspicious spikes in turnout levels with individual polling stations showing up to 100 percent turnout, and sometimes even beyond 100 percent. Such polling stations often also show overwhelming support for one particular party or candidate and are therefore typically seen as 'red flags' for ballot box stuffing (Myagkov, Ordeshook and Shakin 2009, Klimek, et al. 2012). Deviations may also involve suspiciously high shares of invalid votes in individual polling stations or areas indicating that the votes have likely been intentionally invalidated (Herron 2010, Leemann and Boschler 2014, Losada 2006). Scholars have also looked at the digits in aggregate result-sheets to examine whether they follow known distributions or if certain digits stand out, suggesting possible foul play (Beber and Scacco 2012, Mebane 2009, Deckert, Myagkov and Ordeshook 2011). Finally, individual polling stations in which the results differ significantly from other polling stations that should have nearly identical results have also been examined as possible patterns of fraud (Cantu 2014, Hausman and Rigobon 2011, Jimenez, Hidalgo and Klimek 2017). Electoral forensics studies have primarily examined individual elections in different countries, but recent work has also started exploring possibilities for cross-national comparison between elections in different elections (Klimek, et al. 2012, Jimenez, Hidalgo and Klimek 2017, Montgomery, et al. 2015).

A related approach to uncover the occurrence of electoral malpractices has also been the use of randomised control-trials or naturally occurring experiments. Here the randomised or as-if random placement of election observers at individual polling stations has in particular been utilised by scholars to identify the occurrence of malpractices (Hyde 2007, Asunka, et al. 2019, Enikopolov, et al. 2013, Ichino and Schundeln 2012). These studies assume that the presence of election observers deter malpractices from occurring in observed polling stations and point to significant

differences in electoral turnout and vote-shares between observed and non-observed polling stations as a sign that malpractices likely occurred in the latter.

Election observers themselves also sometimes make use of randomisation when they carry out so-called parallel vote tabulations (PVT) in which observers collect vote figures from a randomly selected sample of polling stations and then compare it to the final results. If vote-shares or turnout in the PVT sample deviates significantly from the final results, then it could mean that votes have been tampered with during tabulation (Garber and Cowan 1993). Exit polls have similarly been used for these purposes (USAID 2015). Other studies that have applied experimental designs to identify malpractices also include list-experiments incorporated into surveys to uncover the extent of for example vote buying (Kramon 2016, Herron and Sjoberg 2016, Gonzales-Ocantos, et al. 2012) and various field experimental studies that have sought to evaluate the effectiveness of information and other campaigns to discourage various forms of malpractices (Wantchekon 2003, Vicente and Wantchekon 2009, Callen and Long 2015).

The fact that electoral forensics studies and experimental approaches rely on objective data rather than the subjective judgements of observers and experts increases their validity, allowing scholars to more conclusively infer whether malpractices and fraud occurred or not in a given election. Depending on the methods and design, these studies also have the potential to reveal the type of malpractices that are used and where they may have occurred. Nevertheless, scholars in this field do also warn that these methods, regardless of how well they are designed, are liable both to false negatives (not detecting malpractices when they occur) and false positives (claiming that malpractices occurred even though they did not). Therefore, electoral forensics scholars emphasise that such studies should always be supported with robust theory on where and how malpractices are likely to have occurred (Leemann and Boschler 2014) or complemented with other findings, such as reports from election observers (Hicken and Mebane 2015), in order to convincingly verify the occurrence of malpractices.

1.2.4 Strengthening electoral integrity

The international community has invested considerable resources into strengthening democratic governance, and in particular electoral integrity; a development that has only intensified as elections have spread across the world. Current efforts to strengthen electoral integrity include transparency-enhancing measures, capacity-building, as well as coercion. These measures range from the deployment of election observer missions, including both long-term observers as well as Election Day observers sent to individual polling stations; election audits to settle disputes over electoral results; support in designing electoral legislation and procedures in line with best practices; building the capacity of independent agencies that manage and oversee elections, including electoral commissions, journalists, and judiciaries; financial support and technical assistance to support the running of elections, ranging from ballot-printing to the introduction of biometric technologies; as well as international sanctions targeting countries and individuals that engage in malpractices (Norris 2017, Norris and Nai 2017). Supporting free and fair elections does not come cheap however. In the late 1980s, less than USD 1 billion of foreign aid was annually spent on democracy assistance, including support for elections, human rights, civil society and the media. Today, the annual total is said to be over USD 10 billion (Carothers 2015).

A particularly prominent form of strategy to strengthen electoral integrity is election monitoring. In fact, in unconsolidated democracies today, nearly all national elections have either international or domestic elections observers present, and often both of these. International election observer organisations include regional organisations such as the European Union (EU), the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the African Union (AU), and the Organisation of American States (OAS), as well as international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), such as the Carter Center, International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), and the Commonwealth Secretariat. Over the last decades, these organisations have deployed thousands of international observers to unconsolidated democracies across the world (Kelley 2012, 16-42). Complementing these efforts are typically domestic observers organised by various domestic NGOs, whose funding

and training is often supported by international donors. During Election Day, domestic observers can deploy far greater numbers of observers than visiting international missions, often several thousands in an individual election (Bjornlund 2004, Gromping 2017). [7] Both domestic and international election observers generally monitor the lead up to elections, including registration of voters, campaigns, and the exposure and portrayal of different parties in the mass media; proceedings during Election Day, especially with regards to voting, counting and tabulation of results; as well as the publication of results and the aftermath of the election. Following the election, observers present their findings regarding the integrity of the election process in press briefings, statements and in-depth reports (Hyde 2011, Kelley 2012).

Scholars have sought to examine the effectiveness and potential consequences of various efforts to strengthen electoral integrity, in particular with regards to election monitoring. Several research findings point towards election monitors contributing positively in this regard. For example, Kelley (2012, 112-130), when comparing elections in unconsolidated democracies over the period 1975-2004, finds that elections that are monitored by international observers are associated with overall better electoral procedures and fewer malpractices compared to elections with no observers present. Also, monitored elections according to her study experience more frequent electoral turnovers (possibly due to lesser manipulation on the side of the incumbent).

This positive impression regarding the role of election observers is further reinforced by findings of the above-mentioned studies that show that election observers deter various forms of election malpractices at individual polling stations. For instance, these studies show that where observers are present, the occurrence of registration fraud, ballot-box stuffing and vote stealing, and even incidents of electoral violence, are often reduced (Hyde 2007, Enikopolov, et al. 2013, Asunka, et al. 2019, Ichino and Schundeln 2012). Scholars have also argued that the assessments issued by election observers about the integrity of the contest can create important

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[7] For example, in the 1986 Philippine presidential elections, the Philippine NGO NAMFREL mobilised up to 500,000 domestic observers in their effort to monitor each and every polling stations in the country (Bjornlund 2004).

incentives for leaders in unconsolidated democracies to hold 'cleaner' elections and for international and regional organisations to more accurately target coercive actions, including sanctions (Hyde 2011, Donno 2013).

This does not mean however that interventions to strengthen electoral integrity are always considered effective or even positive. For instance, when it comes to the presence of election observers at individual polling stations, it has been shown that these may at times struggle to deter malpractices, particularly in more authoritarian settings where officials and local actors may be less sensitive to criticism and more likely to ignore the presence of observers (Buzin, Brondum and Robertson 2016, Sjoberg 2016). Studies have also shown that the presence of election observers at one location can at times divert attempted malpractices to other locations (Ichino and Schundeln 2012, Asunka, et al. 2019). When it comes to potential observer criticism of the electoral integrity, it has been documented that incumbents in unconsolidated democracies often seek to neutralise this by inviting several different types of observers, some of which are likely to provide them with more positive assessments (Kelley 2012, 43-58, Daxecker and Schneider 2014). Relatedly, studies have shown that the knowledge that election observers will be present and monitor an election can lead incumbents in unconsolidated democracies to employ some other forms of malpractices, typically prior to the election (Beaulieu and Hyde 2009, Simpser and Donno 2012, Daxecker 2014).

Finally, the question of whether and how efforts to strengthen electoral integrity, and in particular election observer missions, influences domestic perceptions about the election quality has become of interest in this field. Past research has argued that when election observers issue positive statements about an election, domestic audiences often gain more trust in electoral procedures (Bjornlund 2004, Garner and Cowan 1993). On the other hand, when election observers issue negative statements about an election it has been shown to correlate positively with post-election protests and violence (Hyde and Marinov 2014, Daxecker 2012, von Borzyskowski 2019). At the individual level, some studies show that awareness that election observers are monitoring polling facilities increase peoples trust in electoral procedures (Brancati 2014, Kerr 2013), however other studies show no such effects (Cantu and Garcia-Ponce 2015). Exposing voters to

either positive or negative observer statements have also been shown to influence voters' perceptions, however, these effects tend to be heavily conditioned by partisan affiliation (Bush and Prather 2017, Robertson 2015).

1.3 Empirical Studies, Case Selection, Data and Methods

This will seek to build on and contribute to existing body of research in this field. e three empirical studies presented in this thesis will study core challenges to electoral integrity in unconsolidated democracies and examine potential strategies and remedies that may help overcome or alleviate these challenges. As described above, I focus particularly on different transparency-enhancing measures to strengthen electoral integrity. Below I discuss the empirical studies in more detail, including their guiding research questions, the selection of cases, and the use of empirical data and research methods.

1.3.1 Empirical studies and research questions

The first empirical study will focus on one central transparency-enhancing strategy which is to deploy election observers to individual polling stations on Election Day. Here I build on the aforementioned past research that has emphasised that election observers can deter various electoral malpractices (Hyde 2007, Enikopolov, et al. 2013, Asunka, et al. 2019). The study asks whether the presence of election observers at the polling station can also safeguard women's rights to vote. Despite universal suffrage for both men and women being the norm today across virtually all countries that claim to be democracies, the reality on the ground in many unconsolidated democracies is often different. Discrimination, marginalisation, and direct attempts to ban women from voting or standing in elections, often *de facto* disenfranchise several thousands of women. Electoral participation, and broader participation in civil society, is also often considerably lower for women than for men in many unconsolidated democracies. Acknowledging these challenges, election observer organisations have increasingly emphasised women's electoral rights and female participation as central concerns and give special attention to these in their

observation reports (EU 2016, OSCE 2004, UN 2005, OAS 2013). This study therefore seeks to examine whether deploying election observers on Election Day can have an impact on women's opportunities to vote at the level of individual polling stations. Can the presence of election observers in individual polling stations contribute to better safeguarding women's right to vote and deter female disenfranchisement? Can election observers even increase female participation? Or does their presence at the polling station possibly have unintended consequences and even detrimental effects on female electoral participation? This study represents the first attempt to systematically examine the impact of election observers on female participation.

The second empirical study will look further into different types of electoral malpractices carried out on Election Day in individual polling stations. As noted above, one enabling factor for electoral malpractices is that they occur in secret, away from public scrutiny, making it difficult to verify accusations of fraud or to hold perpetrators to account. Making electoral processes more transparent and calling out malpractices when they occur is therefore a first, but essential, step in strengthening electoral integrity. But how can electoral malpractices best be identified? How can we verify that malpractices have actually occurred? Similarly, how can we best determine how or where malpractices were carried out or who in the end benefitted or were harmed by them? The second empirical study seeks to answer these questions by examining how perpetrators trade-off different types of malpractices on Election Day. In particular, the study asks how local support for the fraudulent party impacts on the choices and trade-offs of different types of electoral malpractices to either inflate or suppress votes at individual polling stations. In examining this question, I use electoral forensics methods to identify deviating patterns in the electoral data that are consistent with specific types of malpractices.

Finally, the third study will examine how transparency-enhancing strategies impact on domestic audiences, especially on the politicians taking part in elections. As described above, perceptions on the quality of elections are often divided along partisan lines. Whereas winners more often view an election as free and fair, losers tend to emphasise the flaws and shortcomings in the process. In unconsolidated democracies, such winner-loser gaps may result in increased tensions and heightened risks of post-election protests and violence, especially following

controversial elections. The third empirical study has two objectives. Firstly, it asks whether partisanship is also a determining factor when it comes to political elites and their evaluations of election integrity. Political elites from both the winning and losing sides often take central roles following a controversial election, possibly urging on or restraining post-election protests and violence. Despite this, past research on the winner-loser gaps has almost exclusively focused on ordinary voters when it comes to perceptions on electoral integrity. This study therefore asks whether politicians, when they evaluate the quality of electoral processes, are similarly influenced by whether they are affiliated with the winning or losing side in the election. Are politicians from the winning side more likely to praise the election than those from the losing side simply because they belong to this winning camp? Or are political elites less susceptible to such tendencies? Secondly, the study asks whether and how election observer assessments impact on politicians stated views. Ideally, providing impartial assessments on the electoral process should help politicians from either side to reach an agreement on the true quality of the election. But are politicians actually open to outside assessments on the electoral quality? When told that election observer missions highlighted certain issues with regards to the integrity of electoral procedures, do politicians update their own evaluations on this? If so, are these effects the same across all politicians, or do they vary along partisan lines? This study makes use of an elite-level survey to gauge politicians' views on electoral integrity with an embedded survey-experiment to assess the impact of election observer statements.

1.3.2 Case Selection

The empirical studies will examine the research questions in elections in three unconsolidated democracies: in Pakistan, Ukraine and Malawi. These three countries are all characterised in the academic literature as unconsolidated democracies or hybrid regimes that hold open and competitive multiparty elections but that display systematic or severe violations of core democratic rights and freedoms to such a degree that they cannot be considered as fully consolidated liberal democracies (Diamond 2002, Levitsky and Way 2010). The three cases included in this thesis were

all classified by Freedom House as Partly Free during the time-periods focused upon in each individual study. Below I justify further the selection of each case, emphasising that the selected cases can be seen as *illustrative cases* in which the specific phenomenon under study is visible in a pronounced way. By investigating such cases in-depth we can obtain a more detailed and elaborate understanding of the phenomenon under study (Mills, Durepos and Wiebe 2010, 61-63). For each case study I also consider possibilities for generalisations to other unconsolidated democracies that display similar characteristics. The selection of cases in this thesis has also been guided by data availability and opportunities to identify causal relationships, which will be discussed further in the following sub-section.

The first empirical study presented in this thesis, which focuses on election observers and female electoral participation and disenfranchisement, is set in Pakistan during the General Election in 2008. Following a series of military coups, Pakistan returned to holding open multiparty elections in 2008, which were won by the opposition. Subsequent open multiparty elections were also held in 2013 and 2018. Pakistan invites both international and domestic election observers to monitor the quality of the electoral process and allows these organisations to deploy observers to individual polling station on Election Day. Despite this, systematic abuses of democratic rights and freedoms, including a range of human rights abuses, such as arbitrary arrests, harassment of journalists, and violations of women's and minority rights, has meant that the country still fails to be considered as a fully consolidated democracy (Puddington and Dunham 2019, 743-751). Freedom House rated the country as Partly Free in 2008. On their 7-point scale, in which lower scores indicate more democratic freedoms, Pakistan scored 4 on political rights, and 5 on civil liberties (Puddington, Piano, et al. 2009, 546). A particular concern in Pakistan regards women's political and electoral participation, which have been highlighted by both scholars and international organisations (Cheema, et al. 2019, Awan 2016, Puddington, Piano, et al. 2009). Factors such as traditional norms, discriminatory laws, and weak enforcement of the rule of law, have often restricted female electoral participation in Pakistan. In addition, there are also several reports of local incidents in Pakistani elections in which women are intentionally hindered or banned from voting (EU 2008, Democracy International 2011, Siddiqa 2018). The combination of

electoral monitoring and reported challenges to female electoral participation makes this a particularly interesting case to examine if the presences of election observers at individual polling stations can help safeguard women's rights to vote. Based on the experiences in Pakistan we can draw some tentative conclusions about the potentials of observers in deterring malpractices targeting women, but also on their effects on female electoral participation in general.

Pakistan is not an isolated case when it comes to challenges to female participation in unconsolidated democracies (Randall 2014, Norris and Inglehart 2003). One potential proxy for this is provided by the Varieties of Democracy measure on *Women civil society participation index* (Coppedge, et al. 2019). This is an expert-based index incorporating women's open discussion of political issues, participation in civil society organisations, and representation in the ranks of journalists. The measure ranges from 3 indicating high levels of female civil society participation to -3 indicating complete lack of participation (V-Dem 2020, 184). Figure 1 below shows how countries that have been classified as Partly Free by Freedom House at some point since the year 2000 measure on this index. The values in figure 1 represent average values for those years each country was classified as Partly Free.

Overall, the values on the Women Civil Society Index vary in Partly Free countries between 2.3 in Trinidad and Tobago to -1 in Yemen. Pakistan is placed towards the bottom of the graph with an average score of 0.63, suggesting comparatively low levels of female civil society participation. Other countries that display similarly low levels of female civil society participation include Albania, Bolivia, Zimbabwe, Niger, Maldives, Ecuador, Guinea, Azerbaijan, Gabon, Bahrain, Kosovo, Papua New Guinea and Djibouti. Countries with even lower levels of female civil society participation include Haiti, Democratic Republic of Congo, Libya, Turkey, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Egypt and Yemen. The countries that show similar types of challenges when it comes to female participation as Pakistan are the types of unconsolidated democracies that the findings from Pakistan could reasonably be generalised to.

Figure 1 *Women civil society participation in unconsolidated democracies*
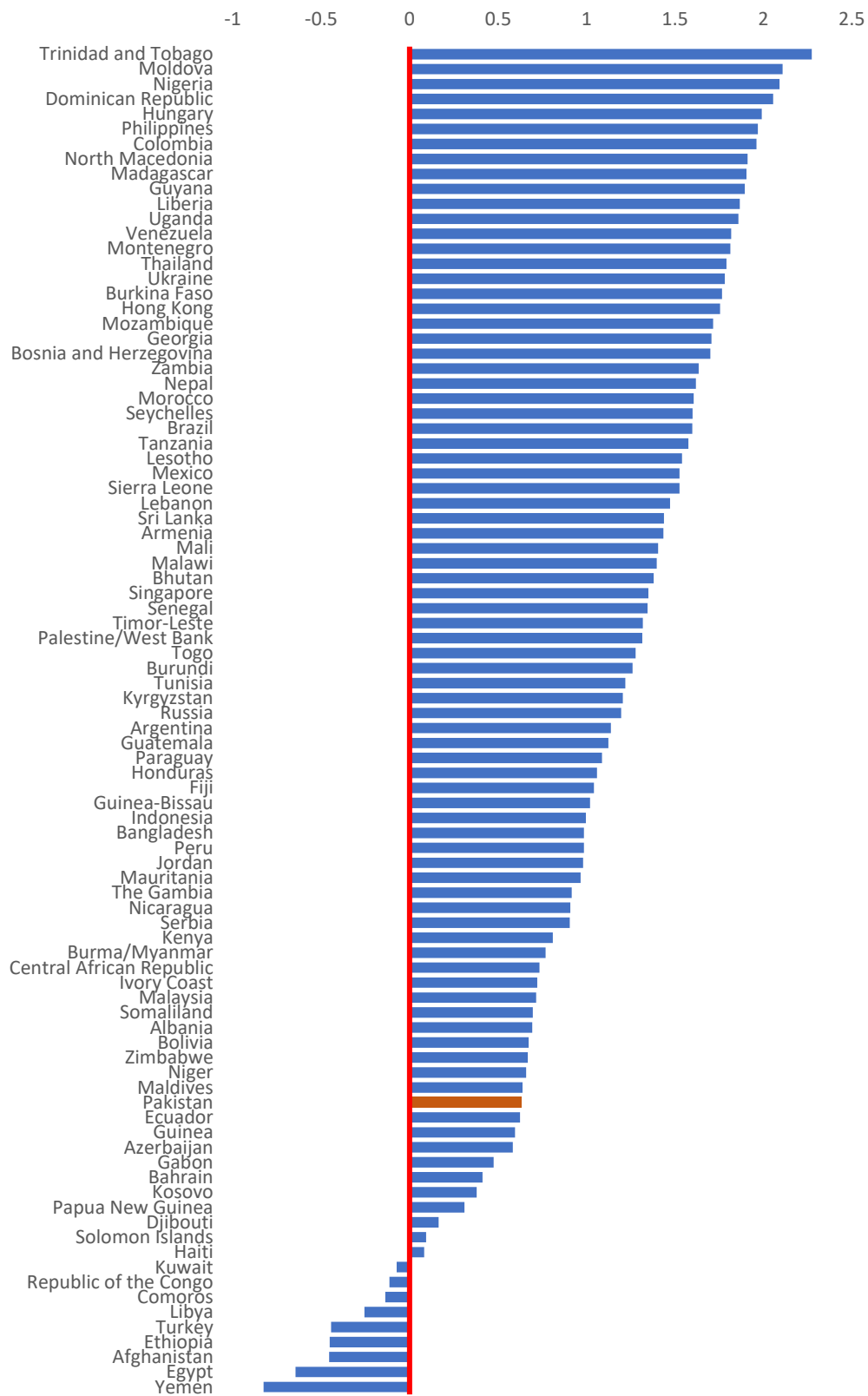
Note: The graph represents countries classified by Freedom House as Partly Free during 2000-2018 and compares their average values on V-Dem Women Civil Society Participation Index (source: Coppedge, et al. 2019).

The second empirical study presented in this thesis, focusing on different types of Election Day malpractices, is set in Ukraine during the 2004 Presidential elections. Ukraine has held open multiparty elections for both the executive and legislature since the fall of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. These elections have been monitored by both international and domestic election observer organisations. The integrity of early elections, however, has been questioned, and election observer reports highlight that various forms of malpractices may often have impacted on the final results (OSCE 2000, OSCE 1998). The 2004 runoff presidential election represents a low point in this regards during which electoral malpractices – especially those that were carried out on Election Day in individual polling stations – were particularly widespread and severe, leading to post-election mass demonstrations and eventually a nullification of the election results by the constitutional court (Wilson 2005, Myagkov, Ordeshook and Shakin 2009, OSCE 2005). Freedom House rated Ukraine as Partly Free in 2004. On their 7-point scale, Ukraine scored 4 on political rights and 3 on civil liberties (Piano and Puddington 2005, 663). The well recorded and severe electoral malpractices that occurred during the 2004 elections allow us to further examine the use of different types of malpractices and how to go about detecting their occurrence. Based on the findings from these elections we can also make predictions with regards to how perpetrators are likely to act in elections in other unconsolidated democracies.

While the Ukrainian 2004 elections can be seen as something of an extreme case when it comes to Election Day malpractices, several other unconsolidated democracies have also experienced these. One possible proxy for this is the Varieties of Democracy measure *Other Voting Irregularities* (Coppedge, et al. 2019), which is an expert-based index that seeks to measure the degree to which elections suffer from use of double IDs, intentional lack of voting materials, ballot-stuffing, misreporting of votes, and false collation of votes[8]. The measure ranges from 3 indicating that there was no evidence of such malpractices to -3 indicating that they were systematic and widespread (V-Dem 2020, 64).

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[8] The measure does not refer to lack of access to registration, harassment of opposition parties, manipulation of voter registry or vote-buying, which are dealt under different measures (V-DEM 2020).

Figure 2 *Elections with widespread malpractices in unconsolidated democracies*
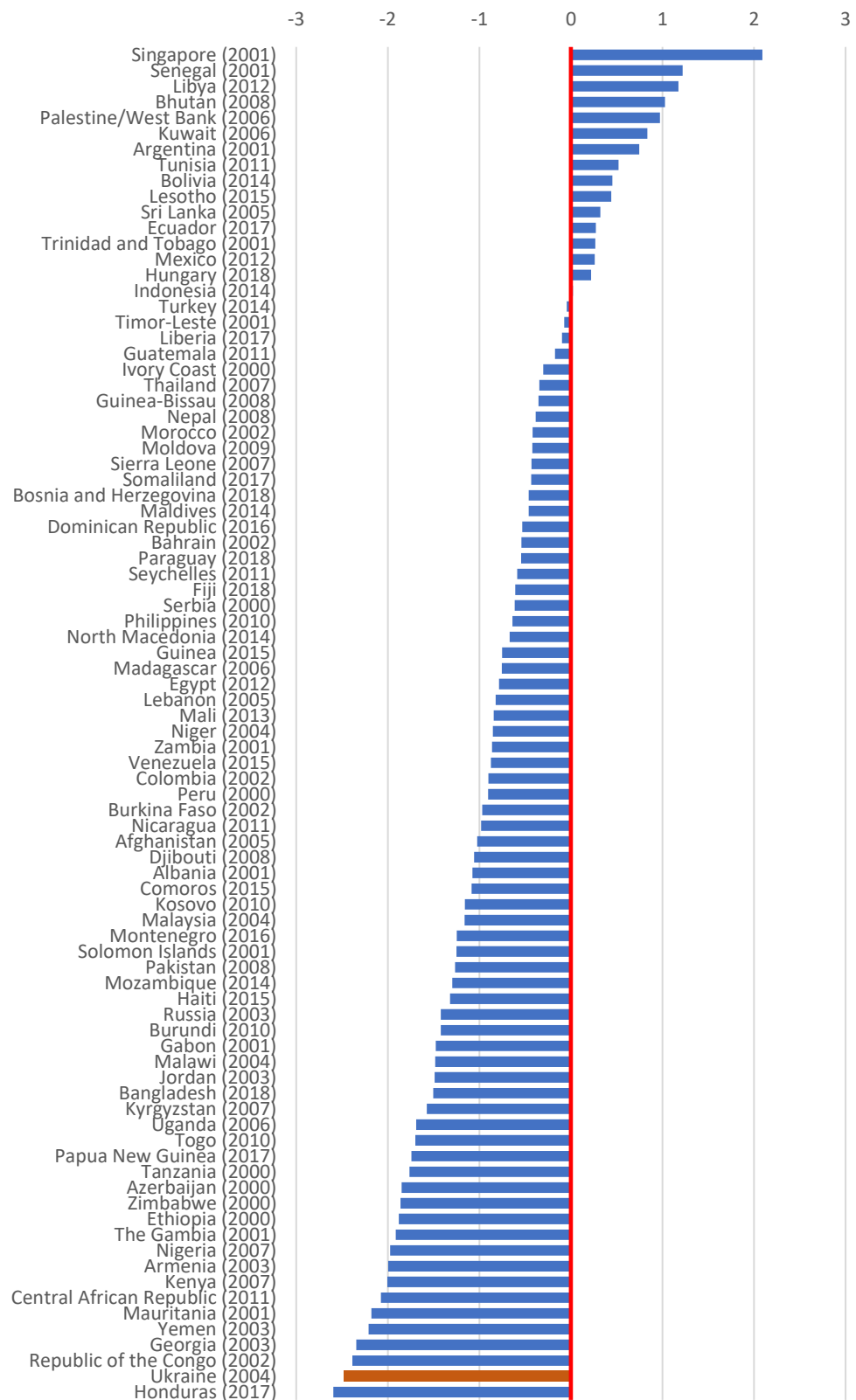
Note: The graph represents countries classified by Freedom House as Partly Free during 2000-2018, and compares elections in these that have scored worst on V-Dem Other Voting Irregularities (source: Coppedge, et al. 2019).

Figure 2 shows how elections from countries classified as Partly Free during an election year performed on this index. In figure 2 I have included only the election year in each country when scores were lowest on this index. Overall, the best rated election in this comparison occurred in Singapore in 2001, receiving just over 2 on this index. At the other extreme is the Honduran election in 2017 which received the lowest scores with approximately -2.5. The 2004 Ukrainian presidential elections are placed at the very bottom of the figure with a score of -2.48 indicating very poor quality elections with severe and widespread electoral malpractices. Other unconsolidated democracies, apart from Honduras, that have also experienced similarly flawed elections include Azerbaijan, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Armenia, Kenya, Central African Republic, Mauritania, Yemen, Georgia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Consequently, it could be argued that these are the types of unconsolidated democracies that the findings from Ukraine could reasonably be generalised to.

Finally, the third empirical study, focusing on whether partisan affiliation drives politicians' evaluations on electoral integrity and whether election observer assessments can have any impact on this, is set in Malawi following the 2014 presidential elections. Malawi introduced multiparty elections in 1994 and has since organised general elections every five years for president and parliament, and more recently also for local councillors. Each of these general elections has seen high attendance of both international and domestic election observer organisations (EU 2019, EU 2014, Chirwa and Patel 2014, Commonwealth Secretariat 2014, Commonwealth Secretariat 2009, IFES 1999, Commonwealth Secretariat 1994).

While political rights and civil liberties are upheld to a high degree in Malawi, democratic governance is also hampered by endemic corruption at all levels of public administration and weak and often biased enforcement of the rule of law. Freedom House rated Malawi as Partly Free in 2014. On their 7-point scale, Malawi scored 3 on political rights and 4 on civil liberties (Puddington, Repucci, et al. 2015, 413-417). Malawi presents an interesting case to examine the different factors that determine evaluations on electoral integrity, not least due to the controversies that have followed recent presidential elections (Patel and Wahman 2015, Chunga 2020). The

third empirical study will focus particularly on the 2014 presidential elections, which was followed by numerous accusations of malpractices and fraud. Recent surveys suggest that a majority of Malawians considered these elections either as not free and fair or as hampered by major problems (Afrobarometer 2019). International and domestic observers that were present, while considering the elections to generally meet democratic principles, were also critical and raised concerns about several irregularities and shortcomings in the process (Patel and Wahman 2015, Chirwa and Patel 2014). By examining how politicians from different parties in Malawi evaluate the integrity of these elections, and whether election observer assessments have any impact on this, we can gain a better understanding about the potentials and challenges to overcome the winner-loser gap in perceptions in unconsolidated democracies.

To identify other unconsolidated democracies that share similar characteristics as Malawi, figure 3 below compares survey results from the sixth World Value Survey (Inglehart, et al. 2014) and the sixth Afrobarometer survey (Afrobarometer 2015). The figure shows the share of respondents in countries classified as Partly Free who believe that election votes are counted fairly. The comparison is based on data from two different surveys and should therefore be treated with some caution. The survey-question in both surveys was identical - "In your opinion, how often do the following things occur in this country's elections? – Votes are counted fairly" – to which respondents could answer on a 4-point scale. For the World Value Survey, the answer categories were "Not at all often", "Not often", "Fairly often" and "Very often", while in the Afrobarometer survey they were "Never", "Sometimes", "Often" and "Always". Figure 3 shows the percentage of respondents in each country who answered the two top answer-categories; that is, they believed that the vote-count was fair Fairly often/Often or Very often/Always.

Overall, based on this comparison, the respondents' confidence in vote-counting in unconsolidated democracies varies considerably from over 90 percent in Singapore to less than 15 percent in Haiti. Malawi is placed towards the right-hand side of the chart, with approximately 38 percent of respondents showing confidence in the fairness of the vote count. Other unconsolidated democracies with comparably low levels of public confidence include Mozambique, Kenya, Colombia, and Georgia,

in which 40-45 percent of respondents expressed strong confidence. Unconsolidated democracies with even lower levels of confidence in the fairness of vote counting include Ukraine, Liberia, Zambia, as well as Haiti, with levels of confidence ranging from as low as 15 to 35 percent. Therefore, it is primarily to these types of unconsolidated democracies that the findings from Malawi could reasonably be generalised to.

Figure 3 *Percent respondents in unconsolidated democracies believing that votes are counted fairly*
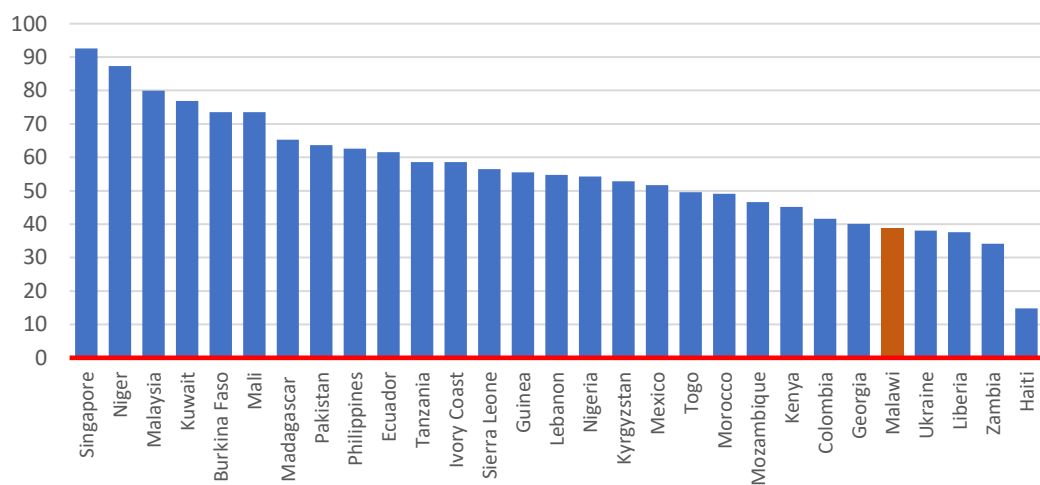
Note: The graph includes countries classified by Freedom House as Partly Free during 2014-2015 and compares percent of respondents who replied that the vote-count was fair fairly often/often or very often/always (sources: Inglehart, et al. 2014, Afrobarometer 2015).

1.3.3 Data and Research Design

The selection of cases in this thesis has also been guided by data availability and opportunities to identify causal relationships. To examine the set-out research questions, each empirical study employs separate methodological approaches and analyse different empirical data.

In the first study I make use of polling station data from female-only polling stations in Pakistan to examine the potential impact of election observers on female participation and disenfranchisement. Pakistan is one of few countries that uses separate polling stations for men and women, in addition to mixed polling stations. While the gender-segregated polling stations in Pakistan have been criticised for

introducing additional challenges to female participation, they also enable detailed measurement of female electoral participation with the aid of polling station data. The data collection – which I carried out myself – involved a challenging process of machine reading and at times hand-coding, and cleaning, of a dataset containing turnout figures for the 2008 Pakistan General Election from up to 13,000 individual female-only polling stations. In the case of Pakistan, I further make use of a large-scale parallel vote tabulation (PVT) exercise, during which domestic election observers were deployed to 10 percent of polling stations using randomised allocation. Following a natural experiment research design (Dunning 2012), I take advantage of this setup to measure the causal impact of election observer presence on female turnout by comparing turnout in those female-only polling stations that were observed on Election Day with those that were not.

The second study also makes use of polling stations level data in order to distinguish patterns in the electoral data that are consistent with different types of malpractices. I use polling station data from the November and December rounds in the 2004 Ukrainian presidential elections. This data covers 33,000 polling stations from each round and were retrieved from the Ukrainian electoral commission's website with the aid of web archiving tools.[9] With regards to the polling station data for the November round in the elections, this has not been examined previously, as the results of this election round were nullified and thus the electoral commission restricted the public accessibility to this data. The 2004 Ukrainian presidential elections also present a unique event in that two otherwise nearly identical elections in November and December, with the same candidates and voters, were carried only 35 days apart of each other, but where one has been seen as heavily fraudulent and the other nearly free and fair. By combining the polling station data from the two election rounds, and examining the change in rates of turnout and invalid votes between the two elections, I am better able to identify patterns that are consistent with different malpractices to either inflate or suppress votes, and to examine how these are related to local support for either candidate in the election.

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[9] Web archiving tools such as Wayback Machine archive hundreds of millions of public websites and webpages each year. This makes it possible to retrieve various websites and data that has once been published on the internet even if it is removed at a later stage.

It is worth emphasising here that both the first and second study examine turnout as an outcome variable. Turnout figures in individual polling stations have often been used to inform about the possible occurrence of electoral malpractices (Myagkov, Ordeshook and Shakin 2009, Klimek, et al. 2012). When turnout in an individual polling station is far below average rates – even reaching zero percent – then this can indicate possible vote suppression, through for example violence and intimidation and other forms of voter disenfranchisement. In contrast, when turnout is far above average rates – near and even above 100 percent – then this can indicate that votes have been fraudulently inflated, possibly through multiple voting, ballot-box stuffing and result-sheet forgery. The focus of the first study in Pakistan is how these possible patterns may be altered if malpractices in an individual polling station are deterred, for example by the presence of an election observer in that polling station. The focus of the second study set in Ukraine, on the other hand, is to use these patterns, and how they vary between the two elections, to examine how local support influences the choice of different malpractices. In this second study, I also focus on polling stations with excessively high rates of invalid votes, indicating that votes may have been suppressed through intentional invalidation.

Finally, the third study set in Malawi makes use of data on politicians' evaluations on electoral integrity collected through an elite-level survey targeting nearly all elected and in-office members of parliament and local councillors in Malawi, resulting in a sample of 460 respondents. I was given the opportunity to carry out this survey while working on a larger research project in Malawi that studied how politicians locally allocate foreign aid (Seim, Jablonski and Ahlbäck 2020). The survey that will be examined in the third study gauged politicians' evaluations regarding the integrity of the 2014 Malawi presidential elections with a battery of survey questions, allowing me to determine whether and how politicians' evaluations differ along partisan lines. In the survey there was also an embedded experiment that sought to measure the impact of election observer concerns on the evaluations of the respondents. The experiment was designed so that all respondents were first equally sensitised to the fact that there had been concerns about irregularities and potential fraud following the election. Randomly assigned respondents were then additionally told that certain international and domestic election observer organisations had

raised concerns about these issues. The experiment will allow us to better determine whether politicians', when reminded of election observer concerns, update their own evaluations of electoral integrity or not.

1.4 Structure

The remainder of the thesis is structured as follows. Below, in chapter 2, I present the empirical study on female participation and disenfranchisement in Pakistan and how election observers impacted on this. The topic of chapter 3 is the study on polling station malpractices in Ukraine and how local support determines the choice of different malpractices. In chapter 4, I present the study on politicians' evaluations on electoral integrity in Malawi, the impact of partisanship and the influence of election observer concerns on these. Finally, in chapter 5, I summarise the key empirical findings, discuss possible generalisations and limitations of these, and put forward a set of policy recommendations and suggestions for further research.

2

Enfranchising the disenfranchised?

The impact of election observers on female electoral
participation and disenfranchisement in Pakistan

Abstract

This chapter studies female electoral participation and disenfranchisement in
Pakistan and examines the impact of election observers on this. The setting for the
study is the 2008 Pakistan General Elections, which featured a significantly lower
turnout among women compared to men and numerous polling stations in which
seemingly all women had been barred from voting. Observing the elections was a
large number of domestic election observers who were randomly assigned to
different polling stations across the country. Following a natural experiment research
design, I utilise the random allocation of observers to estimate their causal effect on
turnout figures in female-only polling stations. The findings of the study show that
observers significantly reduced incidents of zero turnout in female-only polling
stations, indicating that observers were able to deter more brazen attempts of
female disenfranchisement in those polling stations where they were present.
Observers did not however increase average turnout in female polling stations,
suggesting that they did not deter more incremental forms of disenfranchisement.
Instead, their presence was associated with a slight decrease in female turnout when
compared to non-observed polling stations, which may be due to observers in some
ways depressing female participation.

2.1 Introduction

The right to universal and equal suffrage is guaranteed under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (article 21). Equal rights for both women and men to participate and vote in free and fair elections is also central to modern understandings of representative democracy (Dahl 1971). Nevertheless, even in nominally democratic countries, this right is still not fully enforced for millions of individuals. Women in particular are consistently disenfranchised, often as a result of marginalisation and discrimination, but also due to electoral malpractices and violence that prevent women from voting (UN 2005). These problems have been encountered across developing countries but are especially prevalent in parts of the Middle East, North and Africa, and South Asia, where turnout among women is often particularly low (Moghadan 2007). One possible safeguard of women's rights to vote are election observers who are deployed to individual polling stations on Election Day. Several studies have highlighted that election observers play an important role in detecting and deterring electoral malpractices and fraud (Hyde 2011, Kelley 2012). Observer organisations themselves also increasingly emphasise female participation as a primary concern and give special attention to this in their observer reports (EU 2016, OSCE 2004, OAS 2013). Despite this, very little is actually known about the ability of observers to ensure that women are able to vote or the possible consequences that the presence of observers at the polling station can have on female participation, as no previous studies have examined this.

In this chapter, I study the causal effects of the presence of polling station observers (PSO) on participation and disenfranchisement in female-only polling stations in Pakistan. I focus specifically on polling stations that are designated for women only because this allows me to examine effects on female electoral participation, which is not possible in other polling stations in Pakistan for which turnout figures are not gender-disaggregated. The study seeks to examine whether the presence of observers in female-only polling stations are able to reduce instances of disenfranchisement or other electoral malpractices that deny women the right to vote in these polling stations. The aim is further to examine if observers in other ways impact on participation in female-only polling stations. It should be emphasised that

the empirical approach adopted here does not allow me to ascertain the possible impact of observers in other polling stations or on female turnout in Pakistan as a whole.

Building on previous research, I argue that PSOs raise the costs of different forms of malpractices and intentional acts to hinder women from voting, making it more likely that polling station officials and local actors abide by electoral rules. I therefore expect that the presence of PSOs at the polling station reduces incidents of extreme female disenfranchisement, in which women are completely barred from voting in a given polling station, as well as more incremental transgressions that disenfranchise smaller numbers of women from voting in individual polling stations. As a result, I expect that PSOs reduce the number of female-only polling stations with zero turnout and on average increase female participation in those polling stations where they are present.

Nevertheless, PSOs may also impact on female participation in other ways, making results more difficult to interpret. For example, PSOs may deter fraudulent vote inflation in observed polling stations and thus reduce the reported turnout in those polling stations in relation to other non-observed polling stations. Or, their presence may induce polling station officials to apply more stringent voter identification requirements, thus actually making it more difficult for women to vote in observed polling stations. Some women may also for a variety of reasons decide not to vote in case observers are present in the polling station. Therefore, it is also possible that PSOs may decrease female turnout – either reported or real – in those polling stations where they are present. A better understanding of these processes helps to fill an under-researched gap in the academic literature and is also important to practitioners who work towards strengthening women's rights and that seek to enhance their electoral participation.

I test the causal implications of PSOs on female participation and disenfranchisement in polling stations by studying turnout in female-only polling stations during the 2008 General Elections in Pakistan. Women in Pakistan face severe and persistent obstacles to voting. Women's participation rates in Pakistan are considerably lower than for men, and both election observers and the media have reported multiple incidents in which women have been denied their right to

vote. Furthermore, in Pakistan roughly half of all polling stations are divided between male-only and female-only polling stations; the rest being mixed. This enables detailed examination of female turnout right down to the level of individual polling stations[10]. The 2008 General Elections also presents an opportunity to analyse the impact that PSOs may have on female participation and disenfranchisement in individual polling stations through a natural experiment research design. This is made possible as the Pakistani non-governmental organisation Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) carried out a large-scale election observation mission during the 2008 General Elections in which pairs of PSOs were deployed to some seven thousand randomly selected polling stations across the country to observe voting throughout Election Day (FAFEN 2009a).

I take advantage of the randomised allocation of PSOs to different polling stations to examine the causal effect of having PSOs present in female-only polling stations. If the presence of PSOs have an impact on female participation and disenfranchisement, then this should be visible by comparing turnout figures in those polling stations that were observed (the treated) to those that were not (the control group). I use zero turnout in female polling stations as a proxy of more extreme disenfranchisement, as both observers and the media in Pakistan have claimed that these are often the outcome of all women being barred from voting in a given polling station (FAFEN 2009a, EU 2008, DAWN 2013, Democracy International 2011). During the 2008 elections, up to 541 female-only polling stations, or about 4.1 percent of all female-only polling stations in Pakistan, had zero turnout. I further use the average turnout in female-only polling stations as a proxy for more incremental disenfranchisement as well as for estimating other possible effects on PSOs on electoral participation in female-only polling stations.

The polling station data used in the study was compiled by the author using official polling station lists and result sheets, originally published by the Electoral Commission of Pakistan (ECP). The data covers turnout figures in 13,136 female-only

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[10] Other countries that have incorporated some elements of separate polling stations by gender include Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Nigeria, Palestine, Sri Lanka, Yemen, and Zanzibar. Only very few of these however publicise polling station level data.

polling stations from 236 constituencies across Pakistan. The observer data detailing the placement of election observers to different polling stations was provided to me by FAFEN.[11] This data however only indicates whether PSOs were present in a given polling station, and if that polling station had been included in the original sample. FAFEN did not provide me with the original sampling files, or the so-called intention -to-treat data. This could present a possible threat to inferences, as a large number of PSOs reportedly did not locate their sampled polling station on Election Day, but instead observed a substitute one. To account for this, I randomly resample those PSOs that could not locate the correct polling station to nearby polling stations in the same local area multiple times to obtain average estimates. This allows me to test the robustness of the main effect under different scenarios. Another potential concern to casual inferences regards how the presence of observers in polling station impact on other polling stations. Past research has documented how the presence of observers in one polling station may displace malpractices to other stations (Ichino and Schundeln 2012, Asunka, et al. 2019). It was not however possible in this chapter to properly account for these possibilities because it would have needed detailed data on the exact location of individual polling stations and nearby stations which was not available for the entire dataset[12].

The findings of the empirical analyses are mixed, suggesting both that PSOs are able to deter more brazen attempts to disenfranchise women, but also that their presence had a slight negative effect on turnout in female-only polling stations. First, I find that the rate of zero turnout in observed female-only polling stations is significantly lower than in non-observed ones. When measuring the treatment effect using a linear probability model, the presence of PSOs reduces the average probability of zero turnout in female-only polling stations by 3.3 percentage points (p<0.01), and when fixed constituency effects are included in the model, by 1.3 percentage points (p<0.01). Given that the overall probability of zero turnout

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[11] I wish to thank Megan Reif for her help in providing the observer data and approval from FAFEN to analyse this data.
[12] As described in more detail in section 2.4.1 with the aid of census data from 1998 I was able to hand-code the location of those polling stations that observers were not able to locate on Election Day. This process was however already extremely time-consuming for a smaller sample of polling stations and would have been impossible with available resources and time constraints to carry out for all polling stations.

occurring in female polling stations was 4.1 percent in the 2008 General Elections, these treatment effects can be considered substantial. I test the robustness of these findings by estimating bounds for the intention-to-treat (ITT) effect by resampling out-of-sample PSOs to nearby polling stations in the same local area, first without any priorities, then by prioritising nearby female-only polling stations, and finally by prioritising nearby female-only polling stations with zero turnout. The effect remains negative and statistically significant under all these scenarios. I interpret these findings as support for the hypothesis that PSOs were able to deter more brazen attempts of female disenfranchisement in those polling stations where they were present.

It should be highlighted that the vast majority of female-only polling stations with zero turnout occurred in one region; the North-Western Frontier Province. Anecdotal evidence suggest that female disenfranchisement is particularly severe and widespread in this region. While it can be ascertained that the effects do occur in this region, the findings may not be representative for Pakistan as a whole. Further, as noted above, potential displacement effects were not examined in this study. Therefore, it cannot be wholly ruled out that rather than deterring electoral malpractices, the presence of election observers here may simply displace these to other polling stations.

Second, the results do not indicate that PSOs would increase average turnout in female polling stations, and thus I find no support for the hypothesis that they also deter more incremental forms of female disenfranchisement. Instead the analyses suggest that the presence of PSOs had a small negative effect on average turnout in female-only polling stations. This negative effect is statistically significant under only one specification for the entire sample but is likely reduced by the opposite effect of PSOs on zero turnout. When limiting the sample to only constituencies that did not have any female-only polling stations with zero turnout, the presence of PSOs are associated with a statistically significant reduction in turnout in female-only polling stations by 1.5 percentage points ($p<0.05$) and with fixed constituency effects by 0.9 percentage points ($p<0.05$). When testing the robustness of these findings by resampling out-of-sample observers to nearby polling stations and estimating ITT, I find that the negative effect remains under all scenarios; however, it does not

entirely reach conventional levels of statistical significance in all regression models. This finding could indicate that PSOs deter fraudulent vote inflation (ballot box stuffing) in female-only polling stations. I try to test this possibility by estimating the effects of PSOs on exceptionally high turnout in female-only polling stations, but I find no statistically significant effects. I therefore hold open the possibility that the presence of PSOs at female-only polling stations may have had the unintended consequence of actually depressing female participation in these.

The remainder of this chapter proceeds as follows. Below, I provide an overview of the 2008 Pakistan General Elections and highlight some of the barriers to female electoral participation in Pakistan. Here I also discuss the FAFEN observer mission and their deployment of observers. Next, I present the theoretical argument in more detail and formulate the key hypotheses that are tested in the study. In the fourth section, I present the research design, data and estimation models. Here I also discuss the resampling models. The key results of the empirical analyses are presented in the fifth section, while the final and concluding section discusses the main findings and their implications.

2.2 Setting

2.2.1 Elections and female participation in Pakistan

On February 18, 2008 Pakistan held multiparty elections for its National Assembly and provincial assemblies. The elections were considered a crucial test of the country's prospects for political stability and a peaceful transition from the Pervez Musharraf-ruled military government to civilian rule. The elections were a major undertaking for the Electoral Commission of Pakistan (ECP) involving the organisation of separate electoral contests in 272 constituencies according to a first past the post (FPTP) electoral system. In all, some 80 million people were registered to vote in over 60,000 polling stations, for which the ECP provided polling station staff and polling material. Despite a tense and often violent pre-election climate, the Election Day was relatively calm and about 35 million Pakistanis turned out to vote. The election resulted in a victory for the late Benazir Bhutto's *Pakistan People's Party* (PPP) who

won 91 of the directly elected seats, followed by Nawaz Sharif's *Pakistan Muslim League - Nawas* (PML-N), that obtained 69 seats, and the incumbent Musharraf-backed *Pakistan Muslim League – Quaid e Adam Group* (PML-Q), with 38 seats (IFES 2008).[13] The election was considered a success insofar as all main parties in the end accepted the results and power was peacefully transferred to the election-victors.

Despite this, both international and domestic election observers pointed towards several failings in the election process, including malpractices and outright fraud in individual polling stations, constituencies with implausibly high turnout figures or questionable victory margins, and sporadic incidents of violence both inside and outside polling stations (EU 2008, Democracy International 2008, FAFEN 2009a). A particular concern highlighted by many observers and some media outlets was the disproportionally low participation among women, which was further emphasised by reports of localised attempts to bar women from voting in many areas.

Pakistan's constitution guarantees women the right to vote and equality between men and women. As specified by Article 25.1 "All citizens are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection of the law" and Article 25.2 states that "There shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex" (National Assembly 1973). Pakistan has ratified the Convention of the Political Rights of Women (CPRW) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and has committed itself to "take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country" (CEDAW 1979, Article 7). Even so, women in Pakistan continue to be marginalised and discriminated against both socially and politically and are often discouraged and even barred from standing or voting in national and local elections. According to a study by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), using self-reported data on turnout from the sixth wave of the World Value Survey, Pakistan had the lowest rates of female electoral participation in comparison to male

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[13] In addition to directly elected FPTP seats, a number of seats in each province were also reserved for female and minority candidates, awarded through a proportional representation system. When these are included, PPP obtained 118 seats (34,5 percent of all seats), PML-N 89 seats (26.0 percent) and PML-Q 60 seats (17.5 percent).

participation of all 59 countries included in the survey (IDEA 2016). The estimated turnout in female-only polling stations in the 2008 Pakistan General Elections was only 34.9 percent, compared to the official average of about 48 percent across all polling stations. Female electoral participation in 2008 was lowest in more rural and tribal areas, such as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), North Western Frontier Province (NWFP) and Baluchistan, where average turnout in female-only polling stations was between 13 and 21 percent. In the more populous Punjab and Sindh and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), turnout in female-only polling stations was somewhat higher, reaching approximately 38 percent. In most constituencies across the country, however, turnout in female-only polling stations was considerably lower than the official average across all polling stations in those constituencies.[14]

Numerous barriers have been identified as contributing to the low female participation rates in Pakistan. Socially conservative cultural and gender norms, and conservative interpretations of Islam – especially in rural areas – typically confine women in Pakistan to the private and domestic sphere and discourage broader societal or political engagement or voting, while poverty, lack of education, illiteracy, and restrictions on movement further limits female participation (Gine and Mansuri 2018, Awan 2016, Zia and Bari 1999).[15] Some of these barriers, however, are more directly related to electoral procedures. For instance, according to the Pakistan Electoral Roll Act (1974, section 6-2) all eligible voters need a National Identity Card (NIC) or a Computerised National Identity Card (CNIC) in order to vote. While this requirement is not enforced in practice for registration of voters, showing a valid NIC/CNIC card is still a legal prerequisite for casting a ballot in national elections in Pakistan. Nevertheless, it is widely recognised that a significant proportion of the population, especially women, do not possess such identification cards. Exact figures are not available, but it has been estimated that in 2012 up to 20 percent of women

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[14] Turnout figures for female-only polling stations in the 2008 Pakistan General Elections are based on data complied by the author for this study.

[15] Like in many developing countries, but especially in Muslim-majority countries, there is a considerable disparity in education between men and women in Pakistan. For example, over 60 percent of Pakistan's illiterate population are women while women make up less than a third of pupils enrolled in secondary schools (Government of Pakistan 2006).

that were eligible to vote in Pakistan were not included in the National Database Registration Authority (NADRA) that issues NIC/CNIC cards (IFES 2013). Moreover, in the build-up to the 2008 elections, the electoral commission of Pakistan acknowledged that in some parts of the country more than 50 percent of women were likely without proper identification cards (EU 2008). According to the non-governmental organisation Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) that observed the 2008 elections, the enforcement of voter identification requirements varies from one polling station to the next, and voters are often able to cast a ballot without presenting a valid identification card (FAFEN 2009a, 16). This however means that the right to vote for potentially millions of women in Pakistan is ultimately decided upon by individual polling station officials, subjecting many women to arbitrariness and possible abuse and, according to FAFEN, also enables impersonation and duplicate voting.

The gender segregation of polling stations in Pakistan has also been criticised for discouraging female participation, although it was originally introduced to protect women. About 50 percent of all polling stations in national elections in Pakistan are gender segregated so that men and women vote in separate polling stations, which are often also in separate locations. The remainder of polling stations in Pakistan are mixed but have separate booths for male and female voters. The electoral commission's guidelines state that separate polling stations for men and women should only be used in case men and women cannot be accommodated for in the same premises (ECP 2011, 70). Ultimately, however, it is the presiding officer in each individual constituency that decides on the number of polling stations needed for voting, where these are to be located, and whether they will employ gender-segregated polling stations or only separate booths (ECP 2013, 1-8). As displayed in figure 4 below, gender segregated polling stations are found across Pakistan in all major provinces, but their density varies considerably from one district or constituency to another.

Figure 4 *Gender segregated polling stations in the 2008 Pakistan election*
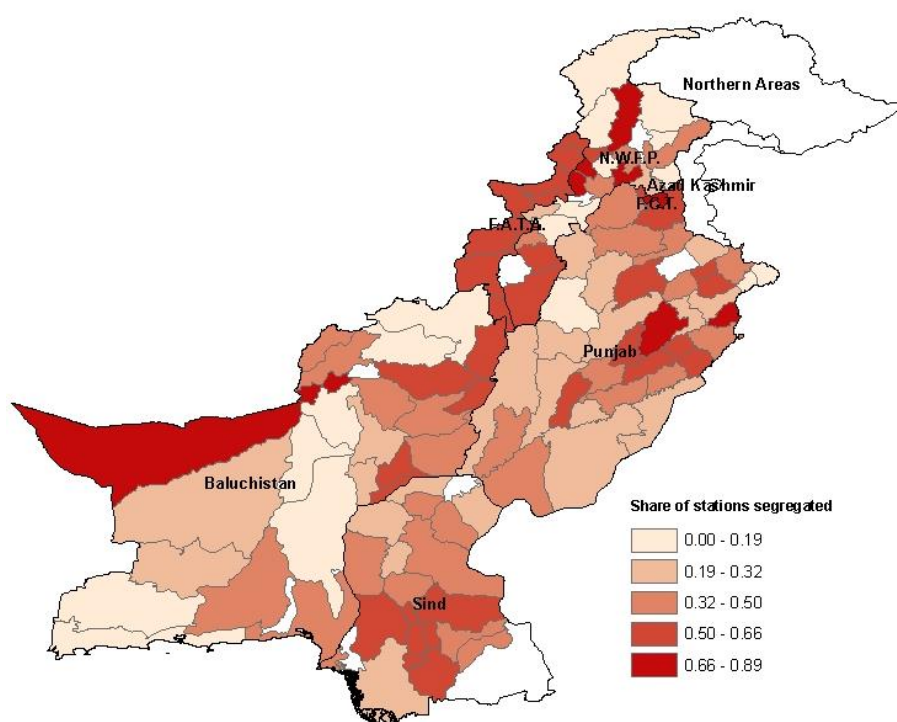
Note: The map shows the share of gender segregated polling stations by district in the 2008 Pakistan General Election. The map was created using shapefiles of administrative boundaries in Pakistan (https://gadm.org) and official electoral lists sourced from the Electoral Commission of Pakistan. The white areas in the map indicate missing data, either because no election was held in this area, or because data could not be obtained.

According to FAFEN, the gender segregation of polling stations forces male and female family members to vote in separate locations, which is thought to cause practical problems (FAFEN 2009a). Segregated polling stations may further also make female voters more vulnerable to malpractices. In the 2008 elections, international election observers noted that certain obstacles to the voting process seemed to affect female-only polling stations more than male-only polling stations. These obstacles included delayed openings, insufficient provision of materials, and inadequate polling station facilities (Democracy International 2008). Observers also noted that female-only polling stations tended to be more prone to failures to protect the secrecy of the vote, incorrect application and checking of ink, and general disorder and confusion (EU 2008). According to FAFEN, illegal stamping of ballots by polling station officials and other actors was recorded twice as often in female-only polling stations, compared to male or mixed stations (FAFEN 2009a, 17). Furthermore, female-only polling stations should as a rule be provided with female

staff, or at least one female polling station officer should be present. This is not however always the case; a factor that – especially in more conservative areas – may discourage women from participating.

Security concerns and fears of harassment and violence at the polling station are often referred to as key deterrents for female participation in Pakistan (EU 2008). During the 2008 elections, election observers reported numerous incidents in which candidates, party supporters and even electoral officials intimidated voters and sought to influence or "guide" their vote choice or even force people to vote for specific parties or candidates. In some cases, individual polling booths and even entire polling stations were taken over or 'captured' by armed men who then proceeded to illegally stamp ballots. Sporadic incidents of violence either inside or at the vicinity of polling stations were also recorded in multiple cases (FAFEN 2009a, 14-18). In general, the 2008 elections were held in a tense climate. Most notably, on 27 December 2007, Benazir Bhutto, the leader of PPP was assassinated at a campaign rally, leading to widespread anger, violence and rioting across the country. There were also ongoing threats of insurgencies and terrorist attacks in parts of NWFP, FATA and Baluchistan (EU 2008, 31-32). This overall sense of insecurity is thought to have discouraged many voters, and women in particular, from participating.

Perhaps most worryingly, however, observers also reported direct attempts to completely hinder or bar women from voting in many local areas, resulting in female-only polling stations with zero turnout. During the 2008 elections, there were at least 541 female-only polling stations in which not a single vote was cast, equalling some 4.1 percent of the total number of female-only polling stations. The total number of registered female voters at those 541 polling stations was approximately 500,000. Hardly any such incidents were reported to have occurred in male-only or mixed polling stations. The vast majority of female-only polling stations with zero turnout occurred in NWFP (485), followed by Punjab (20), FATA (13), Sindh (4), and the Federal Capital (1). In total, 40 out of Pakistan's 272 constituencies had at least one female-only polling station with zero turnout.[16]

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[16] Figures are based on data collected by the author for this study.

Similar incidents have been reported from multiple other elections in Pakistan, and nearly always associated with intentional female disenfranchisement. Descriptions vary, but it is often local elders of a community, in collaboration with religious groupings and sometimes the local leadership of political parties, that make the decision to restrict women from voting. This is then implemented in various ways. Some women are simply prohibited from leaving their houses by their families or by tribal elders (AP 2008, Independent 2008). Others may be threatened or intimidated. For example, in 2008, EU observers reported that local islamists in Khyber Agency in NWFP were seen driving around the district in a convoy of 50 or 60 trucks with armed men, over loudspeakers warning women not to vote and announcing a shoot-to-kill policy for those who did (EU 2008, 45). Observers and media reports have similarly described incidents in which armed men arrive at the polling station and instruct women not to vote (FAFEN 2009a), or in which women have simply been stopped from entering the polling station (Dawn 2013, Democracy International 2011). In other instances, local elders, often in collaboration with local parties and candidates, have forced authorities to entirely close down female polling stations during Election Day, as reportedly occurred in 30 polling stations in the Mattani district in NWFP in 2008 (NYT 2008).[17]

Some attempts have been made to support female participation in Pakistan. In particular the 2017 Electoral Act imposed several measures towards this, including automatic nullification of electoral returns from constituencies with less than 10 percent female turnout and the criminalisation of practices that prevent or bar women from voting or contesting in elections. Efforts have also been made to provide more training to polling station staff, as well as increasing the use of election observers to monitor specifically female voting (Democracy International 2011,

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[17] Reports indicate that the local candidates and political parties often collaborate to bar women from voting. For example, in the by-election in Shangla district (NWFP) in 2011, observers managed to recover written agreements between candidates declaring that women would not be allowed to vote and instructing female polling officials to leave the polling stations. One of these agreements was even countersigned by the presiding officer (Democracy International 2011). Similarly, following a local election in Lower Dir (NWFP) in 2015, a petition was lodged with the high court by 12 women who alleged that there was an agreement between local candidates to completely bar all women from voting in the district. They claimed that special arrangements had been made for this purpose, including the positioning of men with batons intimidating and blocking female voters outside polling stations and the non-availability of female polling staff (Tribune 2015, Independent 2015).

AWARE 2013). Challenges still persist, however, and female electoral participation in Pakistan still remains one of the lowest in the world.

2.2.2 FAFEN observer mission

The Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) was established in 2006 as a coalition of 30 leading civil society organisations with the stated objective to monitor the 2008 elections. Highlighting its role as an independent election monitoring organisation, FAFEN has continuously emphasised its neutrality and impartiality in statements and reports (FAFEN 2009a). According to reports by the international development community (JDEPEA 2008, Democracy International 2008) FAFEN's work during the 2008 elections contributed to all main parties in the end accepting the election results.

FAFEN's monitoring efforts in 2008 started long before Election Day, as the organisation audited the registration lists and placed long-term observers throughout the country to monitor the campaigning and pre-election arrangements. On Election Day, FAFEN carried out a parallel vote tabulation (PVT) in 256 out of the 272 constituencies in Pakistan and deployed approximately 7,100 polling station observers (PSO) to randomly selected polling stations within these constituencies to observe voting throughout Election Day. The randomisation process was designed to obtain a statistically valid random selection of about 12 percent of polling stations in each constituency and nationwide (FAFEN 2009a, 12).[18] The electoral commission did not release the polling station lists until two weeks before the election. Therefore, when designing the sample, FAFEN used the 1998 census (the most recent available at the time) as a frame of possible polling locations. Because more populated areas typically have more polling stations, a probability proportional to size (PPS) sample was drawn using population density as a proxy. Once the polling station lists had been released by the electoral commission, FAFEN constituency coordinators matched the

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[18] FAFEN did not carry out the PVT in XX out of the 272 constituencies. The reasons for this varied. Three constituencies in Baluchistan were excluded from the PVT at a late stage due to accreditation problems. In two constituencies the election had been delayed due to the death of a candidate. PSOs were further not sent to 11 constituencies due to security concerns, including 8 in FATA, 2 in NWFP, and 1 in Baluchistan (FAFEN 2009a, 12).

sampled census locations to the polling station lists. This was followed by a further round of randomisation to select the individual polling stations (FAFEN 2009a, 19-20).[19]

The recruitment of observers started in November 2007. PSOs were to work in pairs, whenever possible one man and one woman would observe a sampled polling station. The gender balance was taken into account in the recruitment. The exact level of experience of individual observers is however unknown. The training of observers by FAFEN District and Constituency Coordinators was carried out during the week before Election Day. PSOs were then also provided with all relevant manuals and forms and standardised checklists in order to carry out their duties. Observers were tasked to monitor events at the polling station for the entire day. At the end of voting, they were assigned to record and obtain a copy of each "Statement of Count" which was essential for the PVT (FAFEN 2009a, 12). These were to be delivered to FAFEN constituency coordinators, which further communicated them onwards to FAFEN's headquarters in Islamabad. PSOs were assisted by mobile observers in this task (FAFEN 2009a, 12). In addition, with the aid of standardised checklists, observers further reported on the adherence to electoral procedures by polling staff and other issues that could affect voting, including the opening and closing of polling stations; voter identification requirements; the use of indelible ink; voter disenfranchisement; the impartiality/neutrality of polling station officials; security at the polling station; illegal stamping of ballots; as well as procedures relating to vote counting (FAFEN 2009b).[20]

The execution of FAFEN's observation mission was praised by the international community that was present (JDEPEA 2008, Democracy International 2008, EU 2008). Nevertheless, FAFEN also faced some considerable challenges during Election Day, including many cases in which PSOs were harassed or intimidated while

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[19] The exact method for the final randomisation on the ground varied by the individual organisation covering a specific area, typically the kish method. Information regarding the randomisation process were sourced from FAFEN (2009a, 12-20) with complementing details further verified through correspondence with Megan Reif who was overseeing the sampling process.
[20] Information regarding the recruitment of observers and their terms of reference was sourced from official FAFEN documents (FAFEN 2009a, 2009b) and also further verified through correspondence with Megan Reif. Unfortunately, detailed data on polling station procedures recorded by observers has not been available.

carrying out their tasks and severe delays in the transfer of PVT results following the completion of voting (FAFEN 2009a, 20). From a research point of view, two issues in particular need to be emphasised. Firstly, examination of the share of polling stations that were observed on Election Day, reveals that female-only polling stations were somewhat underrepresented. While the total share of polling stations that were observed on Election Day was 11.7 percent, the equivalent share of female-only polling stations was only 8.9 percent. FAFEN did not use any gender quotas when sampling the polling stations, however, given that the proportion of male and female polling stations should be roughly equal in each constituency, a more balanced sample would have been expected. Some imbalance is also found in the number of registered voters between those female-only polling stations that were observed and those that were not. Observed polling stations had on average 62 fewer registered voters compared to non-observed ones. Secondly, a relatively high number of PSOs – 991 (14.9 percent) – did not observe the polling stations that they had been originally sampled to. This was not discovered until after the election, when results were entered into the data system, and as numerous polling station numbers noted down on the forms returned by PSOs did not match those in the system. FAFEN states that the reasons for some observers not accessing the sampled polling stations included unannounced changes in regard to polling station numbers in sampled locations, PSOs simply not being able to find the correct polling station, weather and logistics, as well as access and security concerns (FAFEN 2009a, 20). In the cases where PSOs were not able to observe the sampled polling station, they had been advised to go to the nearest possible substitute station.[21] These issues will be further discussed in section 2.4 on research design.

2.3 Election observers and female participation and disenfranchisement

An increasingly common feature in elections in most new and unconsolidated democracies is the presence of international and domestic election observers, such

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[21] This information was provided to me thought correspondence with Megan Reif.

as FAFEN. One core premise of election observers is that their presence and active monitoring detects and deters possible electoral malpractices and fraud, and thus promotes electoral integrity and democracy (Hyde 2011, Kelley 2012). Acknowledging the challenges that especially female voters often face, observer organisations have increasingly started to emphasise women's right to vote and female participation as central concerns and give special attention to these in their observation reports (EU 2016, OSCE 2004, UN 2005, OAS 2013).[22] Most election observer organisations also implicitly or explicitly seek to deter female disenfranchisement and strengthen female participation. The UN, for example, states that "Carefully designed and conducted election observation can improve implementation of human rights of women and help to enhance their participation in the electoral processes" (UN 2005, chapter 7). Several of FAFEN's member organisations, such as the All Women's Advancement and Resources Development (AWARD) and the Mathani Women's Welfare Association (MWWA), also state specifically among their objectives the strengthening of female electoral participation. Nevertheless, the causal evidence linking election observers and the enforcement of women's rights to vote is still lacking. In fact, very little is known about the exact implications of election observers on female participation or disenfranchisement.

The theoretical model adopted here builds on previous research on the effects of international or domestic election observers on voting procedures in individual polling stations (Hyde 2007, Enikopolov, et al. 2013, Asunka, et al. 2019). Central to these studies is the idea that election observers raise the costs of electoral malpractices in those polling stations where they are present, thus making it more likely that polling station officials and other local actors abide by electoral rules and refrain from intentional violations. These assumptions are supported by empirical evidence demonstrating that election observers can reduce registration fraud, vote stealing, ballot box stuffing, falsification of result sheets, and even violence at

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[22] Some recent election observation mission, particularly in elections in North Africa, Middle East and South Asia, have also been designed specifically to observe the conditions for female participation and voting.

observed polling stations (Ichino and Schundeln 2012, 302-304, Hyde 2007, 51-62, Enikopolov, et al. 2013, 448-451, Asunka, et al. 2019, 141-143).

Applying the same logic as these studies, it can be assumed that election observers should also raise the costs, and therefor deter, various forms of electoral malpractices and violations that hinder women from voting. Such malpractices may include late openings or early closures of female-only polling stations; polling station officials and local actors refusing entry for female voters into the polling station; intimidation and harassment at the polling station with the intent to keep female voters at bay; or attempts to entirely shut down a female polling station in order to stop women from voting. It is doubtful, however, that observers would eliminate all violations that hinder women from voting. For example, some polling station officials or local actors may not care about the presence of election observers and engage in malpractices despite their presence. Others, in contrast, may be more careful, and engage in more covert activities or relocate their efforts to other polling stations (Ichino and Schundeln 2012). Yet others, however, may simply not want to engage in such activities at all while being observed. Such officials would therefore likely completely refrain from such acts if election observers were present at the polling station. Despite these potentially heterogeneous effects, the assumption is that it is unlikely that election observers would increase intentional violations or attempts to disenfranchise women at the polling station. Therefore, the net effect of election observers should be an average reduction in such activities specifically in those polling stations where they are present (Hyde 2007, 41-43).

Female disenfranchisement in Pakistan, as indicated by the descriptions above, can range from more extreme and brazen offences, in which all women are completely hindered or barred from voting in a given polling station, to more incremental transgressions, where smaller numbers of women are in different ways discouraged or prevented from participating. I use zero turnout in female-only polling stations as a proxy for more extreme disenfranchisement as both election observer reports and the media in Pakistan have claimed that these are typically the outcome of women being completely barred from voting in a given polling station. To the extent that PSOs can deter such incidents, the occurrence of zero turnout should be reduced in polling stations that are observed. I therefore expect that:

- *Hypothesis 1. Observed female-only polling stations have lower rates of zero turnout compared to non-observed female-only polling stations.*

I further use average turnout in female-only polling stations to estimate the effect of PSOs on more incremental attempts to disenfranchise women. Such activities could include a range of different malpractices and transgressions that hinder smaller numbers of women from voting in a given polling station. Such incremental disenfranchisement would likely reduce female turnout in affected polling stations, but not necessarily completely bar women from voting there. To the extent that PSOs can deter such activities therefore, their presence should enable more women on average to vote than if observers were not present. Further, the knowledge that observers are present could even encourage further women to go to the polling station, if they believe that it is now safer to do so. According to FAFEN, the local community did not know in advance whether polling stations were going to be observed or not. Nevertheless, during the Election Day, knowledge of their presence were likely to spread, especially in smaller communities. All else equal therefore, we would expect that the presence of PSOs would lead to higher average turnout in female-only polling stations.

- *Hypothesis 2: Observed female-only polling stations have higher average turnout than non-observed polling stations.*

There are however also reasons to be sceptical about the ability of PSOs to deter female disenfranchisement. Firstly, for PSOs to have any impact on these activities then the disenfranchisement must occur in or at least in a proximate vicinity of the polling station. In case women are for example hindered from even leaving their own houses and therefore are unable to vote, then the presence of PSOs at the polling station will of course be irrelevant. Second, as highlighted earlier, some studies have indicated that election observers may not always be able to deter electoral malpractices, especially in more authoritarian settings, where officials or local actors

are less sensitive to the criticism of outsiders and therefore may be more likely to completely ignore them (Buzin, Brondum and Robertson 2016, Sjoberg 2016). It therefore remains an empirical question whether PSOs actually can deter female disenfranchisement or not. Third, it may be that the presence of PSOs do not actually deter overall electoral malpractices that target women, but simply displace these from those polling stations where they are present to other non-observed polling stations. Previous studies have identified such effects when it comes to observer effects on registration fraud (Ichino and Schundeln 2012) and ballot box stuffing (Asunka, et.al. 2019). To properly examine such displacement effects, however, it would be necessary to have access to detailed data on the location of all polling stations. Unfortunately, such data has not been available for this study and therefore these effects are not examined here.

There are also other causal mechanisms that may come into play, making it more difficult to assess the impact of PSOs on turnout in female-only polling stations. Firstly, as emphasised by previous studies, the presence of election observers is likely to also deter various forms of conventional malpractices, such as ballot-box stuffing and result-sheet forgery. These types of malpractices often involve fraudulently adding more votes to the count to benefit certain parties or candidates, thus typically inflating turnout figures in those polling stations where this occurs. If turnout is fraudulently inflated in numerous polling stations, then the average turnout figures across all polling stations will also (artificially) increase (Myagkov, Ordeshook and Shakin 2009, Klimek, et al. 2012). As previous studies have shown, in case PSOs deter various malpractices that inflate turnout figures, then they can also contribute to lowering turnout figures in those polling stations where the observers are present, as compared to the overall average (Asunka, et al. 2019, Enikopolov, et al. 2013). This means that the presence of PSOs in female polling stations, if they deter malpractices that would otherwise (artificially) have inflated turnout figures, could also seemingly contribute to decreasing turnout in observed polling stations.

Secondly, PSOs may also depress female participation in other ways. For example, the presence of PSOs may induce polling station officials to be more stringent in their requirements for voters to produce needed voter identification to legally cast a ballot. This is a realistic proposition in this case, given that PSOs

deployed by FAFEN specifically monitor whether officials properly uphold voter identification requirements or not (FAFEN 2009b). While increasing voter identification requirements may ensure that only eligible voters get to cast a ballot, it may also de facto disenfranchise some voters. For example, numerous studies have shown that even smaller increases in voter identification requirements tend to decrease electoral participation among certain groups (Alvarez, Bailey and Katz 2008, Vercelotti and Anderson 2006). Especially in rural communities, where everyone knows each other, voters that otherwise would have been able to vote, may be hindered from doing so due to observers being present if this affects voter identification requirements (Sjoberg 2012). As described above, women in Pakistan are much more likely to lack proper identification cards, and therefore would be disproportionally affected by more stringent voter identification requirements. A strict enforcement of voter identification requirements is also likely discourage in particular women who wear face-covering veils for religious reasons, as this would require them to lift their veil or provide photo identification, which some women in Pakistan may not be willing or allowed to do (Maltbie 2010).[23] More generally, the presence of outside election observers that are not from within the small local community may, especially when these observers are male, may discourage some voter from voting or even entering the polling station. This could particularly be the case in rural and socially conservative areas in which women are often completely forbidden to interact with men from outside their direct family or local tribe. Finally, female voters do not have to be only passive subjects at the mercy of decisions made by men. It is also possible that female voters simply decide (for whatever reason) that is it better to stay was from polling stations with an observer present.

These different mechanisms, including ballot-box stuffing, increases in voter identification requirements, and potential discouragement of female electoral participation, could contribute to PSOs rather than increasing turnout, actually decreasing it in those female-only polling stations where observers are present. Therefore, a third hypothesis can be added:

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[23] These challenges have been acknowledged in Afghanistan where the introduction of biometric voter-identification systems is feared to discourage women in religiously conservative areas from participating if this means that their photo will be taken (RFE 2019).

- *Hypothesis 3: Observed female-only polling stations have lower average turnout than non-observed female-only polling stations.*

Because different causal mechanisms with similar effects on turnout in female-only polling stations can occur simultaneously it is difficult to conclusively verify the exact processes. One approach would be to formulate concrete assumptions about the incentives for political actors to either inflate or suppress votes in female-only polling stations, and how these may vary from one area to another, as this would allow us to more precisely interpret observer-effects. For example, in areas where those wanting to commit electoral malpractices already are assured a clear majority of the vote – in stronghold areas – it is often more attractive to inflate votes in individual polling stations, for example through ballot box stuffing or result-sheet forgery, than to suppress them. By inflating turnout figures in stronghold areas, perpetrators can contribute to increasing the overall vote count for their side. In these areas they are also better placed to obtain the necessary cooperation within the polling station to carry out such blatant malpractices. On the other hand, in areas where perpetrators lack such support, suppressing votes – through for example disenfranchisement or destruction of votes – becomes more attractive. In these areas, most voters are likely to support other parties, and hence suppressing votes will be effective, and unlikely to hurt one's own side. Furthermore, in areas where perpetrators lack support, it is more difficult to gain support in the polling station to carry out overt malpractices. This forces perpetrators to either attempt more covert malpractices – such as intentionally invalidating votes – or to target malpractices outside the polling station – for example by instigating electoral violence.[24]

In the case of the 2008 General Elections in Pakistan, however, it is challenging to examine these assumptions. Because of the First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) electoral system employed in Pakistan, incentives for political actors to either inflate or suppress votes will be specific to each constituency and vary within each constituency. To examine potential strongholds and other areas within

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[24] See further chapter 3 for a more extensive discussion of these assumptions.

constituencies, one would need detailed data from previous elections or other equivalent data on support levels, at an aggregation level lower than individual constituencies; preferably at the level of individual polling stations or locations. Unfortunately, such data is not available and therefore cannot be examined here.

Another possibility to discern the underlying causal processes is to look at polling stations with exceptionally high turnout rates. Past research on ballot box stuffing suggest that when votes are fraudulently inflated in individual polling stations, perpetrators seldom settle for only adding a few votes, but rather stuff as a many additional ballots as possible into the box. As a result, polling stations in which votes have been fraudulently inflated typically display exceptionally high turnout rates, often close to, or even above, 100 percent (Myagkov, Ordeshook and Shakin 2009, Klimek, et al. 2012). Consequently, if the presence of PSOs are deterring different forms of fraudulent vote inflation in female-only polling stations – and this results in lower turnout figures in these stations in comparison to non-observed polling stations – then we would expect that their presence would also reduce the occurrence of exceptionally high turnout figures in female-only polling stations. A final hypothesis to be tested is therefore that:

- *Hypothesis 4: Observed female polling stations have lower rates of exceptionally high turnout compared to non-observed female polling stations.*

2.4 Research Design

The research design adopted here is based on natural experiments. The distinguishing characteristics of experimental setups, as opposed to observational studies, is that the central independent or treatment variable, is randomly assigned. In natural experiments, the researcher does not however design or supervise the assignment of the treatment variable, as this has typically already occurred (Dunning 2012, 15-18). The benefits of natural experiments are that they have the potential to isolate the effect of the independent variable upon an outcome variable and to ensure that no unrelated or spurious factors bias the results. In other words, natural

experiments can more convincingly demonstrate cause and effect. In this study I investigate the implications – or the *effect* – of PSOs that are present at individual female-only polling stations upon female participation and disenfranchisement at those polling stations. The random selection of polling stations to which PSOs were deployed allows us to estimate their potential effects by comparing the rate of zero turnout, average turnout, or the rate of exceptionally high turnout, between those polling stations that were observed (the treated) and those that were not (the control group). Due to the randomisation, on average, observed and non-observed polling stations should not differ from each other in any meaningful or systematic ways, which is equivalent of holding all else constant. Put differently, the control units offer a counterfactual of what we would have seen had the PSOs not been present at a given polling station. Consequently, any differences in either the rate of zero turnout, average turnout, or exceptionally high turnout between observed and non-observed female-only polling stations can be inferred to have been caused by the presence of PSOs (Dunning 2012, 6-8).

In ideal cases, a simple difference-in-means comparison between the treated and the control units gives an estimate of the Average Treatment Effect (ATE). Such an estimate, however, requires that the randomisation has worked correctly and that those units that were supposed to receive the treatment also did receive it, and those that were supposed to be in the control group did not. In other words, to infer causal effects we expect a balanced sample and compliance with the treatment.

Small imbalances in the sample do not necessarily bias estimates however (Imai, King and Stuart 2008). Non-compliance, on the other hand, can be more problematic. As noted above, a large number of PSOs did not go to the originally assigned polling station on Election Day but, for a variety of reasons, instead observed a substitute polling station. This could present a potential threat to inferences as the reasons for not going to the correct polling station could be correlated with the outcome variables. For example, PSOs may have been threatened at their originally sampled polling station by actors who may also have been more prone to hinder women from voting. Or, possibly the originally sampled polling station had already been closed down when the PSOs arrived there. This would bias the estimates and could generate differences in rates of zero, average and

exceptionally high turnout between observed and non-observed polling stations, even though these may not have been caused by the presence of PSOs.

One potential solution to this problem is to estimate the intention-to-treat (ITT) effect, using the original polling station assignment as treatment, regardless if PSOs actually observed these. ITT analysis is useful for testing whether observed differences between treatment and control could reasonably have arisen by chance and avoids overoptimistic inferences of the treatment-effect (Dunning 2012, 88). Estimation of ITT, however, requires data on the original assignment of the treatment, which unfortunately has not been available for this study.

The approach opted for in this chapter has been to resample those PSOs that went to the wrong polling station to nearby polling stations in the same local area. This approach is equivalent to bootstrapping when testing hypotheses (Horowitz 2001). By repeating the resampling process multiple time (1,000 times), average estimates were obtained, allowing me to test the robustness of the main findings under different scenarios. Below I first discuss the underlying data collected for this study, after which I present these resampling scenarios in more detail. Here I also investigate how the resampling scenarios impact on the proportion of female polling stations that were observed on Election Day. Finally, I discuss the quantitative models that will be used in the empirical analysis.

2.4.1 Data

The data used for this study consists firstly of polling station level data on turnout in female-only polling stations from the 2008 Pakistan General Elections. This data was sourced from scanned polling station lists and result sheets that the Electoral Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had temporarily published on their website. These scanned result sheets were often of very poor quality, often scanned at low resolution with occasional ink blobs covering numbers. Some of the result sheets had also been originally filled in by hand. Much of the material was obtained with the help of FAFEN but can also be accessed via internet archiving sites.[25]

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[25] All scanned result-sheets used for this study can be obtained from the author upon request.

Given the primary focus to study the impact of PSOs in female-only polling stations, I limited the data collection to only constituencies in which these existed and that were included in FAFEN's PVT. Among these constituencies I first identified the female-only polling stations from the official polling station lists. The gender of the polling station was typically specified in the polling station name with "female" or "f". If this was not the case, then the gender was also possible to identify based on the number of registered male and female voters in the polling station.

On average, the identified female-only polling stations had 1,155 registered voters with a standard deviation of 522. There were also some extreme outliers in the data with either exceptionally few (as few as 2) or exceptionally many registered voters (the highest being 36,341), indicating likely errors in the register-lists. For the main analyses, I excluded polling station with less than 100 registered voters and polling stations with above 3,000 registered voters, so as not to bias results. These excluded polling stations only repressed 0.2 percent of all female polling stations for which data was collected.[26]

Once the female-only polling stations had been identified, I then collected the total number of cast votes in each of these polling stations from the scanned result sheets. Due to the poor quality of the scanned result sheets, however, only some of this data could be machine-read (using OCR) while a large amount had to be coded manually. The collection of vote data was therefore very time-consuming and consequently this data was not collected for either male-only or mixed polling stations. It total, turnout data was collected for 13,168 female-only polling stations in 236 constituencies located in all the five districts of the country.[27] When excluding polling stations with either exceptionally high or low numbers of registered voters, the total data covers 13,136 female-only polling stations.

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[26] I reran all analyses by including these outlier polling stations. The results from these additional analyses, which can be obtained from the author upon request, do not change the direction or significance of the main findings.

[27] Out of the 272 constituencies in Pakistan, 36 constituencies were not included either because the constituency was not included in the PVT in the first place, or because the constituency did not contain any female polling stations, or because of missing data.

I obtained data on PSO deployment on Election Day from FAFEN.[28] This data contains the polling stations that were observed on Election Day, including the constituency name and polling station number. While FAFEN did not provide me with the original sampling data (or the intention-to-treat data), they did include a dummy variable indicating whether the observed polling station was included in the original sample or not. This had been coded by FAFEN when they realised that the polling station codes reported by some observers did not match the pre-programmed codes in their software. On Election Day, in the 236 constituencies focused upon in this study, FAFEN deployed 6,665 election observers in a total of 56,797 male-only, female-only, and mixed polling stations, of which 5,664 had gone to the originally sampled polling station and 991 had observed a substitute polling station. Out of the 13,136 female-only polling stations that had been identified for this study, 1,170 were monitored by FAFEN election observers on Election Day.

To identify the local area for those PSOs that went to the wrong polling station, I compared polling station lists and village/area names with the 1998 Pakistani census (Pakistan Bureau of Statistic 1998). The census is structured so that the smallest local unit – *the census ring* – covers an area of approximately 1,500 to 2,000 households. For each of the 991 polling stations in which an observer had gone to a substitute polling station, I identified which census ring it belonged to and also identified all the other polling stations that were located within the same census ring. In total, these areas covered 3,152 different male-only, female-only and mixed polling stations. This work had again to be done manually and was very time consuming and therefore was limited to only those polling stations where PSOs had gone to the wrong location.

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[28] FAFEN has published the location of observers in some constituencies (see FAFEN 2009a). FAFEN has however kept secret the location of observers in several areas in order to protect the individual observers from possible repercussions. In analysing the data provided by FAFEN I have agreed not to share any of this data beyond my supervisors or examiners. To obtain the data therefore, please contact FAFEN directly.

2.4.2 Balance tests and resampling scenarios

Potential sources of bias in a natural experiment can be issues relating to randomisation and imbalances between treated and control as well as non-compliance. As highlighted above, there seems to be some imbalances when it comes to the share of female polling stations that were observed on Election Day as well as the number of registered voters. As can be seen in table 1, on average, FAFEN observed 11.72 percent of all polling stations in the 236 constituencies focused upon here on Election Day. The share of female polling stations that were observed on Election Day was slightly lower than this, approximately 8.89 percent. This difference is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

Table 1 *Share of polling stations observed by FAFEN*

	All Polling Stations	Female-only Polling stations
FAFEN Observers	0.117	0.889

Note: Figures are based on data collected in 236 constituencies.

Furthermore, a small imbalance can also be detected when comparing the number of registered voters in the female-only polling stations that were observed with those female-only polling station stations that were not observed. In table 2 below an OLS regression analysis is carried out with the number of registered voters as outcome variable and whether the female-only polling station was observed or not, with fixed constituency effects. As can be seen, on average observed female-only polling stations had 62 registered voters more than non-observed ones. Compared to the average number of registered voters per polling station, which was 1,155, this difference is small – about a tenth of the standard deviation – but it is statistically significant at conventional levels ($p < 0.001$).

Table 2 *Regression Analysis: Observers and Registered Voters in Female-only polling stations with Fixed Constituency Effects*

	Beta (SE)
FAFEN Observers	62.571 (14.392)***
Intercept	1417.467 (44.728)***
N	13,136
R-Square	0.2112
F	15.95***

*Note: Statistical significance: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001*

Whether these imbalances imply that the randomisation did not work is however difficult to verify. To properly test for this, the balance should be measured at the correct level of randomisation, and also taking into account a false discovery rate[29], as otherwise imbalances in pre-treatment covariates may be misleading (Dunning 2012, 242, EGAP 2018). Such detailed tests have not been possible here as it was not feasible to collect data on the individual randomisation area for all polling stations included in the study. Nevertheless, as long as we can trust that the original treatment-assignment was randomised, and there is no particular reason to doubt this in this case, a slightly unbalanced sample does not necessarily bias our estimates (Imai, King and Stuart 2008, 494-498).

It is likely that the differences in pre-treatment covariate were caused by the non-compliance of the large number of PSOs that went to the wrong polling stations. This however also presents another, more serious concern, because the final polling stations that these PSOs decided to monitor on Election Day, as discussed above, may be correlated with the outcome variables. The approach adopted here to account for this non-compliance is to randomly resample these PSOs to nearby polling stations in the local area (within the same census ring). The underlying idea is that PSOs that for whatever reason could not access or locate the polling station to which they were

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[29] The False Discovery Rate (FDR) is the expected proportion of false discoveries (false positives) among all discoveries. Conventionally, a 5 percent FDR is considered acceptable. This means that when balance is testes in multiple individual randomisation clusters, we expect to find statistically significant imbalances in at least 1 out of 20 of them, without this implying serious bias in the randomisation process (EGAP 2018b).

originally assigned had been instructed to select the closest nearby polling station and observe that one. FAFEN did no arrange for the relocation of PSOs on Election Day. It is therefore reasonable to assume that they remained in the same local area. As described above, I first identified the census ring for all polling stations that had been observed by an out-of-sample PSO, and second identified all polling stations (including male, female, and mixed) that were located in the same census ring. I then randomly reassigned the out-of-sample PSOs to these other polling stations 1,000 times and obtained the average of these estimates. I created three different scenarios for this. The first involved completely random resampling without any priorities (Scenario A). The second involved prioritising other female polling stations, so that if non-observed female polling stations existed in the same census ring then these would be picked first (Scenario B). The final scenario involved prioritising other female polling stations with zero turnout, so that if non-observed female polling station with zero turnout existed in the same census ring then these would be picked first (Scenario C)[30]. An insight into how these resampling scenarios impact on the data can be obtained from table 3 below where the share of observed female only polling stations in different scenarios are displayed.

Table 3 *Share of observed female polling stations under different Scenarios*

	Original Data	Scenario A	Scenario B	Scenario C
Share of observed female only polling stations	0.0889	0.095	0.1150	0.1150

Note: Observer shares were obtained by dividing the number of observed female polling stations with the total number of female polling stations in 236 constituencies included in this study. Resampling estimates were obtained by randomising out-of-sample observers to nearby polling stations 1,000 times and obtaining the average estimates of these.

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[30] The re-sampling scenarios were done using STATA 14. Do-files detailing the procedures for these, and enabling exact replication, can be obtained from the author.

The column labelled *original data* in table 3 shows the share of observed female-only polling stations during Election Day – 0.0889 – as given in the data provided by FAFEN. When out of sample PSOs are resampled to nearby polling stations without any priorities in Scenario A, the share of observed female polling stations increases slightly to 0.095. In scenario B and C, in which first nearby female polling stations and then nearby female polling stations with zero turnout are prioritised, the share of observed female polling stations increases to 0.1150, becoming nearly equal to the overall share of observers deployed in the 236 constituencies, which was 0.1170. This suggests that the slight underrepresentation of female polling stations that were observed on Election Day may have been caused by observers going to the wrong polling station. For example, more female polling stations likely existed in the original sample, but PSOs were less likely to locate/access these compared to male polling stations on Election Day. Those PSOs that went to the wrong polling stations may also have been more likely to pick a male polling station as a substitute compared to a female one. The exact processes that may have caused this, however, are almost impossible to verify post hoc.

The intention behind these resampling scenarios is not however to somehow *re-balance* the sample. Instead it is to obtain different bounds to carry out ITT analyses in order to test the robustness of the main result. These robustness tests assume that the out-of-sample PSOs should instead have observed other female polling stations or other female polling stations with zero turnout. It can be expected that the effects of PSOs become somewhat weaker under the more conservative scenarios, especially with regards to the effect of PSOs on zero turnout under Scenario C. Nevertheless, unless the differences between observed and non-observed polling stations are purely a product of PSOs going to the wrong polling station, then we should still expect to see some of these effects remaining even under the most conservative scenarios.

2.4.3 Variables and estimation

The empirical analysis will test hypotheses 1 – 4 by estimating the effect of PSOs on female participation and disenfranchisement. I first use the original data provided by FAFEN to estimate the average treatment effect (ATE) of PSOs on turnout figures in female polling stations. As mentioned, I use zero turnout in female-only polling stations as a proxy for more extreme or brazen forms of disenfranchisement while I use average turnout in female polling stations to measure more incremental forms of disenfranchisement and other possible effects of PSOs on female participation. Finally, I use female polling stations with exceptionally high turnout as a measure for potential ballot box stuffing. I code as exceptionally high turnout polling stations where the recorded turnout is greater than the sum of the upper quartile of turnout across all female polling stations plus one-and-half times the interquartile range, which is a common measure for outliers (compare with Asunka, et al., 2019, pp. 141-143).

Table 4 *Summary statistics for outcome variables in female only polling stations*

Variable	N	Mean	Std.Deviation	Min	Max	Range
PS with zero turnout	13,136	0.041	0.198	0	1	1
Turnout	13,136	0.351	0.174	0	1.913	1.913
PS with exceptionally high turnout	13,136	0.017	0.127	0	1	1

Note: the descriptive statistics excludes female-only polling stations with registered voters under 100 or above 3,000.

Table 4 provides the summary statistics for the outcome variables. Across all female-only polling stations, there were 541 polling stations that had zero turnout, equivalent to 4.10 percent of all female polling stations. On average, reported turnout in female-only polling stations was 35.11 percent, ranging from zero to as much as high as 191 percent. I coded 217 female-only polling stations in which turnout was high enough to be considered an outlier, following the method described above. Turnout in these polling stations was on avarge 92 percent, ranging

from 77 percent to above 100 percent. These outlier polling stations represent 1.65 percent of all female-only polling stations.

I use OLS regression analysis for all estimates. For binary outcome variables this is equivalent to a linear probability model[31]. I first fit all models without any fixed effects. I then add fixed constituency effects, thus holding constant any constituency related factors that may impact on the probability of zero turnout, average turnout or the probability of exceptioanlly high turnout in female polling stations. This is particularly relevant to the analyses of zero turnout and exceptioanlly high turnout as these only occurred in a smaller set of constituencies. Because each constituency was randomised separately, I also cluster the standard errors on each constituency in case error terms are correlated.

Secondly, I test the robustness of the results by estimating the intention-to-treat (ITT) effect using the resampling scenarios described above. For each scenario, I again estimate an OLS regression, first without and then with fixed constituency effects, clustering standard errors on each constituency. It is likely that any effect that PSOs have on zero turnout also has an impact on their effect on average turnout. These outcome variables, however, proxy slightly different phenomena and may be the result of different causal mechanisms. To better isolate the effect of PSOs on only average turnout in female polling stations therefore, I rerun the analyses only for constituencies that had no female polling stations with zero turnout.

2.5 Results

In this section I first present some descriptive statistics, followed by the main results of the regression models, and finally a discussion regarding whether the findings confirm or disconfirm the set-out hypotheses. Table 5 first provides descriptive

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[31] Here I follow the other literature in the field that recommends the use of linear probability models when analysing binary outcomes, especially when using fixed effects and clustering (Wellman, Hyde and Hall 2018, Cameron and Miller 2015). Nevertheless, to check that the findings are not model-dependent, I also replicate these analyses using binary logistic regression. The results of these analyses, which can be obtained from the author upon request, do not change either the direction or significance of the main findings.

statistics showing the differences between observed and non-observed female polling stations for the different outcome variables. Using the original FAFEN data, the figures suggest that the share of zero turnout in those female polling stations that were observed during Election Day was 1.1 percent while it was 4.4 percent in those that did not have any PSOs present. In other words, the presence of PSOs seems to have reduced the share of zero turnout in female polling stations by 3.3 percentage points, or as much as by three fourths. The following columns give the average estimates of the resampling scenarios, first without any priorities, then by prioritising nearby female polling stations, and finally by prioritising nearby female polling stations with zero turnout. The differences in the share of zero turnout between observed and non-observed polling stations become slightly smaller, suggesting that some of the effect of PSOs on Election Day may in fact have been caused by non-compliers. Nevertheless, still in the most conservative scenario (Scenario C) there is a substantial difference in the rate of zero turnout polling stations and the presence of PSOs seems still to reduce this share from 4.3 percent to 2.5 percent, or by about a half.

Table 5 *Descriptive statistics: PSOs and outcome variables*

	Original Data	Scenario A	Scenario B	Scenario C
PS with zero turnout				
Non-observed:	0.044	0.043	0.043	0.043
Observed:	0.011	0.019	0.023	0.025
Difference:	- 0.033**	-0.024**	-0.020**	-0.018**
Turnout				
Non-observed:	35.146	35.169	35.214	35.214
Observed:	34.688	34.501	34.267	34.262
Difference:	-0.458	-0.668	-0.947	-0.952
Turnout in constituencies with no zero-turnout				
Non-observed:	37.748	37.744	37.815	N/A
Observed:	36.239	36.386	36.091	
Difference:	-1.509*	-1.358*	-1.724*	
PS with exceptionally high turnout				
Non-observed:	0.017	0.017	0.017	0.016
Observed:	0.014	0.014	0.015	0.015
Difference:	-0.003	-0.003	-0.002	-0.002

*Note: Statistical significance: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001*

For average turnout, using the original data, the figures suggest that observed female polling stations had 34.69 percent while non-observed female polling stations had 35.15 percent. This means that the presence of PSOs is associated with a small reduction in average turnout by 0.46 percentage points. The resampling scenarios, shown in the following columns, seem to increase this negative effect slightly, to just under 1 percentage points. Table 5 also provides the average turnout figures for observed and non-observed polling stations for only those constituencies that did not have any female polling stations with zero turnout. In these, the differences are somewhat larger, suggesting that the presence of PSOs is associated with a reduction in average turnout in female polling stations by 1.5 percentage points using the original data, and by 1.36 and 1.72 percentage points in the different resampling scenarios. Finally, the share of female polling stations with exceptionally high turnout is low both in observed female polling stations – between 0.17 and 0.16 percent – and in non-observed female polling stations – between 0.14 and 0.15 percent. The difference between these is only around 0.03 and 0.02 percentage points.

To more formally measure the differences between observed and non-observed polling stations, I use OLS regression analysis. The results of these are summarised in figures 5 – 8 and presented in more detail in the appendix. In figure 5, I estimate the effect of PSOs on the average probability of zero turnout in female polling stations. The first pair of bars on the far left give the average treatment effect (ATE) using the original data. The very first bar shows the effect without fixed effects, indicating that the presence of PSOs reduced the average probability of zero turnout in female polling stations by 3.27 percentage points. This effect is statistically significant at conventional levels ($p<0.01$). When adding fixed constituency effects, shown in the second bar, the presence of PSOs reduces the average probability of zero turnout by 1.33 percentage points, again statistically significant ($p<0.01$).

Figure 5 *Observer-effect on zero turnout in female-only polling stations*
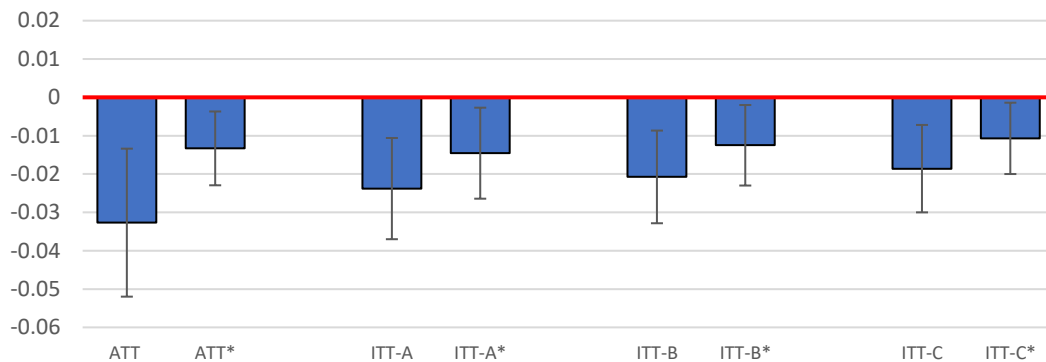
Note: Bars display the regression coefficient for PSOs on the average probability of zero turnout in female-only polling stations with 95% confidence intervals. Bars labelled ATE gives the average treatment effect using the original data. Bars labelled ITT gives the intention-to-treat effect using resampled PSOs following scenarios a − c. Suffix * indicates fixed constituency effects. All models include 13,136 female polling stations, with standard errors clustered on 236 constancies.

The following three pairs of bars measure the intention to treat (ITT) effect by resampling those PSOs that went to a substitute polling station on Election Day. As described above, when resampling the observers, the first scenario did not have any priorities; the second gave priority to nearby female-only polling stations; and the third prioritised nearby female-only polling stations with zero turnout. In all three scenarios, the effect of PSOs on zero turnout in female-only polling stations remains negative and statistically significant, both with and without fixed constituency effects. Even under the most conservative scenario (Scenario C), the presence of PSOs reduces the average probability of zero turnout in female-only polling stations by 1.86 percentage points ($p<0.01$) and when adding fixed constituency effects by 1.07 percentage points ($p<0.05$).

Figure 6 *Observer-effect on average turnout in female-only polling stations*
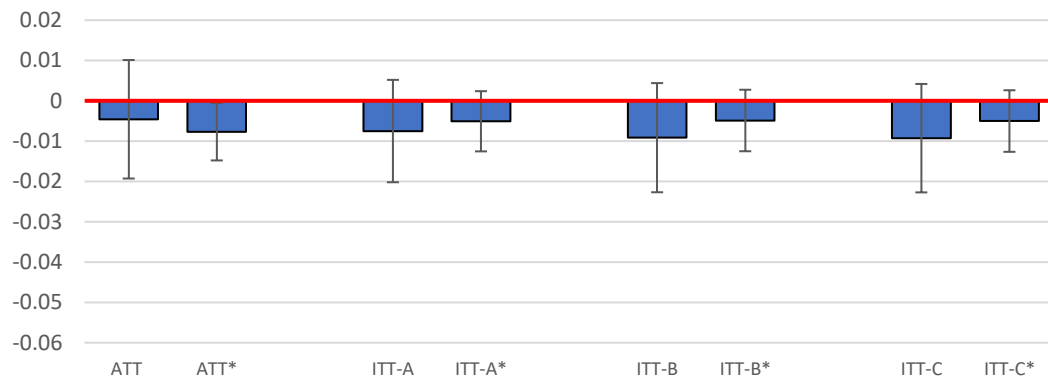
Note: Bars display the regression coefficient for PSOs on the average turnout in female-only polling stations with 95% confidence intervals. Bars labelled ATE gives the average treatment effect using the original data. Bars labelled ITT gives the intention-to-treat effect using resampled PSOs following scenarios a – c. Suffix * indicates fixed constituency effects. All models include 13,136 female polling stations, with standard errors clustered on 236 constancies.

In figure 6, I estimate the effect of PSOs on average turnout in female-only polling stations. Again, the pair of bars to the far left provides the ATE using the original data. The first bar shows the effect without fixed effects, indicating that the presence of PSOs reduces average turnout in female polling stations by 0.46 percentage points. This effect is not however statistically significant (p=0.540). When adding fixed constituency effects, the presence of PSOs reduces average turnout in female polling stations by 0.8 percentage points, now statistically significant at conventional levels (p<0.05). I further test the robustness of these effects by estimating ITT using averages of the resampled PSOs. These analyses show similar negative effects of PSOs on average turnout in female polling stations by 0.5 to 0.9 percentage points. These estimates do not however reach conventional levels of statistical significance, as can be noted by the 95 percent confidence interval of the coefficient extending on both sides of zero.

In figure 7, I estimate the effect of PSOs on average turnout in female polling stations in a reduced sample, including only constituencies that did not have any female polling stations with zero turnout. The purpose is to exclude constituencies with zero turnout female polling stations, because the negative effect of PSOs on

zero turnout is also likely to impact on the association between PSOs and average turnout in female polling stations. As shown in the pair of bars to the far left, the ATE using the original data in this reduced sample, suggests that the presence of PSOs decrease average turnout in female polling stations by 1.5 percentage points, and when adding fixed constituency effects by 0.93 percentage points. Both these effects are statistically significant at conventional levels ($p<0.05$).

Figure 7 *Observer-effect on average turnout in female-only polling stations (in constituencies with no zero turnout)*
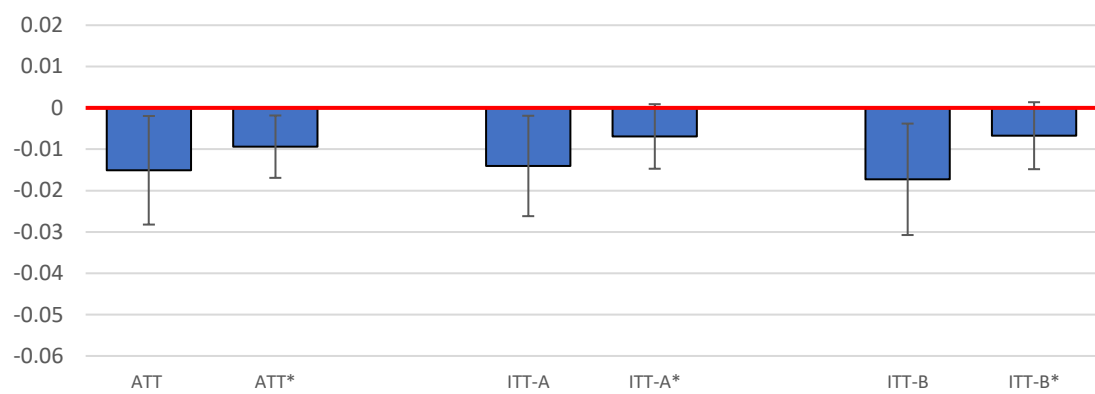
Note: Bars display the regression coefficient for PSOs on the average turnout in female-only polling stations in constituencies with no zero turnout polling stations with 95% confidence intervals. Bars labelled ATE gives the average treatment effect using the original data. Bars labelled ITT gives the intention-to-treat effect using resampled PSOs following scenarios a – c. Suffix * indicates fixed constituency effects. All models include 10,524 female polling stations, with standard errors clustered on 195 constituencies.

Like above, I also test the robustness of these effects by estimating ITT using averages of the resampled PSOs (Scenario C is not included here as the sample does not contain any zero-turnout female-only polling stations). These analyses show similar negative effects of PSOs on average turnout – reducing average turnout by 1.4 – 1.7 percentage points without fixed effects, and by 0.6 – 0.7 percentage points with fixed constituency effects. The ITT estimates are statistically significant for the models without fixed effect ($p<0.05$). When including constituency fixed effects, however, the statistical significance becomes somewhat weaker ($p<0.1$).

Finally, in figure 8, I estimate the effect of PSOs on the share of female polling stations with exceptionally high turnout. The effects in figure 8 are very small and throughout not statistically significant in any model. This is the case both when estimating ATE as well as when estimating ITT using the different resampling scenarios.

Figure 8 *Observer-effect on exceptionally high turnout in female-only polling stations*
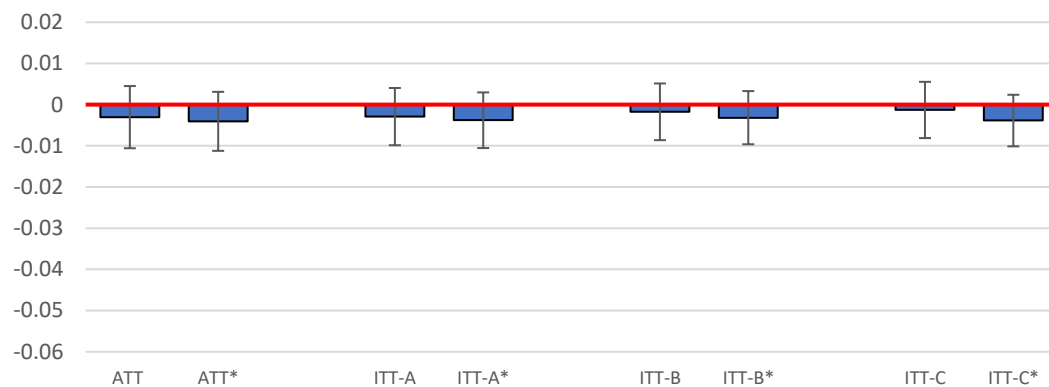
*Note: Bars display the regression coefficient for PSOs on the average probability of exceptionally high turnout in female-only polling stations with 95% confidence intervals. Bars labelled ATE gives the average treatment effect using the original data. Bars labelled ITT gives the intention-to-treat effect using resampled PSOs following scenarios a – c. Suffix * indicates fixed constituency effects. All models include 13,136 female polling stations, with standard errors clustered on 236 constancies.*

In sum, the results of these empirical analyses, firstly, provide evidence that the presence of PSOs significantly and substantively reduced incidents of zero turnout in female polling stations in which PSOs were present; the probability that not a single woman voted was significantly lower than in other female polling stations where there were no PSOs. Because the set of polling stations that PSOs observed on Election Day was randomised, it is reasonable to assume that these effects were caused by the presence of PSOs. While some of this effect may have been generated by non-complying PSOs, this alone cannot have caused this effect. Even under the most conservative resampling scenarios, the effect of PSOs on zero turnout remained negative and statistically significant. I therefore interpret these findings as support for the hypothesis (H1) that PSOs are able to deter more brazen or extreme attempts of disenfranchisement in those polling stations where they are present.

As emphasised earlier, the vast majority of female-only polling stations with zero turnout are found in the North Western Frontier Province (NWFP). The fact that in all analyses above, the negative observer-effect is robust to the inclusion of constituency fixed effects – which drop all constituencies which do not have any female-only polling stations with zero turnout from the analyses – suggest that they are valid in these areas. Even so, due to the geographical concentration of the outcome variable, it may be that these findings are specific to these areas and it is not certain whether they can be generalised to the entire country. Further, as has been noted above, potential displacement effects have not been examined in this study. Therefore, it cannot be ruled out that rather than deterring brazen female disenfranchisement across all polling stations, the presence of election observers at one polling station may simply displace such malpractices to other polling stations.

Further, the results also suggest that PSOs did not increase turnout in female polling stations. This remains the case under all specifications, both when estimating the effects for the full sample and when including only constituencies with no female polling stations with zero turnout. The findings therefore do not provide any support for the hypothesis (H2) that PSOs deter more incremental forms of female disenfranchisement in those polling stations where they are present.

Instead, the results suggest that PSOs may have slightly decreased average turnout in female polling stations. These negative effects appear when using the entire sample, however, they are mostly statistically non-significant. When reducing the sample to only include constituencies that had no female polling stations with zero turnout, the negative effect of PSOs on average turnout becomes stronger and more significant, even though not all models entirely reach conventional levels of statistical significance. This provides some support for the third hypothesis (H3) that the presence of PSOs could be associated with a decrease in female turnout. The mechanisms that causes this reduction in turnout are difficult to verify. Previous research suggests that PSOs deter vote inflation in polling stations and therefore turnout in observed polling stations may seemingly reduce. The analyses above, however, do not provide support for this as PSOs had no significant effects on the rate of female polling stations with exceptionally high turnout (H4) as would be

expected if ballot box stuffing was a large factor in the reduction of turnout. One possibility that remains is therefore that the presence of PSOs may actually have depressed female electoral participation, for example by raising voter identification requirements in female polling stations or through some other ways. With the present data, however, it is difficult to verify this conclusively.

2.6 Conclusion

For decades international organisations and national governments have endorsed goals to strengthen women's empowerment and equality. For instance, in a clear majority of countries today the equality between men and women is legally guaranteed in national constitutions. The right to vote for both women and men is not only seen as an inalienable human right but also central to modern understandings of democracy. Election monitoring organisations have acknowledged the need to emphasise women's right to vote and female participation as central concerns.

Stark gender disparities nevertheless still persist in most countries both in the economy and in politics. As of 2015, only 22 percent of national parliamentarians were women, a slow increase from 11.3 two decades earlier (UN 2019). Participation rates suggest that women vote as frequently as men in most developed countries and in stable democracies. However, in many developing countries and unconsolidated democracies, this is not always the case (IDEA 2016). In fact, it remains the case that in many unconsolidated democracies still today, millions of women are disenfranchised, often as a result of marginalisation and discrimination, but also due to electoral maladministration, fraud and violence that deter or prevent women from voting.

This chapter has investigated the ability of election observers to impact on female electoral participation, by examining turnout and disenfranchisement in female-only polling stations in Pakistan. Utilising a large-scale observer effort to carry out a PVT with randomly allocated observers during the 2008 general elections, I

estimated whether election observers have any impact on women's rights to vote in these polling stations in practice. The study shows that observers significantly reduced incidents of zero turnout in female-only polling stations. This indicates that they are able to deter more brazen attempts of female disenfranchisement in those polling stations where they are present. Observers did not however increase average turnout in female-only polling stations, suggesting that they do not necessarily deter more incremental forms of disenfranchisement. Instead, their presence was associated with a decrease in turnout in these polling stations, which may be due to observers in some other ways depressing female participation.

The findings of this study therefore provide a mixed picture of the ability of election observers to safeguard women's right to vote. On the one hand, it seems that the presence of election observers does enable some women to vote who likely would not have been able to do so in the absence of observers. Given the challenging circumstances for women's participation in Pakistan and the safety concerns for election observers themselves, this positive effect should be applauded. On the other hand, however, the presence of election observers may also have had unintended consequences for female participation. While the exact reasons cannot be ascertained, the fact that election observers are not associated with an increase but rather a decrease in female turnout implies the possibility that their presence can make it more difficult for some women to vote. As discussed above, this could be because the presence of observers in the polling station increases voter identification requirements, which in many developing countries and unconsolidated democracies like Pakistan is likely to disproportionally affect women. It is also possible that simply the presence at the polling station of men from outside the local community can make it impossible for some women to enter the polling station in socially conservative areas. Or alternatively, some women (for whatever reason) may simply choose not to enter the polling station if an observer is present.

Most election observer organisations, like health professionals and development workers, work according to the principle *primum non nocere*, or "first, do no harm". In case their presence does in fact hinder some women from voting, it could be seen to contradict this principle. Further research should therefore be

committed to investigating in more detail how exactly election observers impact on voter identification requirements and other procedures that may have adverse impact on female electoral participation, as well as how election observers are perceived in socially conservative areas, and how this in turn could affect female participation rates when observers are present at the polling station. Importantly, research efforts should focus on finding practical solutions to how such challenges could be averted.

Aside from election observers, another central factor highlighted in this chapter that likely impacts female participation in Pakistan is the gender segregation of polling stations. As noted above, Pakistan is not the only country that assigns men and women to separate stations on Election Day. This system is used in several countries in North Africa and the Middle East as well as in some countries in South Asia (see footnote 10 above). The use of female only polling stations is sometimes argued to increase accessibility for women. For instance, in cultures where women do not interact with men who are not relatives, and when voter identification requires the removal of veils or gloves, having separate polling stations with female staff is seen as necessary (ACE 2013). On the other hand, however, as has been emphasised in this chapter, female-only polling stations can also directly discourage women from voting, if they increase logistical issues, are poorly administered, or if they become targets for forces seeking directly to hinder women from voting. Further research should therefore seek to evaluate under what conditions gender segregated polling stations can actually increase female participation, but also when they instead are part of the problem.

2.7 Appendix

Table 6 *Average treatment effect estimates for zero turnout in female-only polling stations*

	Model 1	Model 2
Observer presence	-0.033 (0.010)**	-0.013 (0.004)**
Intercept	0.044 (0.013)**	0.042 (0.000)***
Fixed Constituency Effects	NO	YES
N	13,136	13,136
R-squared	0.0022	0.0022

*Note: OLS regression analysis. * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001*

Table 7 *Intention to treat estimate for zero turnout in female-only polling stations*

	Coefficient for Observer presence	SE	95 % confidence interval	
			Lower	Upper
Scenario A	-0.0238**	0.006	-0.037	-0.011
Scenario A Fixed Effects	-0.0146**	0.006	-0.026	-0.003
Scenario B	-0.0208**	0.006	-0.033	-0.008
Scenario B Fixed Effects	-0.0125**	0.005	-0.023	-0.002
Scenario C	-0.0186**	0.006	-0.030	-0.007
Scenario C Fixed Effects	-0.0107*	0.004	-0.020	-0.001

*Note: ITT estimates were obtained by resampling out-of-sample observers to nearby polling stations 1,000 times, carrying out an OLS regression analysis in each resampling, and then obtaining the average estimates of these. * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001*

Table 8 *Average treatment effect estimates for average turnout in female-only polling stations*

	Model 1	Model 2
Observer presence	-0.005 (0.007)	-0.008 (0.004)*
Intercept	0.351 (0.002)***	0.352 (0.000)***
Fixed Constituency Effects	NO	YES
N	13,136	13,136
R-squared	0.0001	0.0001

*Note: OLS regression analysis * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001*

Table 9 *Intention to treat estimates for average turnout in female-only polling stations*

	Coefficient for Observer presence	SE	95 % confidence interval	
			Lower	Upper
Scenario A	-0.007	0.006	-0.020	0.005
Scenario A Fixed Effects	-0.005	0.003	-0.013	0.002
Scenario B	-0.009	0.007	-0.023	0.004
Scenario B Fixed Effects	-0.005	0.004	-0.013	0.003
Scenario C	-0.009	0.007	-0.023	0.004
Scenario C Fixed Effects	-0.005	0.004	-0.013	0.003

*Note: ITT estimates were obtained by resampling out-of-sample observers to nearby polling stations 1,000, carrying out an OLS regression analysis in each resampling, and then obtaining the average estimates of these. * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001*

Table 10 *Average treatment effect estimates for average turnout in female-only polling stations (in constituencies with no zero turnout)*

	Model 1	Model 2
Observer presence	-0.015 (0.007)*	-0.009 (0.004)*
Intercept	0.377 (0.009)***	0.377 (0.000)***
Fixed Constituency Effects	NO	YES
N	10,528	10,528
R-squared	0.0008	0.0008

*Note: OLS regression analysis. * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001*

Table 11 *Intention to treat estimates for average turnout in female-only polling stations (in constituencies with no zero turnout)*

	Coefficient for Observer presence	SE	95 % confidence interval	
			Lower	Upper
Scenario A	-0.014*	0.006	-0.026	-0.002
Scenario A Fixed Effects	-0.006	0.004	-0.015	0.001
Scenario B	-0.017*	0.007	-0.031	-0.003
Scenario B Fixed Effects	-0.007	0.004	-0.015	0.001

*Note: ITT estimates were obtained by resampling out-of-sample observers to nearby polling stations 1,000, carrying out an OLS regression analysis in each resampling, and then obtaining the average estimates of these. * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001*

Table 12 *Average treatment effect estimates for exceptionally high turnout in female-only polling stations*

	Model 1	Model 2
Observer presence	-0.003 (0.004)	-0.004 (0.004)
Intercept	0.0168 (0.003)***	0.0168 (0.000)***
Fixed Constituency Effects	NO	YES
N	13,136	13,136
R-squared	0.0000	0.0000

*Note: OLS regression analysis. * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001*

Table 13 *Intention to treat estimates for exceptionally high turnout in female-only polling stations*

	Coefficient for Observer presence	SE	95 % confidence interval	
			Lower	Upper
Scenario A	-0.003	0.004	-0.010	0.004
Scenario A Fixed Effects	-0.004	0.003	-0.011	0.003
Scenario B	-0.002	0.004	-0.009	0.005
Scenario B Fixed Effects	-0.003	0.003	-0.009	0.003
Scenario C	-0.001	0.003	-0.008	0.005
Scenario C Fixed Effects	-0.004	0.003	-0.010	0.002

*Note: ITT estimates were obtained by resampling out-of-sample observers to nearby polling stations 1,000, carrying out an OLS regression analysis in each resampling, and then obtaining the average estimates of these. * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001*

3

How to cheat. And how to detect it.

Polling station malpractices in Ukraine

Abstract

This chapter examines different types of polling station malpractices in Ukraine and the locations where these occur. I theorise that in areas where those wanting to commit electoral malpractices have strong local support it is often more attractive to inflate votes in individual polling stations, especially through overt malpractices such as multiple voting, ballot-box stuffing or result-sheet forgery. In contrast, in areas where they lack such support, suppressing votes becomes more attractive and alternative methods are often needed. When polling station malpractices are sufficiently widespread, these dynamics will be reflected in turnout and the rate of invalid votes in individual polling stations. I test these arguments by comparing polling station-level data between two consecutive rounds in the 2004 Ukrainian presidential elections; two elections that otherwise were very similar but where the level of malpractices differed markedly. The empirical analysis highlights several patterns of polling station malpractices in the former election. In line with the theory, these patterns indicate that malpractices to inflate votes almost exclusively occurred in areas dominated by the regime candidate, while malpractices to suppress votes primarily occurred in opposition areas. These findings can help to better detect – and possibly also deter – the use of different polling station malpractices in future elections.

3.1 Introduction

Electoral malpractices often occur on Election Day in individual polling stations. While malpractices may be sanctioned or even facilitated by incumbents from above, they are typically carried out by polling station officials or local actors on the ground. These employ a range of different methods to gain an unfair advantage. Polling stations may be opened late or not at all. Opposition voters can be intimidated and harassed at the polling station. Some ballot boxes and all their content have a tendency to "disappear" or be destroyed. Others are stuffed. And sometimes the vote figures in the polling station are completely made up (Calingeart 2006, Lehoucq 2003). Such practices constitute clear violations of democratic principles with regards to free and fair elections as they "substitute personal or partisan gain on the part of a restricted number of political actors for popular control by all" (Birch 2011, 26). Nevertheless, since manipulating votes is both illegal and politically contentious, it is typically something that perpetrators do not publicise. Therefore, it is often difficult to verify whether electoral malpractices have actually happened, or to establish where or even how these were done. This is especially the case when malpractices occur at the level of individual polling stations.

In this chapter I seek to address some of these challenges by examining different types of electoral malpractices used by officials and local actors to tamper with votes at individual polling stations. I am particularly interested in how perpetrators on the ground select or trade-off different malpractices, and how this in turn impact on the spatial distribution of such malpractices. I also explore *electoral forensics* to identify these malpractices with the aid of polling station level data. The ambition in this chapter is therefore to develop a theoretical model to predict where different types of polling station malpractices are most likely to occur, and to use statistical methods to detect them when they do.

The core argument set forward in this chapter is that there is a link between existing local support, the attractiveness of different electoral malpractices, and the locations where they are carried out. I argue that, in areas where those wanting to commit electoral malpractices already are assured a clear majority of the vote – in

stronghold areas – it is often more attractive to inflate votes in individual polling stations, for example through malpractices such as multiple voting, ballot-box stuffing or result-sheet forgery, rather than to suppress them. By inflating votes in stronghold areas, perpetrators can contribute to the overall vote count for their side. In these areas they are also better placed to secure the necessary cooperation within the polling station to carry out more overt malpractices. In contrast, in areas where perpetrators lack sufficient support, suppressing votes – for example through violence, voter disenfranchisement, or the intentional invalidation of votes – becomes more attractive. In these areas, most voters are likely to support other parties, and hence suppressing votes will be effective, and unlikely to hurt legitimate support for their own side. Furthermore, in these areas it is more difficult for perpetrators to secure needed cooperation in the polling station to carry out overt malpractices, forcing them to consider alternative strategies.

Furthermore, I argue that different polling station malpractices leave different patterns or traces in the electoral data, especially with regards to turnout and the rate of invalid votes. Malpractices to fraudulently inflate votes – such as ballot-box stuffing and result-sheet forgery, involve adding a large number of votes to the vote count. This tends to substantially increase turnout levels in individual polling stations and, if the malpractices are widespread enough, alter the entire turnout distribution. Malpractices to suppress votes on the other hand, tends to reduce turnout figures if voters are intimidated or disenfranchised, and in case votes are intentionally invalidated, substantially increase the rate of invalid votes. Guided by the theory presented in this chapter, I expect that in elections with widespread polling station malpractices, these patterns will predictably occur in line with the local support of the fraudulent party. The theoretical claims presented in this chapter focus on the dynamics of presidential elections, in which the entire country is a single constituency, and candidates are focused on securing a national majority. I discuss further how the assumptions would possibly differ in other electoral systems in the concluding section.

I provide support for the theoretical claims by examining the relationship between local support and different malpractices in the 2004 Ukrainian presidential

elections between the incumbent-backed Victor Yanukovych and the opposition candidate Victor Yushchenko. Ukraine constitutes a characteristic unconsolidated democracy or hybrid regimes, which regularly holds open and competitive elections, but in which the incumbent or ruling party seldom shies away from using unfair practices or even outright fraud in order to secure its hold on power (Diamond 2002, Levitsky and Way 2010). In 2004, the time this study focuses on, the ruling party in Ukraine exercised considerable control over the state machinery and the electoral management body. At the local level, however, this control was more variable. The ruling party's bases of power were mostly concentrated in the East and the South of the country, while the opposition was stronger in the West, North and in the capital (Wilson 2005). Like many other countries, during the presidential elections in Ukraine, the entire country is a single constituency and all votes are counted equally. This typically means that candidates and parties need to obtain sufficient electoral support across the entire country. Or, as in the case of Ukraine in 2004, they can rely on electoral malpractices and fraud.

The 2004 Ukrainian elections were specifically selected for this study because they represent a unique event in that two nearly identical election rounds were carried out within about a month of each other, but in which one was much more fraudulent than the other. In the runoff election between Yanukovych and Yushchenko in November 2004 widespread electoral malpractices were reported which ignited countrywide protests – popularly known as the Orange Revolution – and eventually led the constitutional court to nullify the election outcome. The runoff election was repeated 35 days later in December 2004. The repeat election in December had the exact same candidates and stakes and included the same polling stations and voters. In contrast to the original runoff in November, however, there is broad agreement that the December election was largely absent of serious malpractices and sufficiently met international standards of electoral integrity. This setup enables a research design in which all other election related factors between the two election rounds can be held constant, while only the extent of electoral malpractices varies. With the aid of a novel dataset of vote figures from 33,000 individual polling stations in each of these election rounds, I utilise this setup to

examine how electoral patterns indicative of different malpractices vary between the two elections, and how these patterns are related to local support.

The empirical analysis shows that, in line with my theoretical expectations, the occurrence of different malpractices at polling stations, and their spatial distribution, was heavily influenced by the level of local support. The analysis provides a strong indication that Yanukovych's side was the main sponsor or benefactor of the polling station malpractices that have been examined in this chapter. When contrasting the two elections, I find patterns indicative of overt malpractices to inflate votes, such as multiple voting, ballot box stuffing and result sheet forgery, to be most severe and noticeable in areas where Yanukovych enjoyed very strong local support. These patterns then gradually disappear in areas where Yanukovych had lesser support. In areas with limited support for Yanukovych, in contrast, electoral patterns instead suggest that votes have been suppressed, especially through intentional invalidation. I do not find evidence for voter disenfranchisement, however. The relationships between local support and polling station malpractices that are established in the analysis are robust to measuring the independent variable using vote figures from an earlier election and to the inclusion of control variables.

It should be noted that the results of the empirical analysis could also be consistent with the use of different manipulative tactics by different sides in the election. For example, it could be that Yanukovych's supporters employed more overt tactics, while Yushchenko supporters used more covert tactics. Election observer reports indicate that electoral malpractices occurred on both sides. While I do not find evidence of this in the empirical analysis, this possibility cannot be excluded. Future research should consider expanding the focus of possible electoral malpractices, and the tools to identify them, thus allowing for alternative interpretations of the findings.

The findings of this chapter contribute to the growing literature on electoral integrity and malpractices. Previous studies here have often emphasised that intense electoral competition increases the likelihood of electoral malpractices. When competing parties or candidates hold similar levels of support, the argument goes,

electoral malpractices have greater probability of impacting who wins or loses, thus making malpractices more likely to occur (Scott 1972, Molina and Lehoucq 1999, Lehoucq 2003, Alvarez and Boehmke 2008). This study shows that electoral competition and support, when measured at lower levels of aggregation, may also structure the trade-offs for different types of malpractices which in turn influences where such malpractices are most likely to occur. In contrast to the conventional view, however, more competition at the local level does not seem to intensify malpractices. Instead, as this chapter shows, it is primarily the absence of competition at the local level that enables the most overt and excessive malpractices, while its presence instead forces perpetrators to employ more covert and moderate methods.

Electoral malpractices in the 2004 Ukrainian elections has been assessed previously both through quantitative and qualitative means (Myagkov, Ordeshook and Shakin 2009, 138-182, Herron 2009, 127-144, Wilson 2005, Birch 2011, 123-131). This study further contributes to these efforts through its use of previously unstudied and rich polling station data and by highlighting the spatial distribution of different types of malpractices in these elections. In particular, the study highlights the use of intentional invalidation that has not been documented in previous studies on these elections. The theoretical model developed in this chapter also contributes to efforts to detect or deter malpractices. By taking into account the association between local support and the trade-offs that perpetrators wanting to commit malpractices in polling stations face, efforts to detect malpractices could be made more efficient by targeting them to specific areas where certain types of malpractices can be expected to occur.

The remainder of this chapter proceeds as follows. Section 3.2 will discuss the theoretical argument in more detail, focusing on the attractiveness of different malpractices and how local support influences these. Here I also formulate specific hypotheses that will be tested in the empirical analysis. Section 3.3 provides an overview of local support in Ukraine and the 2004 presidential elections and uses the reports of election observers and past academic literature to highlight how the level of malpractices differed markedly in the two latter rounds of these elections. Section

3.4 lays out the research design and discusses how different malpractices can be statistically identified, and the data and methods that are used in the empirical analysis. Section 3.5 present the results of the empirical analysis, while the concluding section discusses the main findings and assesses their significance for future research on electoral malpractices.

3.2 Polling Station Malpractices

This section develops the theoretical model regarding different polling station malpractices and how existing local support may influence the location where these are deployed. Electoral malpractices are in this chapter understood as intentional or deliberate violations by elections officials or other stakeholders, which seek to distort the individual or collective will of voters for personal or partisan gain (Birch 2011, 26-27, see also Vickery and Shein 2012). The focus here is specifically on malpractices that occur inside, or in the direct vicinity, of individual polling stations and which typically require the involvement – or at least the silent approval – of the polling station officials themselves. Below, I first review different malpractices that are typically committed at polling stations and consider the trade-offs associated with these. I then argue that the local level support of the fraudulent party has an impact on these trade-offs, and thus is influential in determining the attractiveness of different malpractices. Finally, I formulate concrete hypotheses of where different polling station malpractices are most likely to occur. An important scope condition for this theory that should be highlighted is that it refers primarily to presidential elections, in which the entire country is a single constituency, and all votes are equally valuable, wherever they are cast. Further, it should also be emphasised that this theory focuses only on polling station malpractices that occur on Election Day. This misses out malpractices that may have occurred prior to the election, which in themselves may also impact on Election Day incentives and malpractices.

3.2.1 Polling station malpractices and their trade-offs

The polling station provides a unique context in that it is typically staffed by several local election officials and representatives from different parties and has strict procedures regarding voting, counting and the publishing of results. In Ukraine, for instance, each polling station has a polling station committee (PSC) of at least 12 members, with a chair, deputy chair and secretaries. Each running candidate has the right to nominate members to the PSC, while journalists and international election observers also have the right to oversee voting and counting procedures in the polling station. At specified time-points throughout Election Day (at 11.00, 15.00 and 20.00), polling stations must report turnout figures, and once votes are counted the polling station results are put up for display and detailed result protocols are sent to the Territorial Election Committees (TEC) and the central electoral commission (OSCE 2005, 6).

Despite the presence of numerous actors and strict procedures, malpractices nevertheless occur at polling stations. For instance, in their study on Costa Rica, Molina and Lehoucq (1999) recorded that parties and officials used some combination of at least 47 different types of electoral malpractices to distort votes in polling stations. In very broad terms, however, malpractices in polling stations can be categorised into two opposing logics. The first is *vote inflation*, whereby additional votes for a favoured candidate or party are added to the count. This has the concrete effect of increasing the vote-share for a preferred candidate or party and increasing the overall votes cast in a given polling station. The second is *vote suppression*, whereby votes that otherwise would have benefited someone else are subtracted from the count. Vote suppression also improves the vote-share for a given candidate but instead decreases the number of cast or valid votes in a given polling station (Deckert 2013).[32] Given the specific context of the polling station, fraudulent vote inflation or suppression can further involve more *overt* malpractices, which are difficult to conceal from others inside the polling station, and more *covert*

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[32] Vote stealing is a combination of both vote inflation and vote suppression, involving reducing votes from others and transferring them to your own side.

malpractices, that are less likely to be detected. Figure 9 below provides a non-exhaustive list of common malpractices in or at polling stations that seek to either inflate or suppress votes.

Figure 9 Typical Polling Station Malpractices

Vote Inflation	Vote Suppression
o Ballot box stuffing o Falsification of polling station result-sheet o Multiple voting	o Instigating violence at polling station o Voter disenfranchisement o Intentional invalidation of votes

Perhaps the most well-known electoral malpractices to inflate votes is ballot box stuffing. Like the name implies, this literally involves stuffing large numbers of votes into the ballot box in favour of a party or candidate of choice. Votes can in principle be added at any point during Election Day; prior to opening of the polling station, during voting, and after voters and other onlookers have left the polling station (Lehoucq 2003). Sometimes it is not even necessary to actually put in more physical ballots into the ballot box, as these are seldom recounted. Instead, perpetrators may simply write in additional votes for a preferred candidate or party directly unto the polling station result sheets, or completely make up the vote figures (Callen and Long 2015, Beber and Sacco 2012). In terms of maximising the vote advantage at the polling station, these are also very profitable malpractices. In a single stroke, the turnout and vote-share for the preferred party or candidate can be substantially augmented at the polling station, often to extreme figures (Myagkov, Ordeshook and Shakin 2009). While profitable, within the context of the polling station, malpractices such as ballot box stuffing and forgery of result sheets, are also very overt malpractices and the fraudulent intent is obvious to others in the polling station. Stuffing large numbers of votes in the ballot box or completely rewriting the polling station results is nearly impossible to conceal from others in the polling station and

would likely attract loud protests if they were attempted. In order to commit such malpractices therefore, perpetrators often need the cooperation, or at least the silent approval, of the entire polling station staff. Delegates from other parties also need to be excluded or paid off or their protests need to be silenced. In organisational terms, dealing with others in the polling station could be termed the *implementation* or *human resource* costs of different malpractices (Birch 2011, 59). For these types of overt malpractices such costs are undoubtedly very high.

Sometimes perpetrators may also exploit rules for absentee or proxy voting to fraudulently inflate votes in individual polling stations. By issuing fake certificates for absentee or proxy voting, the same voters can cast a ballot multiple times in several different locations. In many countries, a mobile ballot box is also sent to the homes of voters who are ill, elderly, or otherwise unable to get to the polling stations. Perpetrators may exploit this to pressurise these voters or they can tamper with their votes (Calingaert 2006, 144-145). If used moderately to manipulate only a few votes, then malpractices involving absentee voting or mobile ballot boxes are less overt, and thus less costly to implement. However, if used to excess in order to manipulate several hundreds of votes, then the fraudulent intent in such malpractices quickly becomes obvious to others in the polling station, which again requires the cooperation of the entire polling station staff. Therefore, to be profitable, such malpractices also tend to have relatively high implementation costs.

Electoral malpractices also often involve vote suppression. This can include a range of different activities intended to suppress votes that would otherwise benefit opponents. A common strategy here is to instigate violence and intimidation aimed at demobilising supporters of other parties (Rauchenberg and Paula 2019, 684-685, Hafner-Burton, Hyde and Jablonski 2014, 155-156) or to directly attack polling stations and staff and to destroy polling materials (Birch, Deaxecker and Höglund 2020, 5). Electoral violence is often instigated by party members or supporters, but may also be outsourced to militia groups, thugs and criminal gangs (Ibid, 7). Suppressing votes through electoral violence does not typically require the cooperation of others in the polling station, as this can be targeted outside the polling

station. By outsourcing electoral violence to third parties, perpetrators can also avoid being directly implicated in these events.

Other, more covert malpractices to suppress votes also involve voter disenfranchisement and intentional invalidation of votes. Support for opponents can for example be suppressed by limiting the availability of polling places and material. Polling stations in specific areas may for example be opened late and closed early – or kept closed throughout election day – while essential materials needed for voting (such as register books, ink, ballot boxes, ballot papers, etc.) can be withheld (Deckert 2013, 7). Methods to disenfranchise voters also include altering registration lists, applying exaggerated or discriminatory requirements on voter identification, and other administrative procedures to make it more difficult for eligible voters to cast their ballots (Zoltan, Lajevardi and Nielson 2017). Votes can also be suppressed through invalidation. For example, when a ballot is marked incorrectly but the voter's intention is clear, officials may accept it as valid if it is marked for the candidates that they support but decide that is it invalid if it is marked for a candidate that they oppose (Calingaert 2006, 145-146). More systematically, officials may seek to intentionally invalidate or spoil votes that support other parties or candidates. This can, for example, be done by failing to add necessary signatures or stamps to the ballots, thus rendering the ballot invalid. Or officials may add pen or ink marks to the ballot after the voter has made her selection, in order to make it appear as if the voter chose more than one candidate, therefore making the voter's true intention impossible to verify (Herron 2010, Hanlon and Fox 2006). More covert malpractices such as these tend to be less costly to implement in that they can often be masked as mistakes or administrative errors and can be carried out by a minority of polling station officials present – or even a single official – and with some skill kept completely secret from others in the polling station. On the other hand, more covert malpractices may also be less profitable, as there is a limit to the number of voters that can be disenfranchised and votes that can be intentionally invalidated before the fraudulent intent in these activities becomes clear to others.

3.2.2 Local level support

How do perpetrators then choose between different malpractices? The argument advanced here emphasises the importance of local level support for the party or side that is sponsoring or benefitting from the malpractices. Local level support is here understood in terms of the likely vote-share that a party or candidate can reasonably expect to obtain in a given polling station or local area and whether they can count on local actors – and in particular local polling station staff – to favour them during the election. Such support may be founded on genuine approval at the local level but is often maintained through clientelism and patronage networks, and sometimes even through intimidation and physical coercion (Kitchelt and Wilkinson 2007, Gibson 2013). In the discussion below I refer to the perpetrators of different malpractices as the *fraudulent party*. By this a mean the party or candidate in the election that is either sponsoring or benefits from the malpractices that are committed in a given polling station.

According to the conventional view in research on electoral malpractices, overwhelming voter support for one side should lessen the incentives for malpractices as these are then unlikely to affect the outcome. Instead, the likelihood of malpractices occurring on Election Day are often expected to increase considerably as the race tightens and when candidates' support levels are more evenly matched. In tight races, the argument goes, malpractices have a greater probability to determine who wins or loses, and less of it is needed to make a consequential impact, thus increasing the incentives for malpractices (Scott 1972, Molina & Lehoucq 1999, Lehoucq 2003, Alvarez & Boehmke 2008, see also Simpser 2013, pp. 61-65). While this may hold true at the aggregate level, I however argue that the picture at the local level is different. Rather than making the occurrence of malpractices less likely, the theory presented here posits that overwhelming support at the local level for one side can instead enable the most overt and excessive malpractices to inflate votes. Conversely, the lack of local level support forces perpetrators to employ different tactics to either attempt more covert malpractices – such as intentionally invalidating votes – or target malpractices outside polling

stations – for example by instigating electoral violence. These tendencies concern especially elections in which the entire country is one single constituency, such as direct presidential elections and referendums, in which candidates only need a majority nationally, and all votes are counted equally wherever they are cast (Asunka, et al. 2019, 136).

The theory developed here emphasises two principal ways in which local level support can determine the choice of malpractices at individual polling stations. Firstly, on the demand side, the level of local support for the fraudulent party often determines whether inflating or suppressing votes is an effective strategy worth pursuing in the first place. In areas where the fraudulent party already holds a strong position, it is likely to obtain favourable vote figures even without resorting to electoral malpractices. In fact, it is not uncommon in unconsolidated democracies to find stronghold areas where a given party or candidate can regularly count on getting nearly all the cast votes. Malpractices in such areas are therefore unlikely to affect vote-shares much. Nevertheless, malpractices can still be attractive if these inflate turnout levels. By adding additional (fake) votes to the counts in these stronghold areas, even if vote-shares do not improve much locally, perpetrators can still considerably increase the total number of votes for their side, and consequently increase the overall vote-share on the national level. Vote suppression in stronghold areas, however, makes less sense. Suppressing votes in these areas could potentially cause self-harm by depressing legitimate support, or just simply be ineffective as there are fewer voters in these areas that are likely to support other candidates anyway (and thus fewer votes worthy of being suppressed).

In areas where the fraudulent party only holds moderate support or completely lacks any support, on the other hand, the incentives for inflating or suppressing votes change. In these areas vote inflation still makes sense as this both improves vote-shares and increases turnout. On the other hand, suppressing votes in these areas also becomes increasingly attractive. In areas where the fraudulent party lacks genuine support, there is little chance that malpractices would hurt one's own side as there are fewer voters that would support the fraudulent party anyway. By the same token, in these areas there are more voters likely to cast their ballots for

other parties and candidates, and therefore there are also more worthy targets for vote suppression. A similar theoretical argument such as this has also been presented by Rauchenberg and Paula (2019) to explain the use of mobilising and demobilising pre-electoral campaign strategies that centre on clientelism versus intimidation in African elections.

Secondly, on the supply side, local support can also determine what malpractices are possible to carry out in individual polling stations. *Ceteris paribus*, in areas where the fraudulent party enjoys stronger support, it is often easier, or less costly, to source the necessary cooperation in the polling station to carry out malpractices. In stronghold areas, the fraudulent party can more readily draw on local administrative structures, existing patron-client relationships and patronage networks, and even direct intimidation and violence, to ensure that the "right" officials are in the polling station on Election Day, and that these are compliant. These same recourses can also be used to bribe or coerce polling station officials to either ignore malpractices or to their bidding. Similarly, in stronghold areas, the fraudulent party is better placed to exclude or silence representatives of other parties or independent monitors from observing the voting procedures (Callen and Long 2015, Ziblatt 2009).[33] It can further be expected that regional and district-level election authorities in stronghold areas are more supportive of the fraudulent party and are thus less likely to follow up on any complaints or suspicious polling station results or may even directly aid in carrying out the malpractices. As a result, therefore, the human resource or implementation costs for malpractices in polling stations in stronghold areas are much lower than elsewhere. This allows for more profitable but also more overt malpractices, including multiple voting, ballot-box stuffing and result-sheet forgery.

In areas where the fraudulent party only holds moderate support, on the other hand, the implementation costs for overt malpractices are much higher. Those wanting to cheat in these areas are less able to influence the composition of polling

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[33] In support of this, past research by Callen and Long (2015) find evidence in Afghanistan that close connections between powerful local candidates in a given area and electoral officials in charge of polling station results in that area tend to significantly increase the occurrence of aggregation fraud.

station officials or to get the "right" officials to man the polling station on Election Day. Therefore, the political sympathies of polling station officials are likely to be more heterogeneous making cooperation across the entire polling station more difficult to reach. Each official in the polling station could be seen as a potential veto-player to any concerted effort to carry out malpractices. In line with Tsebelis (2002, 22-23) it can be assumed that, if considerable ideological differences exist between these veto-players, then malpractices that require concerted effort are less likely to occur. In areas where the fraudulent party lacks support, the ability to bribe or coerce unsupportive polling station officials to do their bidding, or to exclude or silence uncooperative officials is much more constrained. If overt and obvious malpractices would be attempted in the polling station in these areas, it is therefore likely that these would protest. Similarly, regional or district-level election officials in these areas are likely to be less sympathetic to the fraudulent party and therefore more likely to follow up on election complaints or to scrutinise suspicious results, which may lead to repercussions. In other words, obtaining the needed cooperation for these types of malpractices are much higher in these areas, making such malpractices more costly to carry out, and therefore less likely to occur.

This does not imply that areas where the fraudulent party lacks support would be absent electoral malpractices, however. Cross-national research has shown that when costs for certain types of malpractices are too severe, incumbents often opt for less costly alternatives (Birch 2011, 53-70). For example, it is argued that the knowledge that international observers will be present to monitor an election increases the incentives for incumbents to focus their manipulation efforts to earlier stages in the electoral cycle, for instance to voter registration or campaigning, when the risks of getting caught are lower (Beaulieu and Hyde 2009, Daxecker 2014, Simpser and Donno 2012). Likewise, the presence of election observers in specific polling stations is argued to increase the incentives for perpetrators to relocate their efforts to other polling stations where observers are not present (Ichino and Schundeln 2012, Asunka, et al. 2019). In a similar fashion, it can be assumed that perpetrators in areas where the fraudulent party lacks sufficient support, and for whom the costs of implementing more overt malpractices are too high, may instead

opt for alternative strategies. One option for perpetrators is to instigate electoral violence in these areas, and harass or intimidate voters, in order to suppress votes. While many factors have an impact on the occurrence of electoral violence, recent studies on African elections have shown that violence and intimidation aimed at suppressing votes is often targeted specifically to opposition stronghold areas (Wahman and Goldring 2020, Rauchenberg and Paula 2019). Such attempts may target the vicinity of polling stations, without requiring any cooperation from polling station officials. Another option available for perpetrators is to employ more covert electoral malpractices, including covert efforts to disenfranchise voters or to intentionally invalidate their votes. As argued above, these may be easier to carry out in polling stations even if perpetrators cannot ensure full cooperation from other polling station officials.

3.2.3 Hypotheses

The theoretical model presented here enables us to set out some concrete hypotheses about where different types of polling station malpractices are most likely to occur. The first hypothesis is that in areas where the fraudulent party enjoys strong local support, where vote inflation is more attractive than suppression and where it is easier to obtain needed cooperation in the polling station, we can expect perpetrators to opt for malpractices to inflate votes. Such malpractices include overt malpractices such as ballot box stuffing and result-sheet forgery. It also favours malpractices exploiting absentee voting and mobile polling stations, especially when these involve adding large numbers of fraudulent votes. As the fraudulent party's local support weakens, such overt malpractices are likely to become increasingly rare or involve fewer votes. The first hypotheses can therefore be written as follows.

- Hypothesis 1. The stronger the local support for the fraudulent party, the more likely perpetrators will engage in malpractices to inflate votes.

Secondly, at the other extreme, in local areas where the fraudulent party lacks support, where voter suppression is increasingly attractive but where cooperation in the polling station is more difficult to secure, perpetrators are likely to opt for different malpractices to suppress votes. This can involve efforts to intimidate voters through electoral violence, various schemes to disenfranchise them, or by intentionally invalidating their votes. Such malpractices should however become increasingly rare as the fraudulent party's support increases, as vote suppression becomes less attractive and other, more profitable malpractices, become available. The second hypothesis can therefore be written as follows.

- Hypothesis 2. The weaker the local support for the fraudulent party, the more likely perpetrators will engage in malpractices to suppress votes.

3.3 Ukraine and the 2004 Presidential Elections

Ukraine presents an interesting case on which to test the theory's predictions. As previously noted, Ukraine is a characteristic unconsolidated democracy or hybrid regime, in which open multiparty elections are seen as the only legitimate way to obtaining political power, but where unfair and even undemocratic practices are often used to guarantee electoral success (Diamond 2002, Levitsky and Way 2010). I focus especially on the 2004 presidential elections between the incumbent-backed Victor Yanukovych and the opposition candidate Victor Yushchenko. The runoff election, arranged on November 21, was considered particularly fraudulent, sparking widespread protests, and was later nullified by the constitutional court. In contrast, the repeat elections on December 26 was much cleaner and broadly accepted by both international and domestic election observer organisations. Below I describe the political background in Ukraine and these two elections in more detail.

3.3.1 Background and local support in Ukraine

Ukraine introduced open multiparty election in 1991, following the breakdown of the Soviet Union. The president, who is elected for a five-year period, was provided with considerable executive powers, including the power to appoint the prime minister. The president is elected in a two-round system. To be elected in the first round, candidates need over 50 percent of all cast votes. If no candidate passes this threshold, a runoff is held within three weeks between the two candidates who had the most votes in the first round. The winner in the second round is the candidate who gets most votes. All elections are administered at the national level by a 15-member Central Electoral Commission (CEC), whose chairman is appointed by the president. Ukraine is divided into 225 constituencies, each with their own Territorial Electoral Commission (TEC). Beneath these are the approximately 33,000 separate polling stations, each of which is overseen by a Polling Station Committee (PSC). Recruitment for polling station staff is usually done through local administrative structures, with each candidate having the right to be represented by a member on the PSC (Franklin 2005, 7-10, Birch 2011, 126).

The first presidential election in 1991 was won by Leonid Kravchuk. He was replaced in 1994 by Leonid Kuchma, who was re-elected in 1999. These elections, while not completely fraudulent, were seen as lacking in many respects with regards to international standards of electoral integrity (OSCE 2000, Birch 2011, 124). Kuchma's presidential rule was characterised by weak governments, unstable economic development, widespread corruption, and allegations of human rights abuses.[34] During his rule, relations with Russia were considerably strengthened, leading to the 2003 declaration to negotiate a Single Economic Space between Ukraine, Russia and Belarus, which made him popular among Ukraine's sizeable Russian-speaking minority. Despite the constitutional court declaring that Kuchma

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[34] In 2000, controversial allegations, backed up by audio recordings, linked President Kuchma to the murder of investigative journalist Georgia Gongadze, whose headless corpse had been found in a forest outside Kiev (Wilson 2005).

was eligible for a third five-year rule, however, he decided not to stand in the 2004 elections (Franklin 2005, 2-4, Wilson 2005).

The incumbent-backed candidate in the 2004 elections was instead the acting Prime Minister Victor Yanukovych, who was a former governor of Donetsk region and a representative of the Donetsk oligarch clan.[35] He ran on a platform promoting closer ties with Russia, strengthened status for the Russian language in Ukraine, as well as greater attention to veterans' rights and rural affairs. Yanukovych enjoyed the support of the parliamentary majority led by the *For United Ukraine* bloc, in which his own party, the *Party of Regions*, was the largest. He was also supported by president Kuchma, large parts of the state administration, and received the open backing of the Russian president Vladimir Putin during the campaign. The main contender was Victor Yushchenko, who had been prime minister in 2001 and stood as an independent candidate. He campaigned for Ukraine to turn its attention westward and eventually join the European Union. He also backed intensified anti-corruption measures and accelerated privatisation of state enterprises. Yushchenko was leader of the parliamentary bloc *Our Ukraine* and also received the backing of the Yulia Tymoshenko bloc (Wilson 2005, OSCE 2005, Paniotto 2005). There were also 22 other candidates contesting the presidential election. Most of these were however seen as purely "technical" candidates put forward to take away votes from the frontrunners and to strengthen representation in the TECs and PSCs, primarily in support of Yanukovych. A large number of them received fewer votes in the first round than the 500,000 signatures they had each provided to the CEC in order to be allowed to run (Franklin 2005).

The local support for the different candidates was highly regionalised and remained similar in all of the subsequent election rounds. Yanukovych's political base was in the east of the country, especially in the mining areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, where the For United Ukraine bloc had polled best in the parliamentary elections in 2002. In addition, Yanukovych also enjoyed solid backing in the southern regions, particularly in Crimea. The East and South have the highest shares of Russian

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[35] In his youth, before entering politics, Victor Yanukovych had served two prison sentences for participating in a robbery and on charges of physical assault (Wilson 2005).

speakers in Ukraine; a minority that provided strong support for Yanukovych (Kuzio 2010). Yushchenko, on the other hand, received his strongest backing in the western regions, particularly in Lviv oblast, and partly in the capital Kiev and in some northern regions, such as Sumy. The central regions were keenly contested by both candidates. Figure 10 below depicts Yanukovych's vote-share in the final repeat election on 26 December 2004 by oblast. The figure shows the regional support bases of each candidate with the strongest support for Yanukovych in the East and South, and the strongest support for Yushchenko in West and North.

Figure 10 *District-level support in the 2004 Ukrainian presidential elections*
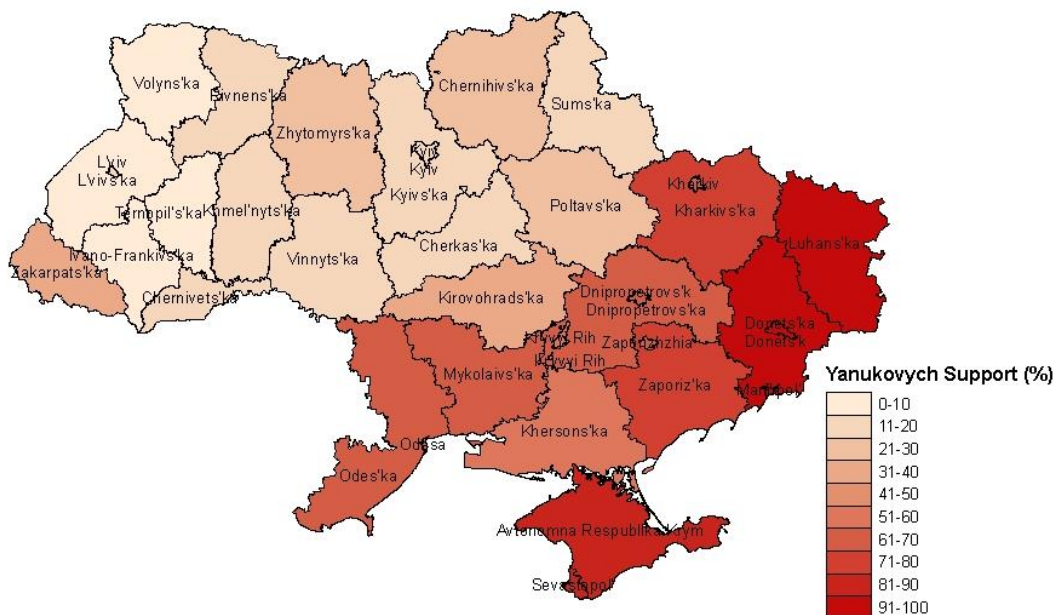
Note: The map shows the vote-share for Yanukovych by district (oblast) in the repeat election round on December 26, 2004. The map was created using shapefiles of administrative boundaries of Ukraine (https://gadm.org) and officials electoral returns sourced from the Central Electoral Commission Website.

3.3.2 Electoral outcomes and protests during the 2004 presidential elections

The 2004 Ukrainian presidential elections were carried out over three separate rounds. The first was organised on October 31. In the first round Yushchenko received the highest vote-share with 39.9 percent of the valid vote, followed closely by Yanukovych who got 39.26 percent. Out of over 37 million voters some 75 percent turned out to vote. The result in the first round is thought to have come as a surprise

for the administration as Yanukovych had been leading in the polls in the build-up to the elections, not least because both state and private media were actively endorsing him and after the state pensions had been nearly doubled in September 2004. In the meantime, Yushchenko had been poisoned with dioxin under mysterious circumstances, severely undermining his health and disfiguring his face (Wilson 2005).

Because no candidate received more than 50 percent of the vote in the first round, however, a runoff election was organised on November 21. This time, to the surprise of many, the order of the top candidates was reversed: now Yanukovych obtained the higher vote-share with 49.46 percent compared to Yushchenko who received 46.61 percent. The turnout was higher in the November election compared to the first round; just over 81 percent. The CEC announced the results the day after the election and quickly declared Yanukovych as the winner and president-elect.

Table 14 *Election results in the 2004 Ukrainian presidential elections (percent)*

	31 October	21 November	26 December
Yanukovych	39.26	49.46	44.20
Yushchenko	39.90	46.61	51.99
Turnout	74.54	81.12	77.28

Note: The table represent the official results in percent provided by CEC. The table does not include vote-shares for other candidates or alternatives.

The results of the second round were immediately criticised by numerous international election observer organisations, domestic NGOs and independent media. The election was also followed by massive but largely peaceful protests, which became known as the Orange Revolution. Maidan square in Kiev became the centre of the protests which attracted an estimated 500,000 people each day and lasted 16 days (Paniotto 2005). The protests were also accompanied by high-level

statements by both the European Union and the United States denouncing the elections, and by Russia defending them[36].

The political deadlock was finally broken on December 3, as the Constitutional Court decided that it was impossible to determine the results of the second round due to the large scale of electoral fraud. A repeat election (or third round) with the same two candidates was therefore scheduled to occur 35 days after the runoff election, on December 26. The repeat election resulted in a clear victory for Yushchenko who now had a majority of the vote-share, obtaining close to 52 percent, while Yanukovych received 44.2 percent. The official turnout in the December repeat election was closer to that of the first round, at 77 percent. On January 10 the CEC officially declared Yushchenko the winner and on January 11 published the final election results.

3.3.3 Electoral malpractices in 2004 presidential elections

The widespread use of malpractices and fraud in the Ukrainian presidential elections in 2004 has been highlighted by international election observers, domestic NGOs, as well as academics. There is broad agreement among these that the most serious violations occurred especially in the runoff election in November during which widespread malpractices, particularly in individual polling stations, were reported by multiple sources. In contrast, the repeat election in December, while not perfect, is often seen as largely absent serious malpractices and broadly meeting international standards of electoral integrity.

The 2004 November runoff election was monitored by some 600 international election observers, organised by the *International Election Observer Mission* (IEOM) and some 1,000 observers from the *European Network of Election*

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[36] US. Secretary of State Colin Power was perhaps most direct in denouncing the elections, saying "We cannot accept this result as legitimate, because it does not meet international standards and because there has not been an investigation of the numerous and credible reports of fraud and abuse" (Schneider 2004). In contrast, the Russian official statement applauded the transparency and fairness of the election and declared that Yanukovych had won (Franklin 2005)

Monitoring (ENEMO). In addition to these, several thousand domestic election observers were fielded by the non-partisan organisation *Committee of Voters of Ukraine* (CVU). Observer reports indicate that especially the runoff election in November was permeated by numerous irregularities and serious malpractices, and that the election results consequently were not credible.

During the November 21 election observers highlighted that the functioning of TECs and PSCs was significantly affected by the large number of technical candidates, whose representatives in many regions effectively formed a 'majority bloc' together with Yanukovych's representatives within these commissions (OSCE 2005, 2). Each candidate that had participated in the first round was also allowed to nominate two representatives for the PSC in the November run-off. According to the IEOM, Yanukovych appeared to be the main beneficiary of this, as most technical candidates had campaigned explicitly against Yushchenko rather than to promote their own platform (OSCE 2005, 16-17). The IEOM further stated that it appeared improbable that each candidate was able "to propose, unaided, a total of up to 66,000 PSC members", and that many appointments were not in accordance with provisions of the law (OSCE 2005, 16). Election observers reported that those nominated to PSCs had often been pressured and coerced to sign up, that there were several cases where persons nominated to PSCs were not even aware of having been nominated, and that some had been nominated multiple times on the same lists (Franklin 2005, 9). Election observers also received multiple reports of local authorities lending a hand to those candidates affiliated with Yanukovych in finding nominees to PSCs, despite only official proxies being allowed to do so (Franklin 2005, 9) and that PSC members nominated by opposition candidates were discriminated against.

There is no data on the exact partisan composition of PSC members from the 2004 elections, although election observer reports suggest that it often favoured Yanukovych[37]. According to IEMO, opposition party representatives, especially in eastern regions, frequently complained that representative supporting Yanukovych

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[37] The Ukrainian electoral commission only contains data on representatives at constituency-level during the December 26 2004 elections.

and that they, together with representatives for technical candidates, used their majority at both TEC and PSC levels to pass several controversial decisions, including the appointment of the PSC chairperson. The IEMO assessed that the selection of chairpersons in over a third of TECs was biased in favour of Yanukovych and against Yushchenko (OSCE 2005, 12). There were also reports of opposition PSC members, especially those occupying the positions of Chairperson, Deputy and Secretary, being intimidated and pressured to resign, while hundreds were summarily dismissed on the day prior to Election Day in November (OSCE 2005, 12-13). Reports also indicate that some PSC members from the opposition side were threatened, harassed and even physically assaulted at the polling stations (Paniotto 2005). For example, in Territorial Election Commission district 42 in Donetsk oblast, representatives nominated by Our Ukraine were reportedly "kicked out of all but a few polling stations" (US State Department 2004). According to Wilson (2005, 107-108), this allowed Yanukovych's side to completely 'control' individual polling stations during the November elections, enabling various forms of malpractices on Election Day.

On the day of the runoff election on November 21, observers reported of widespread ballot box stuffing in individual polling stations. In some cases, observers had themselves seen additional bundles of votes being added to ballot boxes, while on other occasions they received credible reports from voters and party representatives who had witnessed such incidents (OSCE 2005, ENEMO 2005, CVU 2004). Observers estimated that during the runoff election, conduct was poor in up to 7 percent of polling stations. This was particularly the case in the eastern oblasts, where this share was 11 percent (OSCE 2005). Observers reported that problems occurred particularly in Donetsk in which poll workers reportedly engaged in open and public ballot stuffing, not even attempting to conceal the fraud (Way 2005, 141). There was also systematic misuse of absentee voter certificates (AVC) which allows voters to cast their ballot in another polling station. Reports suggest that in the November election busloads of voters would appear at individual polling stations with readily filled-out AVCs. Once all the passengers on bus had voted they often continued to the next polling station. Home voting and voting through mobile ballot boxes was likewise abused, either for stuffing additional ballots into these ballot

boxes or to pressurise those who voted at home (ENEMO 2005). Such incidents were reported from numerous oblasts across the country, but especially in the East and South (OSCE 2005). According to Way (2005, 140-141) there was a failure on the side of the regime to carry out electoral malpractices in Western Ukraine. For example, in the province of Lviv, which overwhelmingly supported Yushchenko, police and tax authorities refused to distribute absentee ballot certificates intended for multiple voting ostensibly to support Yanukovych. On the other hand, accounts also suggest that local authorities in these areas may have facilitated minor fraud – such as allowing residents to vote on behalf of their relatives residing abroad – in favour of Yushchenko.

Among other widespread violations on Election Day, observers noted that ballots had been intentionally invalidated or damaged in many instances. This was often done by providing voters with incomplete ballot papers lacking the PSC member's signature, name or a valid stamp. The omissions of these automatically rendered the ballots invalid, irrespective of the voter's choice. In some cases, acid had secretly been poured into the ballot box, damaging several votes before officials could count them (Telegraph 2004). Even more exotic techniques involved officials using pens with faded ink to sign ballots, making the signature disappear after some time, thus again rendering the ballot invalid (CVU 2004, 10). In the runoff election, reports of such incidents occurred particularly in oblasts in which Yushchenko had performed well during the first round (OSCE 2005, 27, CVU 2004, 9-10). Overall, reports indicate that determining the validity of ballots often systematically favoured Yanukovych (Herron, 2009, ch. 9)[38]. Large numbers of voters were also denied their right to vote, often due to minor issues, such as small spelling mistakes in the voter lists. Such incidences were also reported primarily in areas where Yushchenko's support was higher (Paniotto 2005).

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[38] Herron (2009) describes the procedures in a precinct commission in which ballots were reviewed because they contained additional or stray marks outside the boxes provided for candidates. "Questionable ballots that could reasonably be interpreted as pro-Yanukovych were admitted by a majority vote of the precinct commission. Analogous ballots that favoured Yushchenko were dismissed. Yushchenko supporters on the commission and other domestic observers protested these decisions, but they were upheld" (ch. 9 endnote 6).

Finally, following the November election, allegations were made that Yanukovych's staff had attempted to hack into CECs servers using a transit server in order to manipulate vote figures in case local strategies fell short (Wilson 2005, Way 2005b). The combined effect of all these malpractices were thought to have possibly added over a million votes to Yanukovych's total in the November runoff election (Wilson 2005).

In contrast to the November election, the electoral procedures during the repeat election on December 26 was judged by most stakeholders far more favourably. While the incentives for candidates to carry out electoral malpractices likely remained unchanged between the November and December elections, past research and election observer accounts suggest that the possibilities to carry them out, especially on the side of Yanukovych, had changed. By December the Maidan demonstrations, including the international outcry, following the fraudulent elections had weakened Yanukovych's position within the regime. President Kuchma effectively withdrew his support while regional and local election officials who had previously been relied upon now proclaimed neutrality (Myagkov, Ordeshook and Shakin 2009, 141). Yanukovych also lost the support of his main public representatives – his campaign manager and his representative in parliament – while deputies from various pro-regime factions in parliament defected to the opposition. Large sections of the police, military and intelligence services began openly breaking with the regime (Way 2005, 143). For the December elections there was also a considerably increased election observer presence. For example, IEOM doubled its international observers from 600 to 1,367 in December (OSCE 2005), while there was a large influx of Ukrainians from abroad who joined domestic election observer efforts as accredited journalists (McFaul 2005). Following the ruling of the constitutional court, the parliament also changed the composition of the CEC and replaced its chairman. The composition of TECs and PSCs were also reformed so that they were now based on equal number of members, chairpersons, and secretaries appointed by the two candidates. Parliament also passed specific legislation to regulate and make more transparent the issuing of AVCs and home voting, which were abused during the earlier election rounds (OSCE 2005, 36). In sum, the

weakened support within the state and local administrations, the increased presence of election observers, and changes to the composition of electoral commissions and legislative changes, all contributed towards reducing the regime's possibilities to carry out electoral malpractices.

Following the election on December 26, the IEOM stated that the repeat election had brought Ukraine substantially closer to meeting international standards of electoral integrity. It considered the campaign conditions markedly more equal, media more balanced, and the election administration more transparent. The mission received far fewer reports of malpractices on election day and a vast majority of observers assessed the process much more favourably than in the November round (OSCE 2005). ENEMO concluded that the election was conducted in an orderly, generally well-organised and essentially free environment, and that most of the irregularities that were witnessed in previous rounds were now absent (ENEMO 2005). The CVU noted that while there were some shortcomings during voting and counting, they did not observe any mass or systematic violations as they had done during earlier election rounds (CVU 2004b).

The striking disparity in malpractices between the November runoff election and the repeat election in December has also been highlighted in exit polls carried out following each election round and by scholars applying electoral forensics methods. Following the November election, a nationwide exit poll was carried out by a consortium of polling firms coordinated by the Ukrainian NGO Democratic Initiatives. Their sample consisted of 750 polling stations with 28,000 respondents using a secret ballot to enquire peoples' vote choices. According to the results of the exit poll Victor Yushchenko clearly won the November runoff election, in stark contrast to the official results. Following the repeat round, the same polling firms conducted an equivalent exit poll on December 26. This time, the result of the exit poll was largely in line with the official results, confirming Yushchenko's victory (Paniotto 2005, 14-20)[39].

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[39] The results of the exit poll carried out on November 21 gave Victor Yushchenko 53 – 53.7 percent of the vote, while it gave victor Yanukovych 44.3 – 44 percent of the vote. The results of the exit poll

During the November runoff election, CVU also carried out a parallel vote tabulation by comparing publicly posted polling station results with official results to examine whether vote figures had been altered once they had left polling stations in either the TEC's or at the CEC. CVU could not however find significant differences, suggesting that if votes had been fraudulently altered, then most of this likely occurred already at the level of individual polling stations, before results were sent onwards (McFaul 2005, 10-11).

Scholars have also sought to examine the elections using electoral forensics tools (Myagkov, Ordeshook and Shakin 2009, Herron 2009). While these studies have been restricted due data availability especially with regards to polling station data for the November 21 election (Myagkov, Ordeshook and Shakin 2009, chapter 4), they have pointed towards considerable irregularities in electoral patterns during the runoff election in November which were largely absent in December. Analyses by Myagkov, Ordeshook and Shakin (2009, 139-159) point in particular to the implausible increase in turnout figures in the runoff election, most of which benefitted Yanukovych, as indicative of fraud. Using models predicting the flow of votes between elections in different areas they also suggest that the vote-figures that Yanukovych obtained in November would have been impossible using non-fraudulent methods (160-167). Examinations by the same authors further suggest that some irregularities may have occurred also in the December election, however these were considerably more muted and if they occurred, they likely benefitted both sides in the election (ibid. 168-177).

3.4 Research design

The purpose of the empirical analysis is to examine the relationship between local support and different types of polling station malpractices in the 2004 Ukrainian presidential elections. The theory developed above predicts that perpetrators in

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carried out in December 26 gave Victor Yushchenko 55.28 percent of the vote, and Yanukovych 40.58 percent of the vote (Paniotto 2005, 14-20).

areas where the fraudulent party enjoys considerable support are more likely to opt for malpractices to inflate votes, through for example multiple voting, ballot box stuffing and result-sheet forgery. In contrast, in areas where they lack such support, they are more likely to resort to malpractices to suppress votes, including intimidation and violence, voter disenfranchisement, and intentional invalidation of votes. To evaluate whether these hypotheses are in fact valid, I compare polling station figures between the 2004 November and December elections in Ukraine. For this I use a novel and previously unstudied dataset that allows me to match all 33,000 polling stations between the two elections. I also draw on election forensics studies to develop indicators for different types of malpractices and use quantitative methods to examine the relationship between local support and these indicators. Below, I describe in more detail the indicators that will be studied to identify different malpractices, the data and variables, and the quantitative methods that will be used.

3.4.1 Indicators of polling station malpractices

In order to identify polling station malpractices during the 2004 Ukrainian elections, I compare vote patterns in individual polling stations between the November and December elections. To develop indicators for different types of malpractices I draw on election forensics studies that investigate deviations in turnout figures and the rate of invalid votes.

A common approach among election forensics studies has been to examine the occurrence of anomalous turnout figures. In the absence of malpractices, it is expected that turnout is normally distributed, meaning that most polling stations have turnout figures relatively close to the mean, while progressively fewer polling stations have either extremely low or extremely high turnout (Myagkov, Ordeshook and Shakin 2009, Klimek, et al. 2012). When votes are fraudulently inflated however – for example through multiple voting, by stuffing ballot boxes or by falsifying result sheets – turnout in individual polling stations will shoot up. Two types of vote inflation have been identified in election forensics studies. More "incremental" vote

inflation, whereby only a few votes are added to the count and more "extreme" vote inflation, whereby perpetrators add as many votes as possible, sometimes even more than the number of registered voters at the polling station would allow (Klimek, et al. 2012).

When more incremental vote inflation occurs, the turnout distribution may become increasingly skewed as there are too many polling stations with elevated turnout figures compared to the national mean. When more blatant or extreme vote inflation occurs, a large subset of polling stations with extreme turnout figures are added to the count. This often results in the entire turnout distribution transforming and becoming bimodal with a sizeable "hump" or "spike" towards 100 percent turnout.

This phenomenon is demonstrated in figure 11 using simulated data. The first image shows a completely unaltered turnout distribution, which is approximately normally distributed. In the middle image turnout in a third of polling stations have been inflated by 20 percentage points, while in the last image the same third of polling stations have been inflated by 40 percentage points. Progressively the turnout distribution is transformed from being normal, to being increasingly skewed, and finally, becoming bimodal, with a sizeable spike at the right-hand extreme. Scholars in this field therefore often point towards bimodal turnout distributions and the presence of large numbers of polling stations with unreasonably high turnout as likely indicators for malpractices to inflate votes (Myagkov, Ordeshook and Shakin 2009, 42-44, Deckert 13-14, Moser and White 2013, Levin, et al. 2009).

Figure 11 *Vote inflation and turnout distribution*
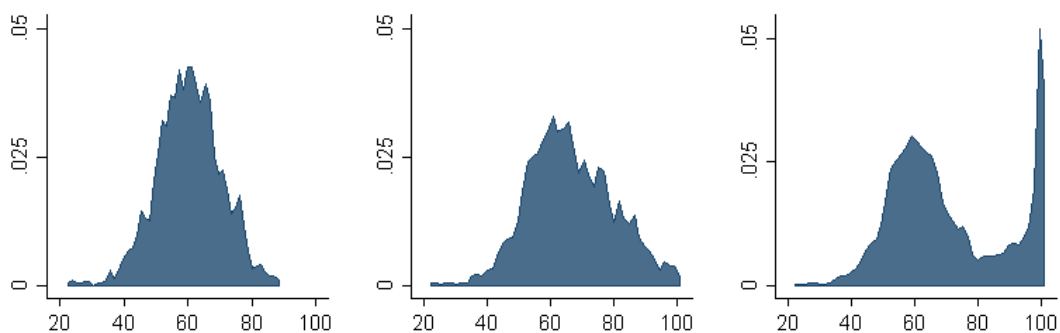
Note: The turnout distributions have been generated by the author using fictional data

In cases of vote suppression – for example through intimidation, violence and other forms of voter disenfranchisement – the opposite happens, as turnout is pushed down. When votes are suppressed, affected areas may display substantially lower turnout figures. If sufficiently widespread, suppression may also affect the entire turnout distribution, skewing it towards zero turnout (Deckert 2013, 13).

Another, although less prevalent, focus for electoral forensics scholars has been the rate of invalid votes (Herron 2010, Leemann and Bochsler 2014, Losada 2006, Hanlon and Fox 2006). In any election, some voters cast ballots that are invalidated. This may result from lack of sufficient instructions on how to fill in the ballot correctly, unintentional errors on the part of the voters, or if the voter purposefully spoils her own ballot as a form of protest. There is limited research on the normal range of invalidation, but on average it is seldom higher than a few percent of all cast ballots (IDEA 2019). Electoral malpractices, however, may alter the invalidation rate in individual polling stations. On the one hand, malpractices to inflate votes may actually decrease the rate of invalid votes in polling stations. The reason for this is that when ballot boxes are stuffed or results sheets tampered with, perpetrators often fail to add proportional numbers of invalid votes, and therefore the rate of invalid votes compared to all cast votes is likely to decrease (Herron 2010, 422). More noticeably, however, when votes are intentionally invalidated, the invalidation rates are likely to increase considerably. Studies in other unconsolidated democracies have shown that polling stations affected by intentional invalidation often have considerably higher rates of invalid votes than other polling stations. Because the normal range of invalid votes tends to be relatively low on average, even smaller amount of intentional invalidation tend to stand out (Hanlon and Fox 2006, Losada 2006).[40]

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[40] There are other forensics methods to detecting irregularities and malpractices in electoral data than the ones described above. Some of these however strive to detect different forms of malpractices than the ones studied here. For example, scholars examining the digit counts, in particular the frequency of the last digit (Beber and Scacco 2012, Leemann and Bochsler 2014), are primarily concerned with potential fraud carried out when the results of multiple polling stations are tabulated at higher levels of aggregation, for example at the central electoral commission. These methods would be unsuitable for investigating potential malpractices that occur in individual polling

A challenge in election forensics studies, however, is that they often investigate individual elections. Therefore, while anomalous polling stations with turnout or invalidation rates that stand out may seem suspicious, it is difficult to ascertain that these deviations are not caused by some other, non-fraudulent means. For example, it is not uncommon in unconsolidated democracies that the hometown or village of a candidate can record turnout figures that are far higher than in any other areas (Myagkov, Ordeshook and Shakin 2009). Special polling stations (e.g. vessels, hospital, and prisons) can also report anomalous turnout figures for reasons other than fraud (Bader and van Ham 2015, Klimek, et al. 2012). Similarly, various forms of errors or accident may cause the turnout to be extremely low, or invalidation rate very high, that may appear as fraud.

To get around this challenge, the empirical study here will focus on the *change* in turnout and invalid votes in individual polling stations between the two elections. As has been established above, there is broad agreement among both observers and scholars that electoral malpractices during the runoff election in November were considerably more severe and widespread than during the December election. Otherwise, however, the elections were very similar. They were held within only 35 days of each other. They featured the same candidates and stakes. The local support on the ground was concentrated in the same geographical areas in both election rounds. And they even had the exact same polling stations, involving the same communities and voters. These elections therefore present a unique situation in which most other factors on the ground that could otherwise have impacted on participation and voting in individual polling stations were kept largely constant across both elections, while the level of malpractices heavily varied between them.

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stations. Other forensics methods may be less effective if malpractices are concentrated to the same areas, as the theory proposed in this chapter suggests. This is for example the case in methods that seek to identify individual polling stations that deviate significantly from other polling stations in the same local area (see Cantu 2014, Hausman and Rigobon 2011, Jimenez, Hidalgo and Klimek 2017) as these only work in case the other polling stations in the same local areas are not at all affected by malpractices. Finally, some forensics methods, such as the Benford's test (see Mebane 2009) have been shown to be highly unreliable (Deckert, Myagkov and Ordeshook 2011), and does not tell us anything on the possible type of malpractices used, and hence is not suitable for the study here.

Therefore, following the approaches outlined above, if malpractices to inflate votes occurred in a given polling station in November, we expect to see a drastic increase in turnout in the November election as compared to the December election. Of particular interest is the polling stations that show unusually high turnout figures in the November election but did not do so in the December election. On the other hand, if malpractices to suppress votes occurred in a given polling station – for example through intimidation and violence or some other form of voter disenfranchisement – then we expect to see a decrease in the rate of turnout in the November election as compared to the December election. This is likely to be observed in a clustering of polling stations with very low turnout particularly in the November elections. Alternatively, if votes are suppressed through intentional invalidation in a given polling station, then we expect to see an increase in the rate of invalid votes in the November election as compared to the December election. Again, of particular interest here is polling stations during the November election that stand out due to having a very high rate of invalid votes but that did not have such high rates in the December election.

3.4.2 Data, Variables and Methods

The dataset used in the empirical analysis contains polling station data from the 2004 November 21 and December 26 Ukrainian presidential elections. This data was collected by the author using official result-sheets originally published by the CEC. While the polling station data is no longer publicly available, it was recovered using internet archiving tools from CEC's own website[41]. To examine the authenticity of this data, I compared the total number of cast votes in each of the 225 TECs to the officially available results. The latter data is still publicly available on CECs website. In most TECs the number of cast votes were very close between the two data-sources, suggesting that the polling station data is correct. I also compared the polling station data with the turnout figures that were reported from TECs on Election Day at 20.00

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[41] The dataset can be obtained from the author upon request.

when voting was completed. This data was also sourced from the CECs website. In most TECs the average turnout in the polling station data and the reported turnout in the TEC at 20.00 was similar, diverging only a few percentage points. In all, when missing data has been excluded, the dataset contains 33,033 polling stations containing relevant vote figures in both the November 21 and December 26 elections, organised into 225 TECs. Each polling station has a unique number, which enabled me to match the data between the election rounds at polling station level.

Based on the indicators developed above, the primary dependent variables of interest are polling station level turnout and the rate of invalid votes, and how these change between the two election rounds. For turnout, I divided the total number of cast votes with the number of registered votes in the polling stations. According to the polling station data, the average turnout across all polling stations in the November 21 election was approximately 84 percent, while in the December 26 election it was 80 percent. This is slightly higher than the official records, which may be due to the fact that results from some TECs in the official results both in December and November were disqualified and excluded from the final count. Also, the average turnout in the polling station data is elevated by a few extreme outlier polling stations with turnout figures far beyond 100 percent (the highest being 190 percent). In the presentation of figures below and in the empirical analysis I leave out polling stations for which the turnout is beyond 100 percent so as not to bias results. Robustness checks nevertheless show that neither the direction nor the significance of main findings change when these are included. I also calculated the invalidation rate in all polling stations, by dividing the number of invalidated ballots with the total number of cast ballots in each polling station. On average, the invalidation rate in the November round was 1.71 percent while it was 1.52 percent in December.

With reference to the above discussion on patterns indicative of different malpractices, in the empirical analysis I will particularly focus on 1) polling stations with turnout rates that are unusually high which would indicate vote inflation, 2) polling stations with turnout rates that are unusually low which would indicate vote suppression through intimidation and violence or some other form of voter disenfranchisement, and 3) polling stations with unusually high invalid votes which

indicate vote suppression through intentional invalidation. One standard approach to identifying such outliers is by multiplying the interquartile range (IQR) by 1.5 and then adding this to the third quartile in cases of outliers with unusually high figures, or subtracting it from the first quartile in cases of outliers with unusually low figures (Asunka, et al. 2019, 141-143).[42] When it comes to polling stations with unusually high turnout, due to the high average turnout in these elections, this method is less feasible, as the cutoff point is above 100 percent turnout. I therefore instead code all polling stations with 99 percent turnout or higher as potential outliers. According to OSCE's election reports, such high turnout figures, especially in larger polling stations is often indicative of malpractices (OSCE 2005). In the November 21 election 2,164 polling stations had 99 percent turnout or above, while in December 26 the number of these was 712. When it comes to polling stations with exceptionally low turnout, the standard technique is possible, indicating that all polling station with turnout less than 55.75 percent are outliers. In the November 21 election there were only 142 such polling stations and on December 26 there were 215 such polling stations. I also code polling stations with exceptionally high rates of invalid votes using the same standard technique, which indicates that all pollig stations with above 4.23 percent invalid votes should be considered as outliers. In the November 21 election the number of polling stations with such high invalidation rates was 1,992 while in December it was 1,164. In addition to these outliers, in the empirical analysis I will also examine the impact on the average change in turnout and the average change in invalid votes between the elections.

The main independent variable of interest is the level of local support for the fraudulent party at the polling station. As a proxy for this, I measured either candidates' share of votes at polling station level. Here I exclude all other votes, such as invalid votes or votes against both candidates. To measure existing support, it is customary to use figures from a prior election. Nevertheless, the figures for candidates' support from both the first round in October and the runoff in November are likely to have been affected by fraud, given the multiple reports of malpractices

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[42] Another equivalent approach is to take code polling stations with turnout above the mean plus two standard deviations as outliers (Moser and White 2013).

in these elections. The least biased estimate of the true level of local support is therefore in the December election when least malpractices were reported. I therefore measure local support using vote figures from the level of individual polling stations in December in all main analyses. To make sure that the results are not driven by the choice of proxy for local support I also rerun all the regression models using the vote-share for Yanukovych in the first round of the presidential elections in October 31 as the independent variable. Data for the first round is available from the CEC website, but only at constituency level. Because this variable is measured on a different level than the individual polling stations, I use multilevel regression models to estimate the association[43]. These robustness tests are presented in the appendix in tables 19 to 23. These robustness tests show similar results with regards to the direction and statistical significance of coefficients as the main analyses. In the empirical analysis presented below I focus particularly on the local support for Yanukovych, since most observer reports and scholarly analyses point to his team as the main sponsors or benefactors of malpractices. This variable ranges from 0 where Yanukovych had no support at all to 100 where Yanukovych had full support. Figure 10, presented earlier, shows the distribution of this variable across the different oblasts in Ukraine. I interpret Yanukovych's support in reverse order to consider if instead Yushchenko's side was the main fraudulent party.

The empirical analysis will begin by investigating turnout distributions in order to get a first impression of the differences between the two elections. Here I use the same methods as Myagkov, Ordeshook and Shakin (2009) with kernel-density plots to examine whether turnout distributions deviate from normality and if they are bimodal. To emphasise the relationship between local support and these, I generate multiple kernel-density plots for different samples given Yanukovych's or Yushchenko's local support.

To more formally test the association between local support and different indicators of malpractices, I use logistic regression models to examine how the main independent variable is related to polling stations with unusually high or low turnout

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[43] For these models I use the lme4 package and the lmer and glmer functions in R.

and unusually high rates of invalid votes. The dependent variables in these models are outlier polling stations in the November elections, while controlling for whether the same polling station showed similar extreme figures in the December election.[44] These analysis therefore show the change between the two elections in the likelihood that a given polling station shows extreme figures conditional upon local support. For the analyses estimating the association between local support and average changes in turnout and invalid votes between the two elections I use standard OLS regression analysis. The outcome variable in these latter analyses is the change in percentage points in either turnout or invalid votes between the two elections.

Strong local support, or the lack of it, may be correlated with a number of socioeconomic factors, which in themselves may also impact on the likelihood of malpractices. In such cases, the relationships uncovered in these analyses may be spurious. To account for this, I control for the population density at constituency (TEC) level. This variable was constructed by first estimating the size of each constituency using GIS-maps, and then dividing the number of registered voters in each constituency by its size. I use the natural logarithm of this variable to correct for skewness. Population density at the sub-national level is often correlated with factors such as urbanisation and economic development, both of which may be possible determinants of electoral malpractices (Birch 2011, Norris 2015). Because this variable is measured on a different level than the individual polling stations, I again include it using multilevel regression models.

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[44] In the empirical analysis the logistic regression eases presentation of the results. Nevertheless, to check that findings are not model-dependent, I also replicate these analyses using linear probability models, which is sometimes recommended in the literature (Wellman, Hyde and Hall 2018, Camerson and Miller 2015). The results of these robustness test do not change either the direction or the significance of the main coefficients.

3.5 Empirical analysis of the 2004 Ukrainian presidential elections

3.5.1 Local support and changes in turnout

The empirical analysis will begin by examining the impact of local support on turnout. As set out by the first hypothesis, we expect that the fraudulent party is more likely to employ malpractices to inflate votes than to suppress them in areas where it enjoys very strong local support. Such malpractices may include for example multiple voting, ballot box stuffing, and result-sheet forgery. In stronghold areas it is both more attractive to inflate votes than to suppress them, and the human resource or implementation costs are lower, thus enabling the use of more overt malpractices. Furthermore, as established above, we expect that such malpractices will particularly elevate turnout figures in those polling stations where they occur, often resulting in polling stations with exceptionally high turnout. With reference to the second hypothesis, we would expect malpractices to suppress votes to occur primarily in areas where the fraudulent party lacks local support. As established above, when voter suppression involves intimidation and violence and other forms of voter disenfranchisement, we expect this to reduce turnout figures in those polling stations where they occur, potentially resulting in polling stations with unusually low rates of turnout.

To get a first indication of the impact of local support on turnout figures, figure 12 below provides a series of kernel density plots showing the turnout distribution in both elections for different levels of local support for Yanukovych. Notable here is that the turnout distribution in the December election – depicted in blue – is approximately normal and roughly bell-shaped across all plots, regardless of local support. This is what we normally would expect to see in free and fair elections. The turnout distribution in the November election – depicted in red – however, differs considerably from this. While it is otherwise similar to that of the December election, it shows a distinct and sizeable second hump or spike appearing towards 100 percent turnout. As described above, such humps or spikes are consistent with patterns caused by malpractices to inflate votes. When measuring for samples of

polling stations with higher local support for Yanukovych, this hump or spike progressively increases in magnitude. In the sample with polling stations with over 75 percent local support for Yanukovych, the distribution has almost completely transformed into the spike.

Figure 12 *Turnout distributions and local support for Yanukovych*
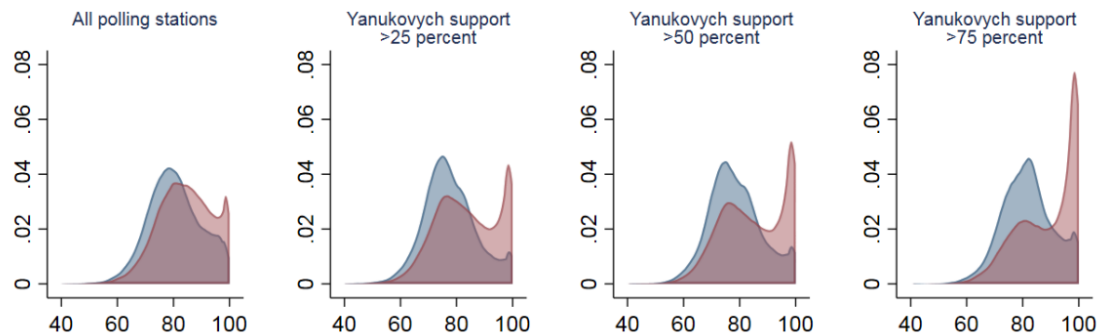
Note: Turnout distributions are based on polling station data from the 2004 presidential elections in Ukraine. The distribution in red represent turnout figures in the November runoff election and the distribution in blue represents turnout figures in the December repeat elections.

In figure 13 the same comparison is done, but now focusing on Yushchenko's support. As before, the distribution in the December election – in blue – is approximately normal regardless of local support. In the November election – in red – the beginning of the hump can be observed for the entire sample. However, when measuring for samples with higher support for Yushchenko, the hump completely disappears, and the distribution becomes nearly identical to the one in the December election. There is some skew in the turnout distribution in the December election when measuring at higher levels of support for Yushchenko, however, this never develops into a second hump or spike as in the November election.

Figure 13 *Turnout distributions and local support for Yushchenko*
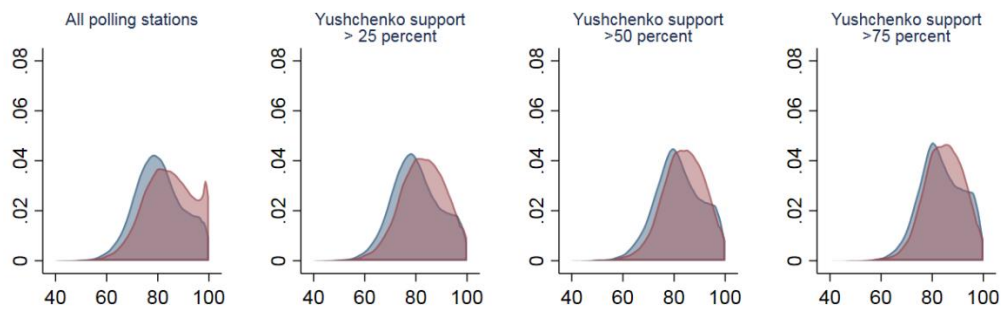
Note: Turnout distributions are based on polling station data from the 2004 presidential elections in Ukraine. The distribution in red represent turnout figures in the November runoff election and the distribution in blue represents turnout figures in the December repeat elections.

Overall therefore, these distributions suggest that turnout in the December election did not deviate considerably from what would be expected in a free and fair election. In the November election, however, turnout in a large subset of polling stations appears heavily inflated. Further, this inflation is almost entirely concentrated to polling stations with very high local support for Yanukovych. Notable is also that the figures do not show any skew or spikes towards lower turnout figures in either election; a pattern that remains unchanged regardless of the candidates' support figures. This would suggest that malpractices to suppress votes that reduce turnout – such as intimidation and violence or other forms of voter disenfranchisement – were likely less widespread during these elections.

To more formally test the relationship between local support and turnout, I carry out a series of logistic regression analyses in table 15 below. Here I estimate the probability of a polling station having above 99 percent turnout in November, while controlling for whether the same polling station had above 99 percent turnout in December. Model 1 estimates the association without additional controls. The intercept in this model is -5.538. This indicates that in polling stations where Yanukovych had no support, the probability of a polling station showing turnout figures above 99 percent was 0.0039[45] or about one in every 250th polling station,

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[45] p =EXP(-5.544)/(1+EXP(-5.544))

while controlling for whether the same polling station showed such high numbers in December. For each percentage point increase in support for Yanukovych, however, the log odds increase by 0.043. Therefore, in polling stations where Yanukovych enjoyed full support (i.e. received 100 percent of the vote-share), the predicted probability of having above 99 percent turnout in November increases to about 0.2237[46], or about 1 in every fourth polling station. This relationship remains positive and statistically significant when controlling for population density in model 2. In this multilevel model, one percentage point increase in Yanukovych's support translates into an increase in the log odds by 0.034.

Table 15 *Logistic regression: Local support and polling stations with very high turnout*

	Model 1	Model 2
Polling station-level variables:		
Local support for Yanukovych	0.043 (0.001) ***	0.034 (0.002) ***
Dependent variable in December	4.665 (0.122) ***	4.278 (0.116) ***
TEC-level variables:		
Log population density		0.078 (0.064)
Intercept	-5.544 (0.086) ***	-5.880 (0.340) ***
Pseudo-R2	0.30	0.49
N	32,949	33,033

*Note: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001*

The association between local support and change in percent polling stations with 99 percent turnout or higher between the two elections for different levels of local support for Yanukovych is also shown in figure 14 below. Here, polling stations with very high support for Yanukovych stand out. In most polling stations across the country, the difference between November and December elections with regard to polling stations with very high turnout is very small – less than one percentage point – and in most cases the difference between elections is not statistically significant. However, in polling stations with overwhelming support for Yanukovych, the difference between the two elections is striking. In polling stations with above 90 percent support for Yanukovych, the share that had above 99 percent turnout is 24

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[46] p =EXP((-5.544+0.043*100))/(1+EXP((-5.544+0.043*100)))

percentage points higher in November than in December. Upon closer inspection, an overwhelming majority of polling stations with such turnout occurred in two oblasts in the East: Donetsk and Luhansk. Yanukovych's local support in these oblasts was on average between 93 and 95 percent.

Figure 14 *Change in percent polling stations with above 99 percent turnout*
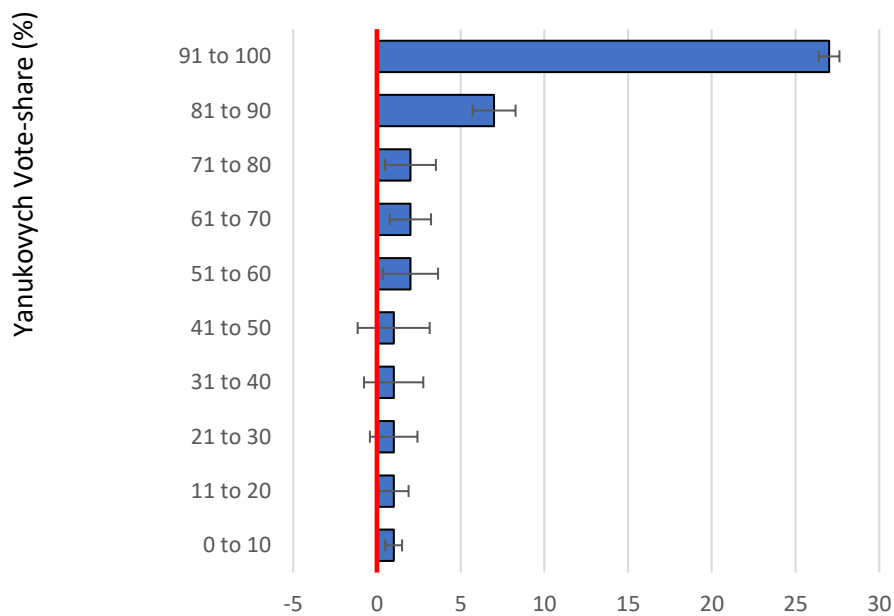
We now proceed to testing the association between local support and polling stations with very low turnout. These were polling stations that had turnout less than 55 percent. As noted above, there were relatively few polling stations in which turnout was this low in either the November 21 or December 26 elections. In table 15 below I estimate the probability of a polling station having below 55 percent turnout in November, while controlling for whether the same polling station had below 55 percent turnout in December. Model 1 estimates the association without additional controls, while model 2 controls for population density. In both models, the coefficient for local support is very low and not statistically significant, suggesting no association between local support and change in polling stations with low turnout.

Figure 15 *Logistic regression: Local support and polling stations with very low turnout*

	Model 1	Model 2
Polling station-level variables:		
Local support for Yanukovych	0.000 (0.002)	0.001 (0.006)
Dependent variable in December	5.313 (0.190) ***	3.848 (0.301) ***
TEC-level variables:		
Log population density		0.252 (0.213)
Intercept	-6.5112 (0.086) ***	-10.556 (1.412) ***
Pseudo-R2	0.05	0.01
N	32,949	33,033

*Note: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001*

Figure 16 below shows the change between the elections in the percent of polling stations with low turnout for different levels of local support for Yanukovych. Across most polling stations, there is less than one percentage point change between the elections, and often this change is not statistically significant.

Figure 16 *Change in percent polling stations with unusually low turnout*
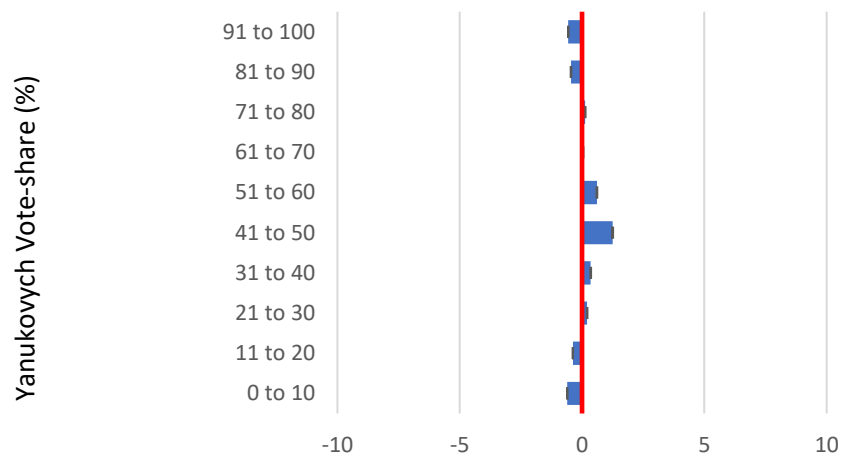
Finally, I measure the association between local support and the average change in turnout between the elections in table 16 below. Positive values here indicate that the independent variable is associated with higher turnout in the November election compared to the December election. In model 1, in which no controls are included,

the coefficient is positive and statistically significant at conventional levels. For each one-percentage point increase in Yanukovych's local support, the predicted change in turnout between the two elections increases by 0.082 percentage points. In other words, compared to polling stations where Yanukovych had no support (i.e. a vote-share of zero percent), the positive change in turnout is on average 8.2 percentage points higher in polling stations where he received 100 percent of the support. To check that the relationship is not driven by other variables, model 2 controls for population density at constituency level. The coefficient for Yanukovych's support in model 2 is still positive and statistically significant. When controlling for population density, a one-percentage point increase in Yanukovych's support corresponds to an increase in the predicted change in turnout between the two elections by 0.044 percentage points.

Table 16 Regression analysis: Local support and changes in turnout

	Model 1	Model 2
Polling station-level variables:		
Local support for Yanukovych	0.082 (0.001) ***	0.044 (0.003) ***
TEC-level variables:		
Log population density		-0.649 (0.190) ***
Intercept	-0.369 (0.059) ***	4.991 (1.005) ***
R-Square	0.14	0.33
N	32,949	32,949

Note: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Figure 17 below also inspects the average change in turnout for different levels of local support for Yanukovych. This comparison verifies that the difference in average turnout between the November and December elections gradually increases as the local support for Yanukovych becomes higher. In polling stations where Yanukovych had almost no support, turnout was slightly lower in November than in December; the difference is 0.9 percentage points. As local support for Yanukovych increases, the difference in average turnout increases steadily. In areas where Yanukovych received full support, average turnout in November was close to 10 percentage points higher than in December.

Figure 17 *Change in average turnout*
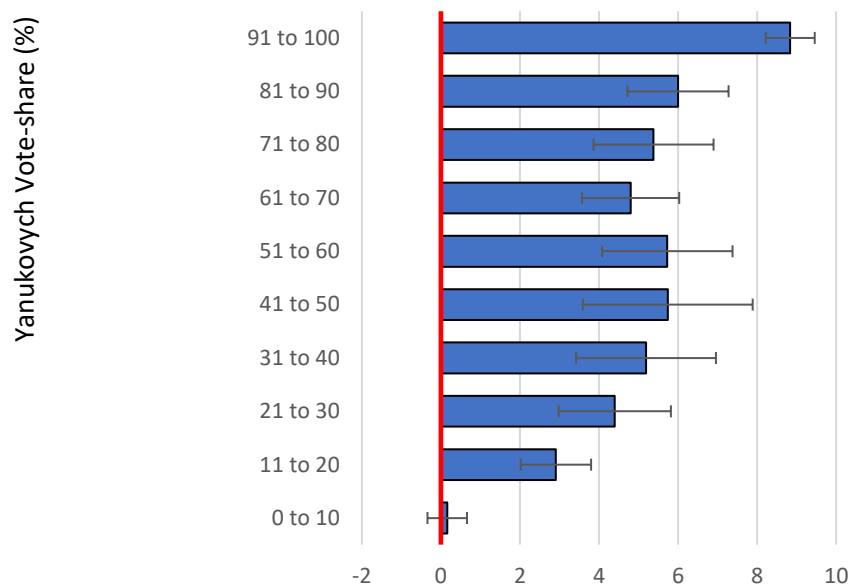
These analyses show a strong positive association between local support for Yanukovych and higher turnout in polling stations in the November 21 elections compared to the December 26 election. This is especially the case for polling stations with 99 percent turnout or above, which in the November election tended to be almost exclusively concentrated in Yanukovych's stronghold areas. These patterns are consistent with malpractices to inflate votes, such as multiple voting, ballot box stuffing and result-sheet forgery. We do not see any such patterns in Yushchenko's stronghold areas, neither in the November or the December election. On the other hand, the analyses do not show any association between local support and polling stations with very low turnout. These were very limited in both elections, and do not change much. This would suggest that the type of malpractices to suppress votes that reduce turnout – such as intimidation and violence or other forms of voter disenfranchisement – were not widespread in either election nor concentrated to either candidates' stronghold areas.

In the appendix I rerun the models from tables 14 to 16 by measuring the independent variable at constituency level using Yanukovych's vote-share from the

first round in October 31. These models also show similar results in terms of direction and statistical significance as the main analyses, suggesting that the relationship is robust to measuring the independent variable at earlier elections as well (see tables 19 and 21 in the appendix).

3.5.2 Local support and changes in invalid votes

Having examined the impact on turnout, we now proceed to the rate of invalid votes. Here we are primarily interested in polling stations with unusually high rates of invalid votes that would indicate intentional invalidation. With reference to the second hypothesis, we would expect to see patterns of such malpractices occurring primarily in areas where the fraudulent party lacks local support. We also consider the possible impact of malpractices to inflate votes on the rate of invalid votes. As discussed above, when votes are inflated, unless the invalid votes are adjusted for, the invalidation rate often decreases.

To formally test the association between local support and polling stations with unusually high levels of invalid votes, a set of logistic regressions are carried out in table 17. Here I estimate the impact of local support on the occurrence of outlier polling stations with very high rates of invalid votes in the November election. Similar to the analysis regarding polling stations with high turnout, these models control for whether the same polling station had unusually high levels of invalid votes in the December election. The intercept in model 1 is -2.638, indicating that in polling stations where Yanukovych had no support, the probability of very high invalid votes was 0.067[47] or about one in every 15th polling station. For each percentage point increase in local support for Yanukovych, the log odds decrease by 0.006. This negative association is statistically significant at conventional levels. In polling stations where Yanukovych enjoyed full support, the predicted probability of having unusually high invalid votes is roughly halved to 0.038 or about one in every 26th

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[47]p =EXP(-2.638)/(1+EXP(-2.638))

polling station[48]. The negative association between local support and the occurrence of outlier polling stations with very high invalid votes is also robust to controlling for population density, as can be observed in multilevel regression in Model 2. In this model, the log odds decrease by 0.005, statistically significant at conventional levels.

Table 17 *Logistic Regression: Local support and polling stations with very high rates of invalid votes*

	Model 1	Model 2
Polling station-level variables:		
Local support for Yanukovych	-0.006 (0.001) ***	-0.005 (0.002) ***
Dependent variable in December	1.719 (0.074) ***	1.314 (0.080) ***
TEC-level variables:		
Log population density		-0.242 (0.054) ***
Intercept	-2.638 (0.035) ***	-1.853 (0.278) ***
Pseudo-R2	0.02	0.03
N	32,949	32,949

Note: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Figure 18 below also shows the change in percent polling stations with unusually high levels of invalid votes, above 4.23 percent, between the two elections. In this comparison, there is no difference in the share of such polling stations between the November and December elections in areas where Yanukovych received full support. Gradually, as Yanukovych's support becomes smaller, the difference increases. In polling stations where Yanukovych received between 10 and 30 percent – in opposition areas – the difference is the largest. In these polling stations, the share with unusually high rates of invalid votes was about 5 percentage points higher in the November election, compared to the December elections.

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[48] p=EXP(-2.638-0.0059*100)/(1+EXP(-2.638-0.0059*100)))

Figure 18 Change in percent polling stations with unusually high invalid votes
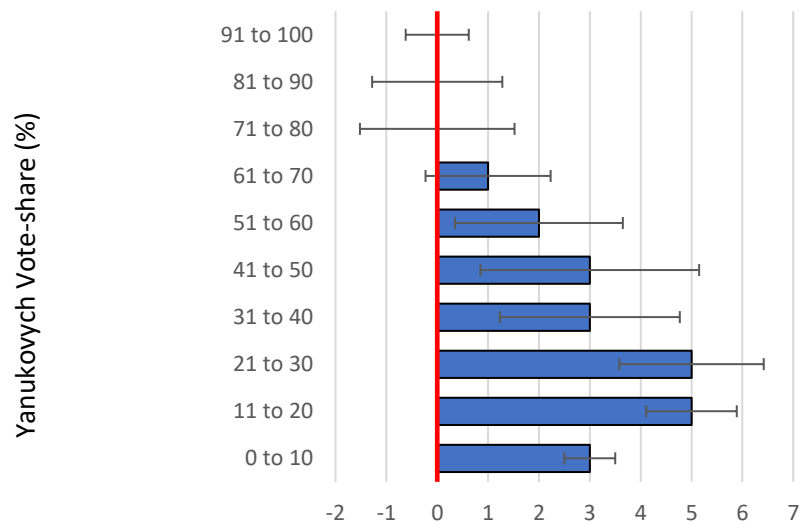
Table 18 below further tests the association between local support and average changes in invalid votes. Positive values here indicate that the independent variable is associated with higher rates of invalid votes in the November election compared to the December election. Model 1 shows that local support is clearly negatively associated with changes in invalid votes. A one percentage point increase in local support for Yanukovych is associated with 0.007 percentage points lower rates of invalid votes in November compared to December. On average therefore, the invalidation rate was 0.7 percentage points lower in the November election in polling stations where Yanukovych obtained full support compared to those in which he received no support. This association is statistically significant at conventional levels. The negative association is also robust to controlling for population density at TEC level. In fact, in the multilevel regression in Model 2, the negative association between local support and change in invalidation is even stronger, as now a one-percentage point increase in the former leads to 0.009 decrease in the latter; again, statistically significant at conventional levels.

Table 18 *Regression analysis: Local support and changes in invalid votes*

	Model 1	Model 2
Polling station-level variables:		
Local support for Yanukovych	-0.007 (0.000) ***	-0.009 (0.000) ***
TEC-level variables:		
Log population density		0.053 (0.023) *
Intercept	0.488 (0.021) ***	0.291 (0.119) *
R-Square	0.01	0.04
N	32,949	32,949

*Note: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001*

Figure 19 below shows the average change in invalidation for different levels of support for Yanukovych. This comparison shows that in polling stations where Yanukovych enjoyed strongest support, the rate of invalid votes is actually lower in November than in December. This is not in line with the patterns regarding polling stations with unusually high rates of invalid votes. As suggested, one reason for this pattern may be the above-described negative effect that malpractices to inflate votes have on the proportion of invalid votes, as typically only valid votes are added to the count when votes are inflated. One indication that this may be the case can be obtained by comparing the rate of invalid votes between those polling stations that had above 99 percent turnout in November with the other polling stations. This comparison shows that polling stations with unusually high levels of turnout at 99 percent or above had on average 0.61 percentage points lower rates of invalid votes than other polling stations in November. The difference is statistically significant and should be considered sizeable, given that the average invalidation rate in November was 1.71 percent.

It can further be seen in figure 19 that the difference in invalidation rates between November and December then gradually increases and becomes higher in November than in December in those polling stations where Yanukovych lacks support. The difference is largest in those polling stations where Yanukovych received only between 10 and 30 percent of the local support, and then becomes smaller again in areas where Yanukovych received nearly no support. This is in line

with the above analysis on polling stations with unusually high rates of invalid votes which were also concentrated to these polling stations.

Figure 19 *Change in average invalidation*
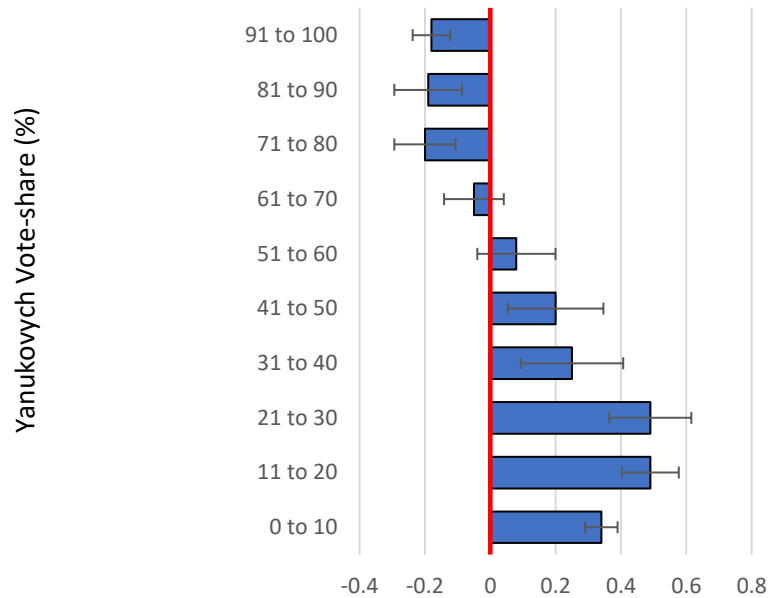
These analyses have shown a strong negative association between local support for Yanukovych and polling stations with higher invalidation rates in the November election compared to the December election. This is especially the case for polling stations with rates of invalid votes above 4.23 percent which are considered as outliers, which in the November elections were concentrated primarily to areas where Yanukovych lacked local support. These patterns are consistent with malpractices to suppress votes through intentional invalidation. During the December elections, such polling stations were fewer and they were more evenly spread across the country. The average change in invalid votes between the two elections also support this same picture. Polling stations in areas with limited support for Yanukovych's saw much higher average rates of invalid votes in the November election compared to December. In contrast, in Yanukovych's stronghold areas, polling stations recorded slightly lower levels of invalid votes in November compared to December. This could be interpreted as some polling stations in Yanukovych's

stronghold areas also experiencing intentional invalidation but in the December election. However, if this were the case then we would also expect to see a concentration of polling stations with unusually high rates of invalid votes in these stronghold areas in the December election, which we do not. Instead, as noted above, these patterns are more consistent with the negative effects that vote inflation has on invalid votes, which as has been established above likely occurred in Yanukovych's stronghold areas during the November election.

In the appendix I rerun the models shown in tables 18 and 19 by using constituency-level vote figures for Yanukovych's support in the first election round in October 31. These robustness tests also show negative and statistically significant associations between local support and the outcomes variables (see models 22 and 23 in the appendix).

3.5.3 Summary

The empirical analyses have investigated the relationship between local support and patterns in the electoral data indicative of different polling station malpractices. The analyses conducted here utilised the unique setup in which two elections were organised soon after each other, featuring the same candidates and polling stations, but in which the level of malpractices reportedly differed considerably. In particular, the analyses examined how levels of turnout and invalid votes at individual polling stations differed between the more "free and fair" election in December and the "fraudulent" one in November.

The results of the analyses show that patterns indicative of malpractices to inflate votes were primarily clustered to polling stations where Yanukovych enjoyed very strong local support. Such malpractices may have involved multiple voting, ballot box stuffing and result-sheet forgery. Polling stations in Yanukovych's stronghold areas showed a much higher probability of having very high turnout, above 99 percent, a higher average turnout, as well as lower rates of invalid votes, in the November election compared to the December election. These patterns were

particularly found in oblasts such as Donetsk and Luhansk. Similar patterns of malpractices to inflate votes cannot in these analyses be found in polling stations where Yushchenko enjoyed strong support. In the latter the share of polling stations with very high turnout and average turnout remained almost unchanged between the two elections.

These findings are also supported by election observer reports and academic studies of these elections that indicate that malpractices such as ballot box stuffing, falsification of result sheets and multiple voting were particularly widespread in eastern areas and were primarily enacted by Yanukovych's side (OSCE 2005, ENEMO 2005, Myagkov, Ordeshook and Shakin 2009, Wilson 2005). As noted, in these areas the incumbent party was better placed to draw on local administrative structures and existing patron-client relationships, financial resources, or intimidation and violence, to ensure that the 'right' people were in the polling stations on Election Day and that these were compliant. The same resources also likely enabled the incumbent party to simply bribe or coerce polling station officials to ignoring malpractices or to their bidding. To this should also be added the possibility that opposition candidates were less able to nominate sufficient number of polling station officials in these areas, and that many of them were dismissed on Election Day in November, leading to a partisan dominance in polling stations.

These findings therefore provide support for the first hypothesis that malpractices to inflate votes in polling stations are likely to be concentrated to areas where the fraudulent party enjoys strong support. These findings are also robust to measuring the independent variable using data from previous election rounds, and to the inclusion of control variables.

With regards to malpractices intended to suppress votes, the analysis does not indicate that attempts to reduce turnout through for example intimidation and violence, or through some other means of voter disenfranchisement, were widespread during the election. There are no patterns in the analyses shown above that would suggest that turnout was reduced in polling stations during either the November or the December election, regardless of local support for either candidate. On the other hand, the analyses do suggest that attempts to intentionally invalidate

votes likely occurred in the November election, especially in polling stations where Yanukovych had considerably weaker support and where he seldom obtained more than a third of the votes. These polling stations showed a higher probability of having unusually high rates of invalid votes as well as higher average rates of invalid votes in the November election compared to December. Similar patterns cannot be found in polling stations in which Yanukovych enjoyed stronger support. These findings also provide support to the second hypothesis that malpractices to suppress votes will primarily occur in areas where the fraudulent party has much weaker support, but here only with reference to intentional invalidation. These findings are also robust to measuring the independent variable using figures from an earlier election round and to the inclusion of control variables.

3.6 Conclusion

Electoral malpractices at polling stations is a widespread phenomenon in many unconsolidated democracies and hybrid regimes. Similar types of malpractices to either inflate or suppress votes as those highlighted in this chapter have been encountered in countries such as Azerbaijan (Herron 2010), Colombia (Losada 2006), Mexico (Cantu 2014), Mozambique (Manning 2010, Hanlon and Fox 2006), Turkey (Klimek, Jimenez, et al. 2018) as well as in more authoritarian regimes such as Iran (Mebane 2010), Russia (Klimek, et al. 2012, Myagkov, Ordeshook and Shakin 2009, Bader and van Ham 2015, Moser and White 2013), and Uganda (EU 2016b), among others. These types of malpractices at polling stations always constitute clear violations of free and fair elections because results from such polling stations no longer reflect the views of actual voters but instead the interests of a restricted number of polling station officials or local actors. In some instances, as may have been the case in the 2004 runoff election on November 21 in Ukraine, such malpractices can have a substantial impact on the election outcome; i.e. on who won or lost the election. Even so, it is always difficult to verify conclusively that malpractices have actually occurred, or to ascertain how or where they were carried out, especially when they occur in individual polling stations.

This chapter has sought to examine the factors that influence how perpetrators at the local level or in individual polling stations select or trade off different types of malpractices, and how this in turn impacts on the spatial distribution of these. Electoral forensics methods were explored to identify these different malpractices by examining polling station level data between the 2004 November 21 runoff and the December 26 repeat elections for the Ukrainian presidency. The core argument that was advanced in the chapter was that the choice of polling station malpractices and the locations where they occur is often dependent on the local support for the fraudulent party. Specifically, it was theorised that in areas where the fraudulent party dominates, in stronghold areas, we can expect that perpetrators seek to inflate votes especially through multiple voting, ballot box stuffing and result-sheet forgery, while in areas where the fraudulent party lacks such dominance, they often have to resort to vote suppression, either through intimidation and violence and other forms of voter disenfranchisement or through intentional invalidation. The evidence from the Ukrainian 2004 presidential elections provide support for these hypotheses, showing that patterns consistent with different polling station malpractices were predictably associated with local support for the fraudulent side.

The findings of this chapter contribute towards a better understanding of electoral integrity and malpractices. The conventional view here has often been that electoral competition and equal levels of support between different candidates increases the likelihood of malpractices. This is doubtless the case at the aggregate level. For example, it is unlikely that polling station malpractices during the 2004 Ukrainian runoff elections would have been as widespread or severe had Yanukovych's popular support been higher and therefore his electoral victory more certain. Nevertheless, as has been argued above, the picture at the local level is different. Here, more competition does not seem to intensify malpractices but instead often make malpractices more difficult to carry out. It is instead the absence of competition at the local level that enables perpetrators to employ the most overt malpractices to inflate votes. Even so, the lack of local support does not necessarily

stop perpetrators from engaging in malpractices, but instead forces them to consider different alternatives, including various malpractices to suppress votes.

The findings of this chapter also open up interesting avenues for further research. Firstly, with regards to the 2004 Ukrainian presidential elections, it should be noted that the analysis focused only on specific types of electoral malpractices to inflate and suppress votes at polling stations on Election Day. While this choice was motivated given that both past research and election observer reports have emphasised that these malpractices did occur in these elections, it also excludes other possible malpractices, including those that occurred prior to Election Day. Further research should be devoted to expanding the focus of malpractices and develop statistical indicators to identify these. This would provide for a more complete analysis of these elections, as well as enable possible alternative interpretations of the findings.

Secondly, further research should examine the theoretical predictions in different electoral systems. For example, past research has emphasised that majoritarian electoral systems often display more malpractices than proportional systems (Birch 2007, Lehoucq and Kolev 2015). Electoral systems using single-member districts (SMD) would be particularly interesting to examine further. Following the conventional view on malpractices, at aggregate level we would expect that malpractices would primarily occur in constituencies in which there is a tight race between the two front-runners; that is, in constituencies in which malpractices have the highest probability of influencing who wins or loses. However, within these constituencies, at the level of individual polling stations, we may again expect the existing local support for the fraudulent party to influence on the choice of malpractices. In line with the theory proposed in this chapter, we expect that malpractices to inflate votes would cluster to areas within the constituency where the fraudulent party already dominates, while malpractices to suppress votes would more likely occur in areas where they lack local support. If malpractices are sufficiently widespread within constituencies then we would expect them to also produce similar patterns in turnout and invalid votes as have been explored in this study.

Thirdly, further research should examine how these tendencies are affected by the composition of electoral management bodies (EMBs), especially at local levels. The system employed in Ukraine is partisan-based and allows each candidate running in the election to nominate their own members on the electoral commissions at regional and polling station levels. Members in partisan-based systems are supposed to be impartial, but at the same time they serve to protect their nominating parties' interests and ensure that others do not take partisan advantage (IDEA 2014, 108). Clearly, the effectiveness of partisan-based systems relies on competing parties actually being able and allowed to be present on an equal basis on these commissions across the country. During the November 2004 presidential elections in Ukraine, the large number of "technical candidates" and the dismissal of many opposition members, resulted in politically unbalanced commissions in many regions, not least in Yanukovych's stronghold areas in the east (OSCE 2005, Franklin 2005). This poses the question whether other partisan-based system are similarly vulnerable to these tendencies? The main alternative to partisan-based systems are expert-based systems, in which members to electoral commissions are instead appointed based on their professional qualifications and electoral knowledge, and political impartiality is often a central recruitment criterion (IDEA 2014, 112). It is not however readily clear whether expert-based systems really can ensure impartial commissions, especially in stronghold areas, in which perpetrators often can rely on a range of different resources to ensure that local electoral authorities are favourable, or submissive. Future research, preferably employing cross-national data, should therefore further explore these issues.

3.7 Appendix

The tables below provide robustness tests of the main analyses (tables 14 to 18) by measuring local support for Yanukovych with vote-figures from the first election round on October 31st, 2004.

Table 19 *Logistic regression: Local support and polling stations with very high turnout*

	Model 1	Model 2
Polling station-level variables:		
Dependent variable in December	4.550 (0.119) ***	4.545 (0.119) ***
TEC-level variables:		
Local support for Yanukovych	0.042 (0.003) ***	0.041 (0.003) ***
Log population density		0.088 (0.058)
Intercept	-5.505 (0.147) ***	-5.913 (0.307) ***
Pseudo-R2	0.44	0.44
N	32,949	33,949

*Note: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001*

Table 20 *Logistic regression: Local support and polling stations with very low turnout*

	Model 1	Model 2
Polling station-level variables:		
Dependent variable in December	3.858 (0.290) ***	3.873 (0.291) ***
TEC-level variables:		
Local support for Yanukovych	-0.005 (0.290)	-0.007 (0.011)
Log population density		0.275 (0.211)
Intercept	-9.093 (0.964) ***	-10.253 (1.388) ***
Pseudo-R2	0.00	0.02
N	32,949	33,949

*Note: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001*

Table 21 *Regression analysis: Local support and changes in turnout*

	Model 1	Model 2
TEC-level variables:		
Local support for Yanukovych	0.113 (0.008) ***	0.044 (0.008) ***
Log population density		-0.781 (0.166) ***
Intercept	-0.897 (0.426) *	2.875 (0.898) ***
R-Square	0.37	0.37
N	32,949	32,949

Table 22 *Logistic Regression: Local support and polling stations with very high rates of invalid votes*

	Model 1	Model 2
Polling station-level variables:		
Dependent variable in December	1.298 (0.080) ***	1.294 (0.080) ***
TEC-level variables:		
Local support for Yanukovych	-0.008 (0.003) ***	-0.006 (0.003) ***
Log population density		-0.250 (0.055) ***
Intercept	-3.000 (0.135) ***	-1.814 (0.290) ***
Pseudo-R2	0.05	0.05
N	32,949	32,949

Table 23 *Regression analysis: Local support and changes in invalid votes*

	Model 1	Model 2
TEC-level variables:		
Local support for Yanukovych	-0.008 (0.001) ***	-0.008 (0.001) ***
Log population density		0.053 (0.023) *
Intercept	0.484 (0.056) ***	0.302 (0.125) *
R-Square	0.03	0.03
N	32,949	32,949

4

Partisanship, observer statements, and evaluations of electoral integrity

Determinants of politicians' evaluations of electoral integrity in Malawi

Abstract

This chapter investigates the determinants of politicians' evaluations on electoral integrity. Specifically, I examine the role of partisanship in shaping politicians' evaluations and whether those from the winning side evaluate the quality of electoral processes differently from those on the losing side. I further investigate the possible impact that election observer statements have on these evaluations, especially when observers raise concerns about the election quality. To examine these questions, I carried out an elite-level survey in Malawi, in which politicians were asked about their views on the electoral processes in a recent election. Embedded in the survey was an experiment in which I reminded politicians of concerns about irregularities and possible fraud in the election and then emphasised to randomly assigned respondents that international and domestic election observers had raised concerns about the election. The results of the study show that partisanship has a strong impact on politicians' evaluations. Systematically, those politicians affiliated with the winning side expressed more positive views regarding electoral procedures. The impact of reminding them of observer concerns, however, did not show substantial or statistically significant impact on their evaluations, regardless of whether the politician belonged to the winning or losing camp or whether the reminder referred to international or domestic observers.

4.1 Introduction

Democracy necessitates that citizens are able to choose their leaders in elections that are competitive, free and fair, and repeated on a regular basis (Dahl 1971). How elections are viewed by the public, and not least by the contesting politicians themselves, however, also matters. In some countries accusations of vote rigging from the losing side are commonplace even when no malpractices occur. Conversely, political elites belonging to the winning party and their supporters sometimes vigorously applaud the conduct in elections that by others are seen as deeply flawed. This matters as different views on electoral integrity have consequences: those who have strong confidence in the integrity of elections often express higher trust in the democratic system as a whole and for example vote more often, while those who lack such confidence are more likely to denounce the results and protest (Andersson, et al. 2005, Birch 2010, Norris 2014). Election observers can play an important role in these contexts. Following electoral contests, election observers can provide impartial assessments of the quality of the election and either deliver praise or raise concerns about different aspects of the electoral process. In fact, in most unconsolidated democracies today, it is standard practice that elections are carefully assessed by both international and domestic election observer organisations (Kelley 2012, Hyde 2011).

This chapter investigates politicians' evaluations on electoral integrity in unconsolidated democracies and the factors that shape and influence these evaluations. The chapter has two goals. Firstly, it seeks to investigate the role of partisan affiliation when it comes to elected politicians in unconsolidated democracies. Previous research has documented that supporters of the winning and losing parties often display very different views regarding the integrity of elections. Systematically, election winners tend to view electoral procedures in a more positive light, while those supporting losing parties are more likely to emphasise flaws in the process and even question the results. Such partisan divides in perceptions may place further strains on democratic consolidation processes that require compliance with electoral results from all citizens (Andersson, et al. 2005, Cantu and Garcia-Ponce

2015, Moehler and Lindberg 2009). Previous research has however only investigated how perceptions of electoral integrity differ among ordinary citizens or voters. Thus far no research has examined how the politicians that participated and were elected in these elections themselves rate the integrity of the election. Are evaluations among elected politicians similarly influenced by whether they supported the winning or losing parties in an election? Or are political elites less susceptible to such tendencies?

Secondly, the chapter examines whether election observer statements have an impact on politicians' evaluations of electoral integrity, especially if observers raise concerns about the election quality. Research on election monitoring has argued that positive observer statements are often important sources for public confidence in elections (Bjornlund 2004), a view that is also shared by the election observer organisations themselves (UN 2005, Carter Center 2019). Negative observer statements, on the other hand, have been associated with increased likelihood of post-election protests and violence (Hyde and Marinov 2014, Daxecker 2012, von Borzyskowski 2019). Prior research shows some evidence that observer statements can influence public perceptions of electoral integrity; although, this is often mediated by respondents' partisan affiliation (Bush and Prather 2017, Robertson 2015). But what do elected politicians themselves make of observer statements? When told that observers raised concerns, do elected politicians update their own evaluations of an election? If so, are these effects the same across all politicians, or do they vary along partisan lines? And does the type of observer organisation matter? For example, does it make a difference if concerns are raised by international or domestic observer organisations?

This chapter uses the findings of an elite-level survey carried out in Malawi in 2017 to examine these research questions with a focus on the Malawian presidential elections in 2014. The case of Malawi was selected because an opportunity to carry out a survey of this kind was made available when I worked on a larger research project investigating politicians' local allocation of foreign aid (Seim, Jablonski and Ahlbäck 2020). Malawi presents an interesting setting to examine politicians' evaluations of electoral integrity given the widespread distrust in electoral

procedures among ordinary Malawians (Chunga 2017). The 2014 presidential election was a close race that was followed by numerous accusations of malpractices and fraud. International and domestic observers that were present, while considering the elections to generally meet democratic principles, were also critical and raised concerns about several irregularities and shortcomings in the process (Patel and Wahman 2015, Chirwa and Patel 2014).

The survey included 460 elected and in-office politicians in Malawi, including both members of parliament and local councillors. To measure their evaluations regarding the integrity of the 2014 elections, the survey asked them a battery of questions regarding the overall freeness and fairness of the election and on the occurrence of specific malpractices on Election Day. Embedded in the survey was also an experiment which sought to investigate the impact of information updating among the participating politicians. The experiment was designed so that all respondents were first equally sensitised to the fact that there had been concerns about irregularities and potential fraud following the election. Randomly assigned respondents were then additionally told that certain international and domestic election observer organisations had raised concerns about these issues.

This study represents the first attempt to examine politicians' evaluations regarding electoral integrity and the possible influence that partisan affiliation and observer statements have on these. Focusing on elected politicians is motivated, as it is primarily their views that matter if electoral integrity is to be strengthened, for example through legislative changes. Changing the beliefs and behaviour of political elites is also one way in which election observers are thought to have more long-term impact in those countries where they operate (Kelley 2012, 104-105). Politicians are further pivotal in urging on or restraining protests and possibly deadly violence following elections in unconsolidated democracies (Beaulieu 2014). In fact, elected politicians are often seen as central to the survival of democracy. Democracies, as Levitsky and Ziblatt emphasise, "die not as a result of men with guns attacking from outside the system, but rather because elected leaders from inside the system slowly undermine them" (2018, 3). It is therefore important to further our understanding on how politicians in unconsolidated democracies evaluate electoral integrity, the

factors that shape these evaluations, and under what circumstances politicians may be susceptible to outside criticism.

The results of the empirical analyses show, firstly, that still three years after the 2014 presidential elections, those politicians affiliated with the winning party evaluated the integrity of the election very differently from those affiliated with other parties. In line with previous research on voters' perceptions, the results show that politicians from the winning side were considerably more positive towards the integrity of the election, compared to politicians affiliated with other parties. Statistically significant differences in the politicians' evaluations were found both on a summary index of all survey-questions regarding electoral integrity as well as for several individual survey items. These differences in perceptions are robust to the inclusion of several control variables.

Secondly, the results of the empirical analyses show that the assigned information treatment did not have statistically significant effects on the politicians' evaluations. Once the respondents had been sensitised to the concerns about irregularities and potential fraud that existed after the 2014 elections, then emphasising that election observers had raised such concerns did not appear to alter their views in any meaningful ways. The null-effect appears when combining all survey-questions regarding politicians' evaluations on electoral integrity into a summary index as well as for individual survey items separately. The same limited treatment-effects can also be observed when interacting the treatment with the respondents' partisan affiliation. Especially politicians from the winning side were on all accounts unaffected by the treatment. Politicians on the losing side showed some near-significant treatment effects, however, these were sporadic and contradictory. The overall limited treatment effects on most accounts are the same irrespective of whether the treatment prompt mentions international or domestic election observers as the source of criticism.

The findings of this study therefore show how evaluations of electoral integrity in unconsolidated democracies are often heavily influenced by partisan affiliation also when it comes to political elites. This winner-loser gap in evaluations among politicians can detract from the democratic legitimacy that elections are

meant to provide and can put strains on further efforts to consolidate democracy. The findings further highlight the potential difficulties for outsiders such as election observers to alter this. When told that election observers had raised concerns about irregularities and potential fraud, the politicians participating in the study did not update their own evaluations in any substantial or consistent way. The results of the survey-experiment, however, need to be treated with some caution as the lack of any treatment effects may also be due to the considerable time that had passed since the election and the relatively weak treatment prompts. Further research would be needed to more conclusively establish whether election observer statements provide meaningful information to elected politicians and if their evaluations are influenced by this.

The remainder of this chapter proceeds as follows. Below I first describe the research setting with regards to the 2014 presidential elections in Malawi, the presence of election observers, and some of the concerns about irregularities and fraud raised in these elections. Section 4.3 then discusses the theoretical framework and past research in order to formulate hypotheses regarding the possible determinants of politicians' evaluations regarding electoral integrity. Section 4.4 describes the survey that was carried out in Malawi, including sampling, survey questions and outcome variables, the experimental design as well as the estimation of effects. The results of the empirical analyses are presented in section 4.5 and the concluding section discusses the implications of these findings.

4.2 Research Setting

The 2014 general elections marked the fifth national elections in Malawi since the country's transition from single-party rule to multiparty politics in 1994. Despite the relatively calm election campaign and ultimately peaceful transfer of presidential power, the elections were seen as controversial due to apparent shortcomings in electoral management, accusations of electoral fraud, and an initial refusal of the losing candidates to accept the final results. The elections also attracted a host of

international and domestic election observer organisations, who monitored the pre-election environment, deployed observers across the country during Election Day, and gave their verdict on the election quality in its aftermath. Overall, the elections were seen as broadly free and fair. Nevertheless, election observers also raised concerns regarding electoral irregularities and malpractices that detracted from the integrity of the process.

Elections in Malawi over the last decades have generally been open and competitive, and considered to meet minimal standards of electoral integrity. Nevertheless, due to high levels of corruption and patronage, a skewed electoral playing field favouring the incumbent, and weak enforcement of the rule of law, Malawi is often described as an unconsolidated democracy or hybrid regime (Diamond 2002, Levitsky and Way 2010). Freedom House classified Malawi as Partly Free in 2014, scoring 3.5 on their 7-point democracy scale (Puddington, Repucci, et al. 2015). The management of elections in Malawi is the responsibility of the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC). While the MEC is formally independent, its chairperson and members are political appointees, and it relies heavily on state personnel, such as civil servants and schoolteachers, to act as returning officers and polling station staff. Funding has often been a major obstacle in MEC's operations, and due to the lack of resources, and recurrent financial mismanagement, its preparedness to carry out elections has often been questioned (Ofosu and Posner 2015, EU 2014).[49]

The 2014 elections were perhaps the most competitive elections to that point in Malawi's history[50]. Also, for the first time, voters cast their ballots simultaneously in presidential, parliamentary and local elections. The local elections were the first since local authorities were disbanded in 2001 and featured only new candidates. The single-round presidential race was contested by no less than four viable candidates: the sitting president, Joyce Banda of the People's Party (PP), who had succeeded President Bingu wa Mutharika following his unexpected death in 2012; the late president's brother Peter Mutharika of the Democratic Progressive Party

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[49] MECs chief electoral officer for the 2014 elections, Willie Kalonga, was fired in 2017 for alleged economic fraud and mismanagement.
[50] The 2019 presidential elections in Malawi were even more competitive and even more disputed.

(DPP); Lazarus Chakwera of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) and Atupele Muluzi of the United Democratic Front (UDF). The parliamentary elections were contested by 1,293 candidates in 193 constituencies and the local elections by 2,412 candidates in 462 wards[51]. Both parliamentary and local council elections followed a first past the post (FPTP) electoral system.

In the lead-up to the elections, the largest parliamentary party, DPP, was confronted by internal splits as numerous MPs crossed the floor to join PP, following allegations of an attempted coup to prevent Banda from taking office. Joyce Banda, on the other hand, while initially popular, was faced with a major corruption scandal involving the embezzlement of some USD 30 million in state funds – entitled *Cashgate* – only months before the election, which weakened her support and incumbency advantage. The outcome of the election was therefore highly uncertain, and no political party was seen as a clear favourite (Patel and Wahman 2015).

Despite a high turnout and relative calm throughout the election period, the Election Day was marked by a series of severe delays and problems, which raised tensions and distrust between the parties while MEC was counting the votes. The problems related particularly to the late provision of ballot material to polling stations in numerous areas, resulting in long delays and that some citizens were denied the opportunity to vote; unlikely vote figures and suspicious patterns in result-sheets in certain areas; and severe problems in sending results from district tally-centres to central tabulation, which led to various ad hoc arrangements which often were in contradiction with the electoral law. The situation came to a head only four days following the election when president Banda declared the elections "null and void" on national radio, citing rampant irregularities and widespread fraud. Banda, supported by the candidates from MCP and UDF who also cited electoral malpractices, called for a complete recount of all four million votes, further time to address individual electoral complaints and accusations of fraud, or a completely new election (Patel and Wahman 2015, 84-85, Chirwa and Patel 2014).

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[51] Elections in 5 local councillors-wards were for different reasons suspended. The councillors in these wards were later elected through by-elections.

The MEC did not in the end heed any of these calls. Following a decision of the high court, the final results were announced on May 30 declaring DPPs Peter Mutharika the winner of the presidential race with 36.4 percent of the vote, followed closely by MCPs Lazarus Chakwera with 27.8 percent, PPs Joyce Banda with 20.2 percent, and UDFs Atupele Muluzi with 13.7 percent. The results in both the parliamentary and local councillor elections largely resembled that of the presidential race, with DPP emerging as the largest of the main parties, closely followed by MCP, and then PP and UDF. A high number of independent candidates were also elected in both the parliamentary and local council elections.

Table 24 *Malawi 2014 Tripartite Election Results*

	Presidential Elections (vote-share %)	Parliamentary elections (share of seats %)	Local Councillor elections (share of seats %)
Democratic Progressive Party	36.4	26.4	36.1
Malawi Congress Party	27.8	24.9	28.7
People's Party	20.2	13.5	14.2
United Democratic Party	13.7	7.3	12.5
Others/independents	1.9	27.9	7.6

Source: Malawi Electoral Commission

Following the announcement of the results, none of the losing parties officially challenged or petitioned the results. Nevertheless, the leadership of MCP, PP and the UDF, all maintained that the election result was not credible, and that Peter Mutharika was becoming president through a faulty and fraudulent process (Chirwa and Patel 2014). These sentiments were also reflected in public opinion. In the most recent Afrobarometer following the elections, when asked how they would rate the freeness and fairness in the last national elections, over half of the respondents – 56.6 percent – answered that they were either "Not free and fair" or were "Free and fair, with major problems", while only 19 percent considered the elections "Completely free and fair". Similarly, only 23 percent of respondents said that they trusted the Malawi Electoral Commission either "A lot" or "Somewhat" while 62 percent said they did not trust them "at all" or "just a little (Afrobarometer 2019).

The 2014 elections had been monitored by a large number of election observer organisations. Among the major international organisations that were present were the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU), the Commonwealth Secretariat, as well as the Southern African Development Cooperation (SADC). These were further joined by a large number of domestic observers, organised by the National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE) and the Malawi Election Support Network (MESN), which together also supported the Malawi Election Information Centre (Chirwa and Pater 2014). Immediately following the elections, both international and domestic observer organisations called for calm and emphasised that the elections, despite their shortcomings, were generally free and fair and in line with basic democratic standards. Election observers noted that despite the tense climate and accusations, the evidence did not suggest that there was widespread or systematic rigging. Even so, election observers highlighted criticism about the electoral conduct and raised concerns about various shortcomings and irregularities that had occurred during the elections.

The concerns that election observers raised were focused on all stages of the election process. With regards to the pre-election period, observers pointed out that the electoral playing field was neither level nor fair, and that misuse of state resources, patronage and the use of local chiefs to intimidate other candidates and their supporters favoured established candidates over newcomers (Chirwa and Patel 2014)[52]. During Election Day, observers voiced strong criticism of the MECs failure to deliver necessary election materials to all polling stations, the insufficient crowd control at polling stations, lack of training among polling station staff, and limited security during counting procedures (EU 2014, AU 2014). Observers also drew attention to suspicious election results, especially in 65 polling stations where turnout had exceeded 100 percent, result-sheets that either lacked required signatures or where signatures had apparently been forged[53], as well as the widespread use of correction fluid (tippex) that was not counter-signed, making it

[52] During the pre-election period, long-term election observers emphasised that instances of "electoral malpractices and misconduct such as intimidation, harassment, voter card buying and abuse of public resources" required attention (MESN 2014).
[53] For example, it was highlighted that multiple result-sheets bore the same name and signature for more than one polling station (Chirwa and Pater 2014).

"challenging to assess the integrity of the process" (EU 2014, 28). It was also pointed out that a large number of polling stations visited by election observers did not put the results up for public display or hand them over to party representatives, despite this being a legal requirement (EU 2014, 27). Following the end of voting, election observers also criticised the failures in the result-transmission system, which had led to results being physically transferred from tally-centres to the central tabulation centre in Blantyre. It was stressed that this process was far from secure as tamper-proof envelopes had already been opened, enabling possible alteration of results. Ballot boxes and votes were also left unsecured and were often damaged during transfer and storage (EU 2014, 28)[54].

Overall, election observers stressed that the uneven playing field, delays and individual irregularities during Election Day and poor management of election results had caused tensions and affected the credibility of the election (AU 2014, Chirwa and Patel 2014). While efforts by all parties in the end ensured that the overall process could be considered free and fair, the multiple failures highlighted by election observers had nevertheless given "rise to significant concerns about the integrity and authenticity of the results" (EU 2014, 29). There were differences between election observer organisations regarding their assessment of the election. The European Union and the domestic umbrella body Election Observatory were perhaps most critical of the Malawian electoral procedures. The African Union, an organisation that rarely issues any critique of the electoral arrangements in member states (Kelley 2012, 43-58)[55], was possibly least critical. Despite its unwillingness to directly condemn the electoral arrangements, the AU did highlight several concerns

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[54] For example, a highlighted incidence was an unexplained fire that broke out in a warehouse in Lilongwe destroying up to 1,500 ballot-boxes and all their contents, which added to public suspicions that intentional attempts were made to make a recount of votes more difficult or impossible to carry out (Patel and Wahman 2015, 89-90).

[55] International observer organisations vary in both their capacity to conduct election observations but also in their neutrality and the likelihood that they will criticise the host government. Scholars often emphasise major international organisations, such as the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), European Union Election (EU), Organization for American States (OAS), the Carter Center, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI), as the most critical in this regard. Organisations such as the African Union (AU), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, on the other hand, are often seen as least likely to raise critical issues of the election process (Kelley 2012, 43-58).

regarding the 2014 Malawi elections, including gaps in the planning and implementation of electoral arrangements, the delays in the provision of materials and late opening of polling stations, discrepancies and inadequacies in vote counting procedures, as well as insufficient security arraignments at polling stations (AU 2014, paragraphs 39, 42-45, 57 and 59).

4.3 Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

This section will discuss the theoretical framework regarding potential determinants of politicians' evaluations on electoral integrity. I focus particularly on two factors that are relevant in unconsolidated democracies and that have been emphasised in recent research – partisanship and the influence of election observers. Building on the findings from previous studies, I formulate hypotheses on how partisanship and observers are likely to affect the politicians' evaluations of the 2014 Malawi elections. I further consider how the influence of election observers may vary between international and domestic election observer organisations.

Evaluations of electoral integrity are here understood as the extent to which people consider the electoral process as 'free and fair'. More specifically, this involves individual evaluations of whether voters were able to participate freely and on equal grounds on Election Day; whether they were able to cast their votes without fear or undue influence from outsiders; and whether their vote-choice was accurately recorded and counted (see Birch 2011, 17-25). Positive evaluations therefore entail views that these core principles and procedural conditions are duly satisfied, while negative evaluations question this and emphasise shortcomings and malpractices in the process.

I use the term *evaluation* here rather than *perceptions* or *beliefs*. Whereas peoples' expressed evaluations may build on their true beliefs about the integrity of the election, they may also be intentionally exaggerated or – conversely – underplayed versions of this. Politicians in particular may have strong incentives to exaggerate or underplay the actual events and hence unlikely to reveal their genuine

views on the matter. I nonetheless expect that the impact of the main independent variables studied here – partisanship and concerns raised by election observers – are similar (or at least in the same direction) irrespective if politicians' evaluations of electoral integrity represent their genuine views or not.

4.3.1 Partisanship and voters' evaluations on electoral integrity

Diverging evaluations on electoral integrity among voters have often been attributed to partisanship. After an election, voters' views often divide along partisan lines. Those who voted for the winning side systematically tend to evaluate the election quality in a more positive light than those who lost. Those who voted for the losing side, in contrast, tend to be more critical and emphasise the flaws and shortcomings in the process. This association between whether voters support the winners or losers and their views on the election quality has been recorded in several different settings, both cross-nationally (Anderson, et al. 2005, Birch 2008, Maldonado and Seligson 2014) and in individual countries (Kerr 2013, Cantu and Garcia-Ponce 2015, Wellman, Hyde and Hall 2018, Rose and Mishler 2009). In addition to more positive evaluations on electoral quality, winners also tend to show higher satisfaction with the functioning of democracy and support for core democratic principles, as well as a range of other similar attitudes (Moehler and Lindberg 2009).

The reasons for this winner-loser gap regarding evaluations of electoral integrity may be several. For example, it may be a matter of personal experience with malpractices. Electoral malpractices may disproportionally affect those on the eventual losing side, while those on the winning side may be innocently unaware of these and thus honestly believe that the election was free and fair. Nevertheless, research has shown that even when personal experiences of fraud are taken into account, those on the winning side tend to express much higher confidence in the integrity of electoral procedures compared to those on the losing side (Wellman, Hyde and Hall 2018). Emotions also play a role. Elections, like all other contests, tend to trigger different emotions. Winning makes people more euphoric while losing leads to disappointment, anger and disillusionment. The positive emotions that

winners associate with the outcome also induce support for the procedures that produced it, while the opposite occurs for losers (Anderson et al. 2005, 25-26). In some cases, people even 'adjust' their beliefs about the election quality to better fit their vote choice. Theories on cognitive dissonance emphasise that people adjust their attitudes and beliefs in order to reduce internal inconsistency (Festinger 1957). For example, the inconsistency of supporting the winning party and having doubts about the quality of the election may give rise to psychological discomfort. One coping mechanism to reduce such discomfort is to adjust ones' evaluation and adopt more positive views of the election quality (Anderson et al. 2005, 26-28). Often people also follow the cues of political and party elites. In the aftermath of controversial elections, party elites on the losing side are often the loudest critics of the electoral quality. In contrast, politicians from the winning side tend often to ignore credible claims of malpractices and instead applaud the electoral arrangements (Norris 2014, 97-98). Such statements, especially following controversial elections, may further exacerbate winner-loser gaps in evaluations among voters.

The gap between winners' and losers' evaluations on electoral integrity tends to exist in most countries, although it is often amplified in more controversial elections. Electoral turnovers, on the other hand, have been shown to reduce polarisation (Maldonado and Seligson 2014, Moehler and Lindberg 2009). Following electoral turnovers, the new winners/old losers may acquire more positive beliefs about the election but are still likely to be influenced by scepticism from their past experience as losers. The old winners/new losers may instead moderate some of the unwarranted approval of the electoral quality but are likely to retain some positive views from before (Moehler and Lindberg 2009, 1451).

On an individual level, partisanship is often a better predictor of peoples' evaluations on the election quality than other characteristics, such as their age, gender or education. Some evidence also suggest that stronger partisan identities may amplify the effect of partisanship, especially among winners (Anderson et al 2005, 77-84). The effects of partisanship are also very stable over time. Even several

years after an election, winners will still express more positive views of an election compared to those of the losers (Maldonado and Seligson 2014).

4.3.2 Impact of election observer statements

Whereas winners may express more positive evaluations regarding the election quality than losers, does the information provided by election observers change this at all? Research on the role and impact of election observers often assume that the statements that election observers make about the electoral quality matter for domestic audiences. These statements can also have an impact on individual views on electoral integrity.

Election observer statements refer here to the verdicts that observers issue following an election regarding the quality and integrity of electoral processes. These statements are usually presented in press releases, official statements or in in-depth reports following the election. In these statements and reports, observes often scrutinise all stages of the electoral process, either praising the electoral arrangements, or raising concerns about potential shortcomings and irregularities.

Past research in this field has often emphasised the crucial role that positive observer reports have for democratic legitimacy and public confidence; a view that is often shared by the observer organisations themselves (UN 2005, Carter Center 2019). [56] Positive observer reports have been seen as especially important in transitional and post-conflict countries where they can function to convince the losers to accept the results (Bjornlund 2004, Carothers 1997)[57]. Observer criticism is likewise seen as consequential, but with opposite effects. Studies show that when observers are present during fraudulent elections, and especially when they issue negative statements, the chances that the election is followed by protests, riots and

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[56] According to the UN, for example, observer reports both build trust in the democratic process and enhance the legitimacy of governments that emerge from elections (UN 2005, chapter 7). The Carter Center, similarly, claims that impartial and credible election observers "play a key role in shaping perceptions about the quality and legitimacy of electoral processes" (Carter Center 2019).

[57] Examples of elections in which positive election observer statements have been seen as crucial include Chile (1988), Bulgaria (1991), Dominican Republic (1996), Nicaragua (1990) and Zambia (1991). See further Bjornlund (2004).

violence increases considerably (Hyde and Marinov 2014, Daxecker 2012, von Borzyskowski 2019; see also Luo and Rozenas 2017 and Smidt 2016). The explanations provided for these patterns is that observers provide credible and impartial information about the extent of electoral malpractices, drawing increased attention to these incidents, and thus mobilise citizens to challenge the results[58].

There is therefore an assumption in the scholarly literature that observer statements not only matter for domestic audiences but that whether they praise or criticise the electoral procedures also influences peoples' views on the integrity of the election accordingly. Bush and Prather (2017) find some evidence for this on the individual level in their survey experiment in Tunisia. Specifically, they find that voters who were exposed to negative observer statements expressed more critical views regarding electoral procedures compared to those who were exposed to positive assessments. The difference is small, but statistically significant (929-930). In a related study, Marinov (2018) examines the effects of international criticism regarding media freedoms in Turkey. He also finds some support that concerns raised by international organisations influence the views of individuals, although treatment effects do not entirely reach conventional levels of statistical significance (2018, 18-22). Some studies also show that the awareness that election observers are monitoring polling facilities increase peoples trust in electoral procedures (Brancati 2014, Kerr 2007), although other studies indicate that the number of observers in a precinct does not necessarily correlate with this (Cantu and Garcia-Ponce 2015).

Whereas election observer statements may have an influence on how people view or evaluate the integrity of elections, it is not a given that everyone reacts similarly to these statements. Theories of motivated reasoning (Taber and Lodge 2006, Kunda 1990), suggest that people's priors, and especially their partisan affiliation, is likely to condition how they react to outside criticism. According to this theory, those who are affiliated with the winning side in an election are more likely to devalue or dismiss critical information about the election that contradicts with

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[58] Examples of elections that have resulted in violence following negative observer reports mentioned in this literature include Panama (1989), Cameroon and Mauritania (1992), Togo (1998), Nigeria (1999), Ethiopia (2005), Kenya (2007), Ivory Coast (2010) and Gabon (2015). See Daxecker (2012), von Borzyskowski (2019) and Hyde and Marinov (2014).

their priors. Losers, on the other hand, are more likely to focus on such critical information, and even to actively seek it out, to gain further support for their priors (Taber and Lodge 2006, 756-757).

Bush and Prather (2017) find some evidence for such heterogeneous effects in their study on Tunisia. Specifically, when voters that supported the losing side were exposed to negative observer statements, they were much more likely to express criticism of the election. In contrast, neither positive nor negative observer statements had statistically significant effects on supporters of the winning party (930-932). Robertson (2015), similarly, finds in a survey-experiment in Russia that voters who supported opposition parties were much more open to critical statements regarding electoral quality and as a result were more likely to trust election observer organisations. Voters that supported the regime, on the other hand, were unaffected or trusted the observers even less than before (600-604).

The type of election observer organisation may also matter for whether their assessments are heeded by politicians. One dividing line in past research is often drawn between international election observers and domestic ones. International observers typically have more resources at their disposal and are often seen as more professional than their domestic counterparts. International observers are also assumed to be relatively detached from local politics, without a direct stake in the outcome, and thus seen as more impartial, and more willing to condemn poor election processes (Marinov and Hyde 2014, 338-9). The neutrality of domestic observers, in contrast, is sometimes put into question. This can be because they are seen as linked more closely to opposition parties, and thus all too eager to criticise elections that are won by the ruling party. Or, conversely, they are assumed to be more easily co-opted or intimidated by the regime, and thus less likely to condemn the conduct in an election (Hyde and Marinov 2014, 338-9, von Borzyskowski 2019, 2-3). Research has shown however that the assessments of international election observer organisation are also at times constrained by political considerations, for example when elections are anticipated as important marks of transition (Hyde 2011, Kelley 2012). Also, the fear of post-election violence often leads international

election observer organisations to moderate their judgements on the electoral process (Carothers 1997).

Domestic election observers on the other hand also have advantages over international observers. For example, while international observers are sometimes criticised for only staying in the host country for a short period of time (in some cases a matter of days) and seldom venture beyond the capital region or easily accessible locations, domestic observers typically have permanent organisations, often consisting of large networks of NGOs with a local presence across the entire country, and deploy far greater numbers of observers on Election Day. In fact, in elections in which domestic election observers monitor nearly all polling stations across the entire country, they may often be much better placed than international observers to observe malpractices and to judge the true quality of the electoral process (Carothers 1997, Bjornlund 2004, Nevitte and Canton 1997).

4.3.3 Hypotheses

Building on the existing literature in this field, we can formulate some hypotheses regarding the determinants of politicians' evaluations on electoral integrity that will be examined further in the empirical analysis. It should be noted that the survey examining these evaluations among politicians in Malawi was carried out some three years after the 2014 elections. The hypotheses below therefore refer to politicians' evaluations long after the election rather than it its immediate aftermath.

The first hypothesis regards the impact of partisanship. Following the past literature, we would expect that those politicians affiliated with the winning party would have more positive evaluations of the election quality. This can be especially the case for politicians as their party identity and loyalty to the party are likely on average much stronger than for ordinary citizens, which may amplify the emotional and psychological tendencies that separates winners' and losers' evaluations (Anderson, et al. 2005, 77-84). Also, those politicians affiliated with the winning party, may have strong incentives to paint the election in a more positive light, as

otherwise this could question their legitimate right to rule. Politicians on the losing side, on the other hand, may have strong incentives to exaggerate malpractices to both give an excuse for their own poor performance and to detract from the legitimacy of the winners (Norris 2014, 97-98).

On the other hand, all elected politicians are winners in some sense as they secured (or won) their own seat, regardless of how the overall election transpired. Like turnovers, the experience of both winning and losing could moderate the effects of partisanship (Moehler and Lindberg 2009). Arguably, however, such countervailing impacts should only affect the losers' stances, as those politicians that belong to the winning side have the double-experience of both winning their own seat and their side winning the entire election. Finally, given that substantial time has passed since the election, one could expect partisan differences to dissipate. Nevertheless, as noted above, studies show that these effects tend to linger on still several years after an election (Maldonado and Seligson 2014). Therefore, the first hypothesis that will be tested is:

- *Hypothesis 1: Those politicians affiliated with the winning side in the election will express more positive evaluations of the electoral integrity compared to those affiliated with the losing side.*

The second hypothesis regards the potential influence that election observer statements have on politicians' evaluations. In particular, it will be examined whether reminding politicians that observers had raised concerns about the quality and even credibility of electoral procedures following the Malawian elections has any impact on their evaluations[59]. Similar to the effect of priming (Wittenbrink 2007) it could be assumed that reminding politicians of the concerns that observers raised would bring the negative aspects associated with the election to the surface in politicians'

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[59] It could equally have also been possible to emphasise the positive aspects that observers raised about the election and instead examine whether this impact positively on politicians' perceptions of electoral integrity. It was however feared that the sample size would not accommodate testing both effects, and therefore it was decided to only focus on the effect of observer concerns in this study.

memory. As a result, politicians may put additional weight to these concerns, and this may affect their subsequent judgement of the election. The realisation among politicians that their own evaluations are inconsistent with that of observers may also trigger cognitive dissonance among politicians, resulting in them adjusting their evaluations closer to that of the observers (compare with Anderson, et al. 2005). Therefore, it could be assumed that when reminded of observers' concerns, those politicians that originally would have expressed more positive views regarding the election would likely moderate these somewhat. Similarly, those who originally would have expressed some doubts about the election quality could possibly become even more critical in their evaluations. The net effect of reminding politicians about observers' concerns should therefore, on average, be more negative evaluations. Therefore, the second hypothesis that will be tested is:

- *Hypothesis 2: Upon reminding politicians that election observers had raised concerns about the election quality, politicians will express more negative evaluations of the electoral integrity.*

In examining this hypothesis, it is important to take into account that by simply raising the controversies that followed the 2014 elections, some politicians may express more negative evaluations about the election quality, irrespective of whether concerns were raised by observers or not. That is, some politicians may respond solely to the reminder of irregularities and suspicions of potential fraud rather than the fact that it was observers that raised concerns about such issues. Because the result would be the same it is difficult to verify whether observers' concerns caused the change or simply the general reminder of malpractices. One solution to avoid this is to sensitise all respondents to the issues of irregularities and potential fraud in the election, and then to emphasise to randomly assigned respondents that specific observer organisations had also raised such concerns. This

way the effect of specifically emphasising observers' concerns can be isolated (see Marinov 2018, 10)[60].

A third hypothesis regards the possible heterogeneous effects of reminding politicians about observer concerns. Specifically, as indicated in past research, those politicians affiliated with the winning side are likely to devalue or dismiss outside criticism if this contradicts with their own priors. Politicians affiliated with the losing side, on the other hand, may be more open to such criticism. Therefore, we would expect possible effects of reminding politicians about observer concerns to occur primarily among politicians from losing parties. The third hypothesis that will be tested therefore is:

- *Hypothesis 3: The effect of Hypothesis 2 is stronger among politicians affiliated with losing side compared to politicians from the winning side.*

As indicated above there are reasons to assume that the influence of election observers may differ depending on the type of election observer organisation. For example, people may place differing trust in either international or domestic election observer organisations and therefore be more or less ready to accept criticism from these. Exactly which type of organisation is more trustworthy however is not a given as both international and domestic election observer organisations seem to have both advantages and disadvantages. International election observer organisations are often seen as more professional, have more resources and may at times be more likely to criticise the host government. On the other hand, the presence of international organisations is often limited both in terms of observers on the ground and the time these spend in the country, while their criticism may at times also be moderated due to larger political or strategic considerations. Domestic election observer organisations are, in contrast, often permanently present in the country, have a much better understanding of local conditions, and send out several

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[60] This approach is followed by Marinov (2018) when examining the effects of criticism raised by international organisations regarding media freedoms on citizens perceptions.

thousands of observers on Election Day. On other hand, domestic observer organisations may at times be seen as lacking in training and sufficient funding, and their non-partisan status may at times be questioned. Given these considerations, it is difficult to more precisely predict whether elected politicians are more likely to be open to criticism from either international or domestic election observer organisations. Therefore, two opposite hypotheses regarding this question are formulated:

- *Hypothesis 4A*: *Politicians are likely to express more negative evaluations when the source of concerns is said to be INTERNATIONAL election observers*

- *Hypothesis 4B*: *Politicians are likely to express more negative evaluations when the source of concerns is said to be DOMESTIC election observers*

Finally, evaluations regarding electoral integrity and the openness to outside criticism may also differ between different types of politicians, namely between members of parliament and local councillors. In Malawi, members of parliament are typically more focused on national-level politics and administration, including which individual and party holds controls the executive, than local councillors, which focus more on issues directly pertaining to their wards. It could be assumed that members of parliament may have a higher stake in who wins or loses the presidential election, and by extension whether this election was truly free and fair or not. Therefore, we would expect that differences in evaluations of electoral integrity between winners and losers (Hypothesis 1) would be more accentuated among members of parliament than among local councillors. It could further be assumed that members of parliament are more familiar with different international and domestic election observer organisations compared to local councillors and may therefore be more attentive to whether these raise critical concerns about the integrity of elections or not. This in turn could imply that the hypothesised effect of reminding respondents that election observers raised concerns (Hypothesis 2) would be stronger among members of parliament than among local councillors and especially among those from affiliated with the losing side (Hypothesis 3). It should be noted that this study did not originally set out to examine differences between members of parliament

and local councillors with regards to either their overall evaluation of electoral integrity or their openness to outside criticism. Principally, a concern was that the number of MPs was not sufficient for achieving needed statistical power in an experiment. Conditional hypotheses regarding differences between members of parliament and local councillors are therefore not the focus in the empirical analysis.

4.4 Research Design

To examine politicians' evaluations on electoral integrity and how these may be affected by partisanship and the concerns raised by election observers, I carried out a survey in Malawi in April-May 2017. The survey was part of a larger research project investigating politicians' allocation of foreign aid at the local level (Seim, Jablonski and Ahlbäck 2020). This survey targeted almost the entire population of elected politicians – both Members of Parliament and Local Councillors – in Malawi through face-to-face interviews. Politicians' evaluations on electoral integrity were measured by asking them whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements regarding the integrity of the 2014 presidential elections. Embedded in the survey was also a survey experiment to evaluate the impact of reminding politicians of election observer concerns. The rationale of the experiment was to remind all participating politicians that there was some concern about irregularities and possible fraud in the 2014 presidential elections, and then to specify to randomly assigned politicians that specific international and domestic election observer organisations had raised concerns about these issues. With regards to the experiment, it has increasingly become standard practice to pre-register experiments of this type. Unfortunately, due to the rapid nature of the intervention, however, it was not feasible to submit a pre-analysis plan prior to fielding the experiment. I have therefore sought to be as detailed as possible regarding the design of the experiment. Below I describe in more detail the sampling, the survey questions and the experimental design as well as the estimation models that will be examined in the empirical analysis.

4.4.1 Sampling

In total, the survey targeted 189 of the 193 elected and in-office MPs and 356 out of the 462 local councillors in constituencies and wards across Malawi. The reasons for excluding some politicians from the sample frame was the unavailability of electoral data or data on school needs, or because the number of schools in their ward or constituency was not sufficient for the experiments in the main research project focusing on foreign aid allocation.[61] Out of the sample frame, 125 MPs and 335 local councillors were reached and gave complete interviews. This resulted in a high response rate of 84.4 percent (66.1 percent for MPs and 94.1 percent for councillors).

Figure 20 Sampled constituencies and wards

A. Constituencies   B. Wards

Constituency Boundaries
Sampled Constituencies

Ward Boundaries
Sampled Wards

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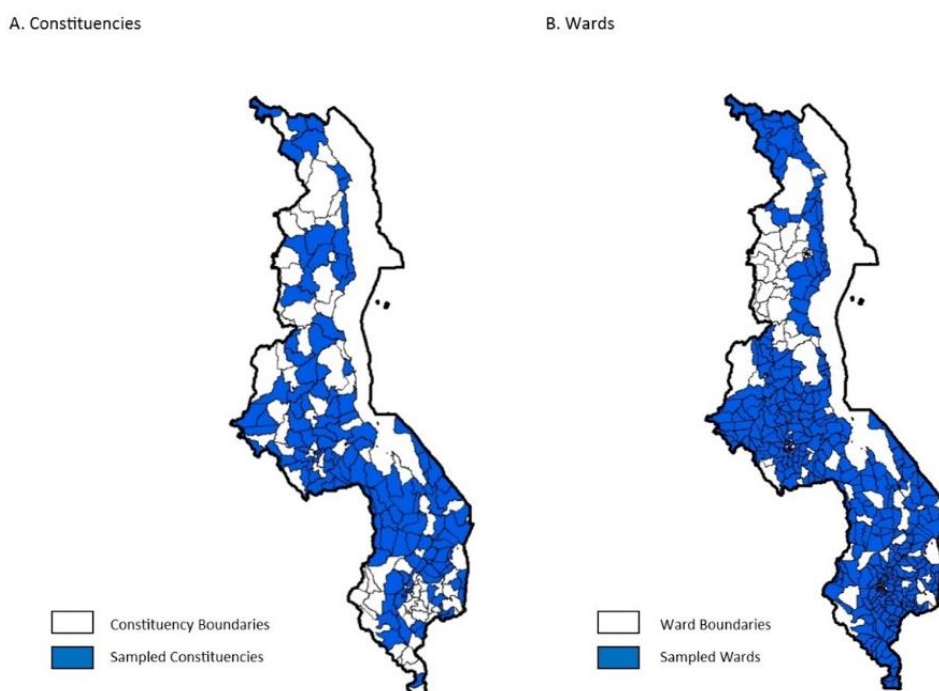
[61] For details regarding the overall experiment to evaluate politicians' allocation of foreign aid, see Seim, Jablonski and Ahlbäck 2020.

Sample statistics and attrition tests indicate that the final sample was reasonably representative of the characteristics of politicians as a whole in Malawi (see Seim, Jablonski and Ahlbäck 2020, SI). The survey was carried out through face-to-face interviews by a team of trained Malawian research assistants[62]. The survey was stored on tablets that the enumerators used when recording the answers. These tablets were pre-programmed to highlight randomised treatment prompts that the enumerators read out. The interviews were typically conducted in the home constituency or ward of the politicians or in the capital city of Lilongwe.

4.4.2 Survey questions

The evaluations of electoral integrity among the participating respondents were measured by presenting them with a set of different claims about the 2014 presidential elections, to which they could either strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree. These survey-items were designed to capture both an overall impression of the election quality as well as the different procedural conditions that need to be present for elections to be free and fair (see Birch 2011, 17-26). The survey items included an overall claim that the "Election was on the whole free and fair, reflecting the will of the people". The wording of this statement was taken from the Afrobarometer surveys, waves 3 to 7. Further claims also gauged the respondents' views regarding the distribution of materials, voter access, the conduct of officials, ballot box interference, and counting of votes (see further table 25). These statements were designed so that 3 were worded positively and 3 negatively, thus avoiding that the respondents simply agreed or disagreed with all claims, regardless of the question. The design of the positive and negative questions (albeit not the exact wording) was taken from the Perceptions of Electoral Integrity Project (Norris and Gromping 2019). The appropriateness of each of these claims was then discussed with the team of local research assistants, to assure that respondents would fully

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[62] The author carried out the training of enumerators in Malawi in 2017.

understand them. The exact wording of each survey-item is provided below. The order in which they were presented to the respondents was randomised.

Table 25 *Survey questions regarding evaluations of electoral integrity*

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know	Decline
Election was on the whole free and fair, reflecting the will of the people	1	2	3	4	-98	-99
MEC prepared and distributed ballot papers without bias towards any particular party	1	2	3	4	-98	-99
Voters were deliberately prevented from voting because of party affiliation	1	2	3	4	-98	-99
Election officials tried to influence or intimidate voters	1	2	3	4	-98	-99
Ballot boxes were interfered with to advantage particular parties or candidates	1	2	3	4	-98	-99
Votes were counted fairly without bias towards any party or candidate	1	2	3	4	-98	-99

The main outcome variable in the empirical analyses is a summary index that combines all these survey-items. To construct this, all variables were first transformed into the same direction so that higher values indicate more positive evaluations and lower values more negative. The scores for each item was then added together to create a summary which was then transformed into a 0-1 scale. [63] Each individual survey item is also analysed separately to examine if independent variables affect these differently. Here I also transformed the variables into the same direction so that higher values indicate more positive evaluations and lower values indicate more negative evaluations.

The first independent variable of interest is whether the respondent belonged to the winning or losing side in the 2014 presidential elections. For this, I coded which party each politician ran for in 2014. Those politicians who ran for DPP,

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[63] As a robustness check I also created a separate summary index using the scores of a Principal Component Analysis. I further created binary variables for all individual survey-items, coded as 1 if respondents agreed or strongly agreed with a statement, and 0 if they disagreed or strongly disagreed. Some of these were then reversed accordingly. The direction and significance of associations using these alternative measures do not differ substantively from those using the original measures and can be obtained from the author upon request.

whose candidate Peter Mutharika won the presidential race, were coded as winners while those who ran for any of the other parties or were independents were coded as losers. In the empirical analysis I also present descriptive data when separating all parties, so as to motivate for these groupings. Because partisanship is not randomly assigned, I also include a range of individual-level control variables that have been highlighted in the literature as relevant for peoples' perceptions of electoral integrity (Birch 2008, Maldonado and Seligson 2014). These include whether the politician was an MP or local councillor, the politicians' gender, age, and education. I also control for the victory margin for each politician in his or her ward or constituency as well as for turnout.

To account for the possibility that politicians had switched parties and allegiances since 2014, the respondents were also asked in a separate survey question which party they would support in case there was a new election tomorrow. Some of the politicians had switched sides. When excluding non-responses, out of 142 politicians that had run for DPP, 7 had switched sides to the opposition, and out of 250 opposition politicians, 31 had switched to DPP. There was a relatively high rate of non-response as 68 of the politicians did not want to disclose their vote-choice. I reran all the main models from the empirical analysis using this question as independent variable, excluding missing values. The findings are similar to those of the main analyses both in terms of the direction and statistical significance of the main coefficients.[64]

4.4.3 Survey-experiment

The embedded survey experiment set out to measure the effect of reminding politicians that election observers had raised concerns regarding the integrity of the 2014 presidential elections. In the experiment, two separate treatment prompts were tested: one emphasising that international election observers had raised concerns and one emphasising that domestic observers had done so. To increase

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[64] These robustness tests can be obtained from the author upon request.

statistical power a full factorial (2x2) design was chosen (Allen 2017, 537-539). This design involves four separate treatment conditions to which respondents were randomly assigned: one full control group, one group receiving the international observer treatment, one receiving the domestic observer treatment, and a final group that received a combination of both the international and domestic observer treatment (see table 26 below). Despite there being four separate groups, in the factorial design we are primarily interested in the main effects of either the International Observer Treatment or the Domestic Observer Treatment. These are obtained by comparing values of the outcomes variable in the groups which received the specific treatment to those groups that did not (Allen 2017, 537-538). With reference to table 26 below, to measure the effect of the International Observer Treatment, we compare treatment conditions 1 and 3 against 0 and 2, while to measure the effect of the Domestic Observer Treatment, we compare treatment conditions 2 and 3 against 0 and 1. Due to the factorial design, the two treatments are orthogonal to each other, enabling independent analysis of each separately, using the entire sample (Collins, et al. 2014).

Table 26 *Treatment conditions*

Treatment condition	Respondents are told that International election observers raised concerns	Respondents are told that Domestic election observers raised concerns	Sample Size
0	No	No	112
1	Yes	No	120
2	No	Yes	115
3	Yes	Yes	113

When examining main effects in a factorial design, we assume that the treatments are not dependent on each other. To verify this, I replicated all the main models presented below by interacting the two treatments with each other. None of these

models show a statistically significant interaction-effect between the treatments, suggesting that this assumption is valid. [65]

The survey prompts, following the same model as a similar survey-experiment carried out by Marinov (2018, 9-12), were designed so that all respondents were first provided a short description of the election results so as to help them better recall the events of the election. The exact wording of this was *"Now we would like to ask you about the 2014 presidential elections in Malawi. The election was won by Dr. Peter Mutharika of DPP with 36.4 percent of the popular vote, followed by Lazarus Chakwera of MCP with 27.8 percent, and Joyce Banda with 20.2 percent."* In addition, all respondents were told of concerns regarding irregularities and fraud that followed the elections. Following Marinov (2018, 10), and as discussed above, this was done in order to sensitise all respondents to the issues of irregularities and potential fraud and thus make them internally comparable. Specifically, after the short description of the presidential results, all respondents were told that: *"There was some concern about irregularities and potential fraud in the election"*. The respondents assigned to the full control group (treatment condition 0) received only these pieces of information.

In addition to these introductory prompts, treatment groups were then further reminded that international election observer missions, such as the European Union (EU) and the African Union (AU), and domestic observers mission, such as the National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE) and the Malawi Election Support Network (MESN) had raised concerns about the election. These organisations were highlighted as it was assumed that respondents were most likely familiar with them, due to their long record of monitoring elections in Malawi. In order to keep the treatment prompts uniform, it was decided not to emphasise specific statements by individual organisations, but instead to only remind respondents that concerns by these organisations had been raised. Specifically, the prompts for each treatment group was:

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[65] These robustness tests can be obtained from the author upon request.

- Treatment condition 1: *"For example, INTERNATIONAL OBSERVER MISSIONS, including the European Union (EU) and the African Union (AU), raised concerns about these issues"*.

- Treatment condition 2: *"For example, DOMESTIC OBSERVER MISSIONS, including the National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE) and the Malawi Election Support Network (MESN), raised concerns about these issues"*.

Due to the full factorial design some respondents were provided with a combined treatment prompt:

- Treatment condition 3: *"For example, INTERNATIONAL OBSERVER MISSIONS, including the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU), the National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE) and the Malawi Election Support Network (MESN), raised concerns about these issues"*.

The treatment that are tested are designed to examine the potential effect of observer concerns upon the views of politicians, which is the central focus of this chapter. Other potential information treatments could also have been of interest, for example reminding politicians of fraud versus not mentioning it, or ascribing the concerns of fraud to other actors, for example specific news media. Given the relatively small sample in this study, however, the numbers of treatments have been limited to only focus on observer concerns.

It is not known exactly how well the participating politicians were aware of the different statements and issues raised by various organisations after the election. Politicians in Malawi, both when it comes to MPs and local councillors, have been shown to have surprisingly little knowledge regarding for example their own voter support or the activities of international donor organisations in their constituencies/wards (see Seim, Jablonski and Ahlbäck 2020). Based on discussions with the local team of research assistants, it was assumed that some MPs had likely

heard of the specific comments and statements made by election observers, but that local councillors were less likely to be fully aware of them. It was therefore anticipated that reminding the politicians of the fact that election observers had raised concerns about these issues would translate into some tangible effects. A manipulation test is common when carrying out survey-experiments to make sure the treatment is fully understood by the respondents. Towards this end, enumerators were instructed to note down in free text if respondents failed to understand questions or statements that were provided to them. An analysis of these indicated that respondents did not experience problems in understanding either the statement or questions.[66]

To ensure that the sample size was sufficiently large to detect possible effects of the experiment, a power analysis was carried out. The expected effect of election observer statements on politicians' evaluations was obtained from Bush and Prather's (2017) study in Tunisia which tests similar hypotheses as is done here. When exposing elections losers to negative observer assessments, Bush and Prather record an effect size of 0.39 on an outcome variable with a standard deviation of 0.8 (928-931). A standard power calculator indicates that the minimum sample size needed to obtain 80% power for such effect sizes is 133 (EGAP 2020). Full factorial designs do not add additional requirements for sample size (Allen 2017, 539). Given that the ultimate sample in this study contained 460 politicians – 307 from the losing side and 153 from the winning side – it was assumed that this was sufficient for testing the main hypothesis.

Randomisation of respondents into different treatment conditions was done separately for MPs and local councillors by blocking on whether the politician was a member of the party whose candidate won the election (DPP) and the individual candidates' own vote-share in the 2014 elections. The balance-test for the full sample provided in table 27 below suggest that the randomisation process worked and that treatment groups do not differ significantly from each other on a range of pre-

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[66] When carrying out the survey, I could only include a limited number of items. These were focused on the main treatments and questions covering the outcome variable. No additional manipulation test was therefore included.

treatment covariates. The fact that blocked variables are also balanced suggests that attrition did not affect these significantly. The null effect of pre-treatment covariates was tested with separate logit models for each of the treatment conditions.

Table 27 *Balance-test of pre-treatment covariates*

Treatment condition	Age	Male (%)	Higher Education (%)	Ran for DPP (%)	Mean Vote-share
0	43.56	90.17	32.14	31.3	48.50
1	43.66	88.33	26.67	32.5	49.00
2	43.84	90.13	31.30	33.9	49.70
3	45.39	87.61	35.40	34.5	49.00

4.4.4 Estimation

To test the set-out hypotheses, the empirical analysis will examine the association between partisanship and the outcome variables as well as the impact of the assigned treatments. I use OLS regression analysis to measure the effect of the independent variables on the summary index. The individual survey items, which range from 1 to 4, are measured on an ordinal scale, and therefore ordinal logistic regression was used to examine these.[67]

When it comes to hypothesis 1 on whether politicians' evaluations are affected by partisanship, I examine the relationship between the outcome variables and whether the respondent ran for DPP or not in the 2014 elections. In these models I hold the experimental treatment conditions constant. I also run additional models, controlling for other variables that could impact on the outcome, including whether the politician was an MP or councillor, the politicians' gender, age, education, as well as the victory margin and turnout in the politician's constituency or ward during the 2014 election.

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[67] Robustness checks were also carried out using multinomial regression analysis to guard that the main results were not model-dependent. The results of these robustness checks show no noticeable difference in either direction or the statistical significance from the main models.

With regards to hypothesis 2 on whether observer concerns impact on politicians' evaluations, I estimate the effect of the International Observer Treatment and the Domestic Observer Treatment on the outcome variables. As described above, due the factorial design, the two treatments are orthogonal to each other, enabling independent analysis of each separately while using the entire sample.[68] Again, I use OLS regression to estimate the effect of each treatment variable on the summary index, while for individual summary items I employ ordinal logistic regression. To test hypothesis 3 on whether losers and winners react differently to observer concern, I include partisanship as an interaction variable in the model. For hypothesis 4a and 4b, I compare whether the effects from the International or Domestic Observer Treatment on average differ across the analyses. In the result-section below, I present the marginal effects for relevant coefficients in graphs and the full regression models in the appendix.

4.5 Results

In this section I first provide overall descriptive statistics regarding politicians' responses and examine whether and how these differ between politicians from the winning and losing side in the election. I then present the results of the survey experiment on whether and how reminding politicians about observer concerns influenced their evaluations. Finally, I discuss whether the results support or fail to support the set-out hypotheses and potential explanations for the findings.

4.5.1 The effect of partisanship on perceptions

Figure 21 below provides a first overview of politicians' evaluations regarding the integrity of the 2014 Malawi presidential elections and how these differ between

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[68] In a factorial design it is also possible to estimate the Average Treatment Effects of separate treatments by interacting them with each other and interpreting the main effect coefficients (see Collins, et al 2014). Robustness checks were carried out using this alternative technique which produced almost identical results as the main analyses.

different parties. Panel A gives the average scores for the summary index and individual survey items. To ease presentation here the individual survey items were all transformed (and some reversed) into a 0 – 1 scale so that higher values indicate more positive perceptions. On average, the politicians' evaluations regarding the 2014 elections lie somewhere in the middle of the scale; neither overly critical nor very positive. This is particularly the case with the summary index that combines all survey items, which has a mean value of 0.48 out of 1.00.

Figure 21 *Politicians' evaluations of the integrity of the Malawi 2014 elections*

Panel A

Panel B
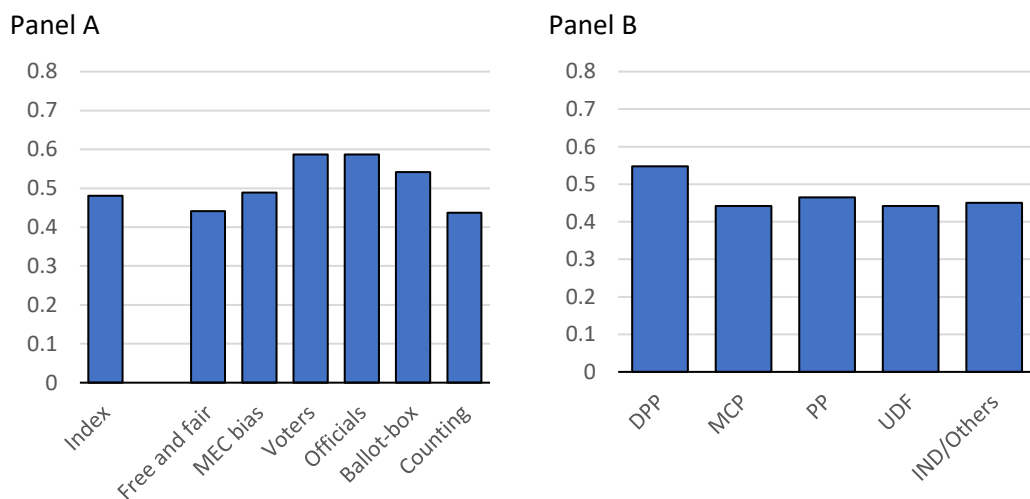
When inspecting the individual survey items separately, it appears that respondents tended to be more critical when it came to the overall question of the freeness and fairness of the election and whether the counting of votes was fair. The mean response for these were 0.44 and 0.43 on the 0-1 scale. On the question of MEC bias, respondents were closer to the midpoint, with a mean response of 0.49. Politicians had considerably more positive views when it came to questions on whether voters possibly were prevented from voting or officials intimidating them. The mean response for these were both 0.59. On the question of possible ballot box stuffing, they were closer to the middle with a mean response of 0.54.

In Panel B the mean score for the summary index is given for the different parties. On average, politicians from the main losing parties – MCP, PP and UDF – as

well as independents and other smaller parties, all responded similarly. The mean response among these were between 0.44 and 0.46. The main exception here is for respondents from the DPP whose presidential candidate won the election and hence can be seen as belonging to the winning side. The mean response for these respondents was 0.55.

To test the effect of partisanship on politicians' evaluations more formally, I carried out a series of regression analyses. The main results for the summary index is presented in figure 22 and in table 28 in the appendix. The figure shows a clear positive and statistically significant effect. Mean responses on the summary index among respondents from the winning side are about 0.09 higher than among others (p<0.001). This is almost equivalent of one standard deviation on the summary index. This association also remains largely unchanged and statistically significant when additional controls are included in the model (see table 30 in the appendix).

Figure 22 *Partisanship and politicians' evaluations – summary index*
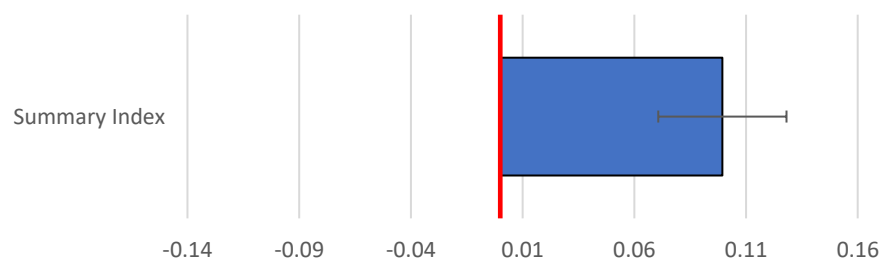
Note: The figure presents the OLS regression-coefficients for belonging to DPP with 95 percent confidence intervals.

Figure 23 further shows the association between partisanship and the individual survey items using ordinal logistic regression analysis (see also table 29 in the appendix). Respondents from the winning side are considerably more positive than others especially when it comes to the overall question of whether the election was free and fair, whether ballot boxes were interfered with and whether counting was fair. For

these survey items the positive coefficient was statistically significant (p<0.001). For the questions regarding possible MEC bias and whether officials intimidated voters the differences are also positive but do not entirely reach conventional levels of statistical significance. The coefficients for whether the election was free and fair, ballot-box interference and the fairness of counting remain positive and statistically significance when individual-level and election-related controls are added (table 31). When controls are added also the question regarding whether voters were intimidates also becomes statistically significant at conventional levels (p<0.05).

Figure 23 Partisanship and politicians' evaluations - survey items
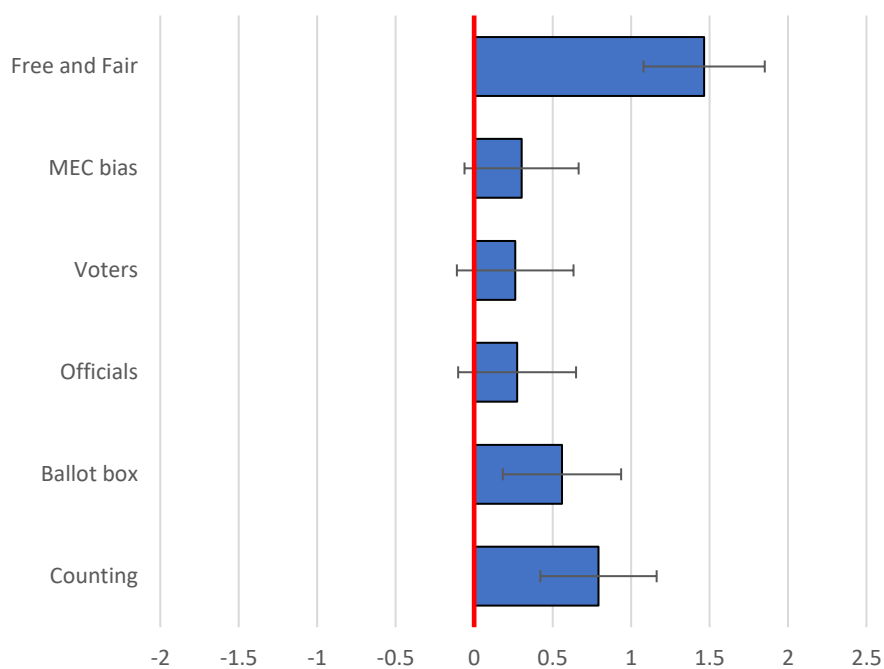
Note: The figure presents the ordinal logistic regression-coefficients for belonging to DPP with 95 percent confidence intervals.

4.5.2 Observer treatment effects on evaluations

The main results of the survey experiment are presented in figures 24 to 29 below and in tables 32 and 39 in the appendix. Figure 24 shows the average treatment

effects on the entire sample for the summary index, while figure 25 shows the effect on separate survey-items. The main effects of both the international and domestic observer treatments are throughout weak and statistically non-significant. Neither for the summary index nor when it comes to any of the individual survey-items do the treatments register effects that are statistically significant at conventional levels.

Figure 24 *Observer treatments and evaluations of electoral integrity - summary index*
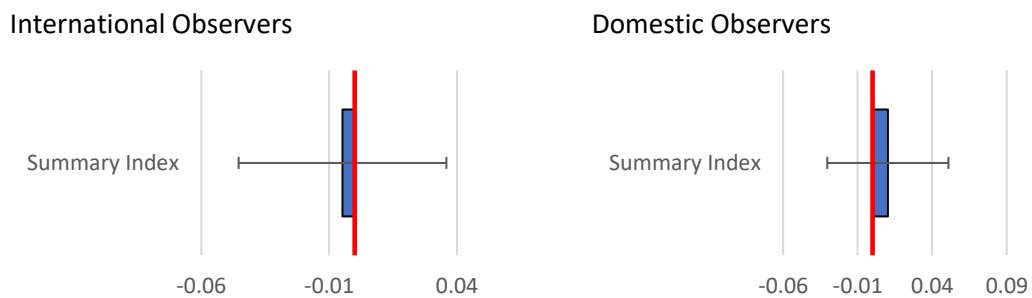
Note: the figure represents the OLS regression coefficient for the International and Domestic Observer Treatment on the summary index. See further tables 32 and 34.

Figure 25 *Observer treatments and evaluations of electoral integrity - survey items*
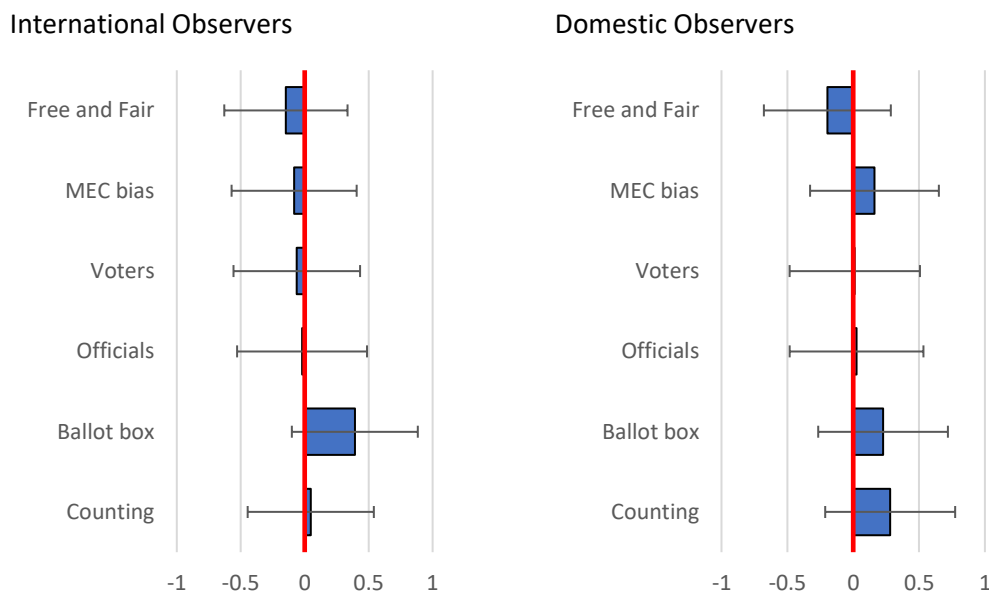
Note: the figure represents the ordinal logistic regression coefficient for the International and Domestic Observer Treatment on separate survey items. See further tables 33 and 35.

We now examine the treatment effects on winners only. Figure 26 and 27 show the marginal effect of the treatment variables for only respondents from the winning party. The treatment effects here are also very weak and statistically non-significant. This concerns particularly the summary index for which the treatment effect is very close to zero and statistically non-significant for both the international and domestic treatment prompts. Similarly, weak and statistically non-significant effects are also recorded for all the individual survey items. The full regression models are presented in 36 to 39 in which the treatment variables are interacted with partisanship. None of these models show a statistically significant interaction-effect.

Figure 26 *Observer treatments and evaluations of electoral integrity among winners - summary index*
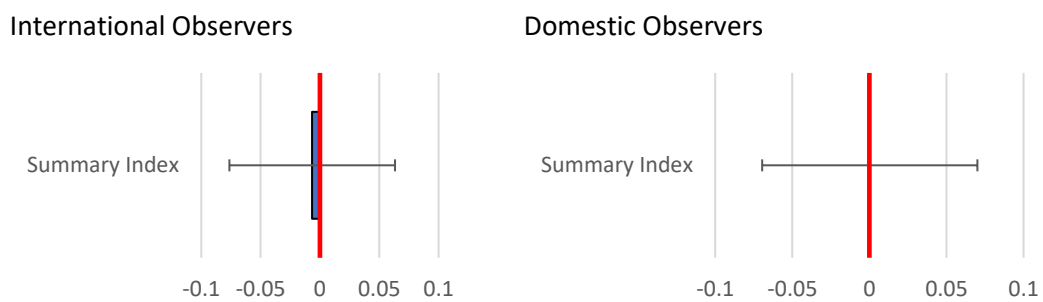
Note: the figure presents the marginal effects of the treatment for politicians belonging to DPP. Marginal effects are obtained from the OLS-regression models presented in table 36 and 38

Figure 27 Observer treatments and evaluations of electoral integrity among winners - survey items
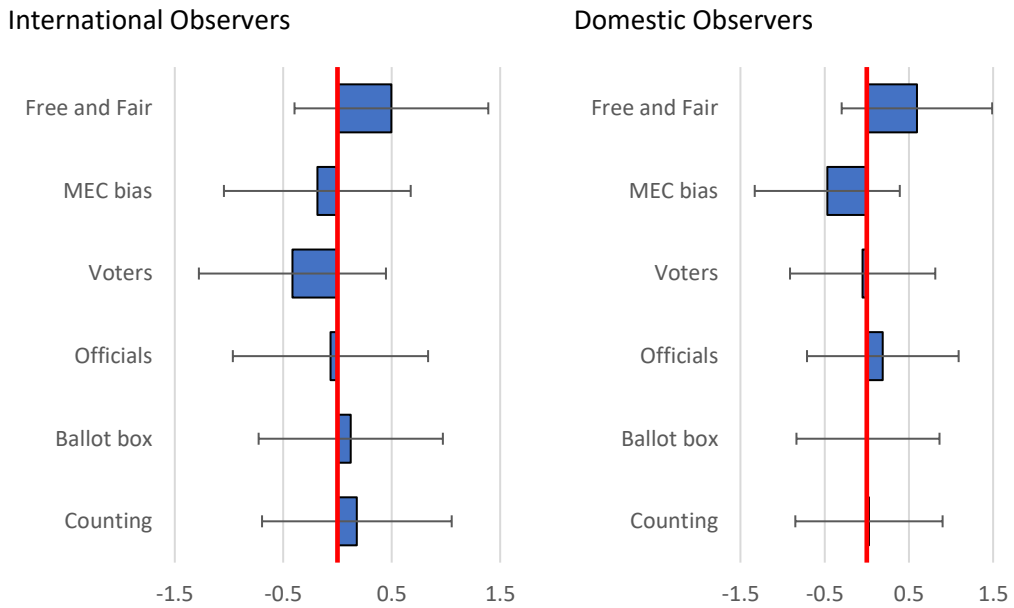
Note: the figure presents the marginal effects of the treatment for politicians belonging to DPP. Marginal effects are obtained from the ordinal logistic regression models presented in table 37 and 39

Finally, we inspect the treatment for only respondents from the losing parties. Figure 28 first shows the marginal effect of treatment variables among losers on the summary index while figure 29 shows this for the individual survey items. For the summary index, like above, the treatment effects are near zero and statistically non-significant for both the international and domestic treatment prompts.

Figure 28 Observer treatments and evaluations of electoral integrity among losers - summary index
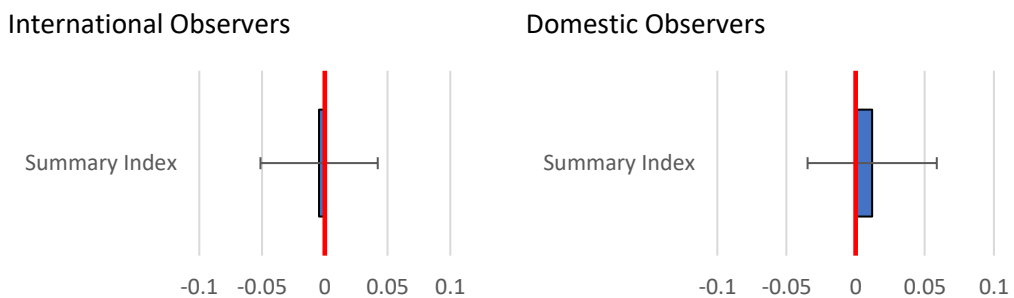
Note: the figure presents the marginal effects of the treatment for politicians belonging to losing parties. Marginal effects are obtained from the OLS-regression models presented in table 36 and 38

Figure 29 *Observer treatments and evaluations of electoral integrity among losers - survey items*
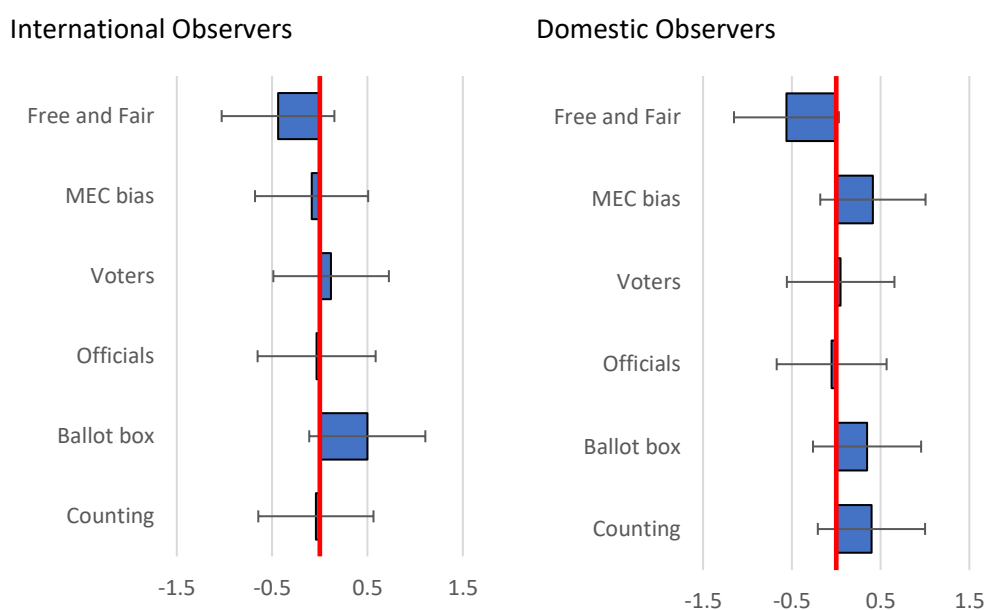
International Observers   Domestic Observers

Note: the figure presents the marginal effects of the treatment for politicians belonging to losing parties. Marginal effects are obtained from the ordinal logistic regression models presented in table 37 and 39

For the individual survey items in figure 29, we can record some near-significant results. For example, on the question whether the election was free and fair or not, respondents among the losing parties, upon being reminded of observer concerns, provided more critical answers to the questions. On the other hand, on the question of ballot-box interference, the effect is the opposite; i.e. respondents provided more positive evaluations upon being reminded of observer concerns. It should be noted however that the interaction-effect between treatment and partisanship for both these questions fails to reach conventional levels of statistical significance (see tables 37 and 39). Other treatment effects in figure 29 also fail to reach statistical significance.

4.5.3 Discussion

The results of the empirical analyses presented in this section show mixed results when it comes to the set-out hypotheses. Firstly, the survey confirms that partisanship has a strong impact on politicians' evaluations of electoral integrity. Still three years after the 2014 elections, on most questions regarding the electoral quality, those politicians belonging to the winning party expressed more positive views than others. This was particularly the case for the summary index that combined all survey items, for which statistically significant differences between winners and losers could be recorded in all models. This should be seen as strong evidence for hypothesis 1 and suggests that the winner-loser gap in evaluations of electoral integrity is also very relevant for political elites, at least in an unconsolidated democracy such as Malawi.

For the survey-experiment, however, the findings suggest that reminding politicians that observers had raised concerns did not alter the politicians' evaluations. Especially when it comes to the entire sample, the treatment prompts did not show any statistically significant effects, regardless if the treatment prompt mentioned that international or domestic observers had raised concerns. These results do not therefore provide any support for hypothesis 2.

When examining possible heterogeneous effects, the results suggest that the treatment had similarly limited impact on the politicians' evaluations and that these were largely non-significant. The analyses do not show any statistically significant interaction effects between partisanship and the treatment prompts on either the summary index or with regards to the individual survey items. The results therefore also fail to support hypothesis 3.

Finally, when comparing the treatment effects between the International and Domestic Observer Treatment we cannot find any systematic differences. Throughout both treatments fail to show statistically significant effects on the outcome variables. The results therefore also fail to support either hypothesis 4a or 4b.

These findings highlight the potentially difficult task for outsiders such as election observers to influence the views of political elites. The results of the survey-experiment, however, need to be interpreted with some caution. One potential explanation to these null results could relate to the specifics of the survey. Firstly, the survey was carried out after some considerable time following the election, and it could be reasonably assumed that the impact of statements and concerns raised by election observers would diminish over time. It is worth noting however that this has not happened to the effect of partisanship which still seems very relevant several years after the election. Another possibility is that the assigned treatments were not powerful enough. Once all respondents had been reminded of irregularities and possible fraud, simply telling them that election observers had raised these concerns may have been too subtle of a treatment to evoke any substantial changes in their evaluations. It would therefore be advisable to carry out further survey-experiments that seek to avoid these potential pitfalls.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to examine politicians' evaluations of electoral integrity and the factors that determine these. In particular, the study considered the role of partisanship and the gap between winners and losers when it comes to evaluations regarding the quality of electoral processes. Furthermore, the study also sought to evaluate whether concerns raised by election observer can influence these.

In line with past research on ordinary citizens (Anderson et al. 2005, Birch 2008, Maldonado and Seligson 2014, Kerr 2013, Cantu and Garcia-Ponce 2015, Wellman, Hyde and Hall 2018, Rose and Mishler 2009), this chapter finds that partisanship has a powerful role in shaping the views that people express regarding electoral integrity. The contribution here is however to demonstrate that this is also the case when it comes to political elites; a question that has not been examined previously. Consistently, the study showed that politicians belonging to the winning

side expressed more positive evaluations compared to politicians from the losing side. This association was robust to the inclusion of several control variables.

On the other hand, the chapter did not find support for the proposition that election observers and the concerns these raise have a considerable impact on politicians' evaluations on electoral integrity. Past research on the effects of negative observers reports on post-election contestation (Hyde and Marinov 2014, Daxecker 2012, Borzykowski 2019) and survey-experiments with ordinary voters (Bush and Prather 2017) would suggest that this is a plausible hypothesis. Nevertheless, when reminded that observers had raised concerns, the politicians that participated in this study did not seem to update or alter their own perceptions.

These findings emphasise the challenges that many new and unconsolidated democracies face. Democracies need critical citizens who support democratic principles regardless of the electoral outcome. If supporters of the losing side always accuse the winners of cheating, regardless of the actual extent of malpractices, then democracy cannot work (Anderson, et al. 2005). But it is also important that winners do not have illusions about the integrity of electoral processes. Unless serious problems are acknowledged, needed legislative reforms and other measures to strengthen electoral integrity are unlikely to be forthcoming. Further emphasis should therefore be paid to identifying the conditions under which political elites acknowledge problems in the integrity of their elections, both when it comes to politicians from the winning as well as from the losing sides.

Whether election observers and their statements can function as such a moderating force was not supported in the findings of the survey experiment carried out in this study. Nevertheless, these findings could be qualified, for example due to the relatively weak treatment and due to the time lag since the election occurred. Further research would therefore be needed to more conclusively establish whether election observer statements can provide meaningful information to elected politicians and if this influences their evaluations.

4.7 Appendix

Table 28 *Regression: The effect of Partisanship on summary index*

	Summary Index
DPP	0.099 (0.015)***
INT	-0.008 (0.014)
DOM	0.004 (0.014)
Intercept	0.448 (0.008)***
R-square	0.095
N	434

Note: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table 29 *Ordinal Logistic Regression: The effect of partisanship on individual survey items*

	Free	MEC	Voters	Officials	Ballots	Counting
DPP	1.466***	0.302	0.261	0.274	0.560***	0.793***
	(0.197)	(0.186)	(0.190)	(0.192)	(0.192)	(0.189)
INT	-0.118	-0.029	-0.100	0.014	0.194	-0.190
	(0.175)	(0.176)	(0.177)	(0.181)	(0.178)	(0.177)
DOM	-0.173	0.226	-0.021	0.073	0.059	0.059
	(-1.301)	(0.176)	(0.177)	(0.181)	(0.178)	(0.177)
N	450	453	455	455	453	452

Note: Coefficients for intercepts have been excluded from the model. * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table 30 *Regression: The effect of Partisanship on summary index (control variables)*

	Summary Index
DPP	0.103 (0.015)***
INT	-0.009 (0.014)
DOM	0.005 (0.014)
MP	0.013 (0.020)
MALE	-0.012 (0.022)
AGE	-0.000 (0.001)
HIGHER EDUCATION	0.014 (0.020)
VICTORY MARGIN	0.020 (0.039)
TURNOUT	0.120 (0.095)
Intercept	0.448 (0.008)***
R-square	0.104
N	434

Note: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table 31 *Ordinal Logistic Regression: The effect of partisanship on individual survey items (controls)*

	Free	MEC	Voters	Officials	Ballots	Counting
DPP	1.541***	0.294	0.387*	0.261	0.592***	0.776***
	(0.202)	(0.189)	(0.195)	(0.196)	(0.197)	(0.193)
INT	-0.111	-0.022	-0.104	0.009	0.173	-0.179
	(0.176)	(0.177)	(0.177)	(0.182)	(0.178)	(0.177)
DOM	-0.181	0.232	-0.013	0.060	0.031	0.054
	(-1.176)	(0.177)	(0.178)	(0.182)	(0.179)	(0.177)
MP	0.449	0.179	0.530	-0.552*	-0.275	0.082
	(0.267)	(0.267)	(0.275)	(0.282)	(0.285)	(0.274)
MALE	-0.007	0.095	-0.092	-0.400	-0.302	-0.092
	(0.289)	(0.288)	(0.302)	(0.294)	(0.295)	(0.287)
AGE	-0.008	-0.001	0.002	0.007	0.017	-0.002
	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)
HIGHER EDUCATION	-0.015	-0.469	0.141	0.689	0.309	-0.241
	(0.243)	(0.246)	(0.250)	(0.261)	(0.264)	(0.254)
VICTORY MARGIN	0.547	-0.366	0.465	0.204	-0.486	0.182
	(0.495)	(0.502)	(0.500)	(0.507)	(0.511)	(0.492)
TURNOUT	1.652	0.507	1.223	0.807	-0.657	0.603
	(1.175)	(1.156)	(1.208)	(1.22)	(1.203)	(1.219)
N	450	453	455	455	453	452

Note: Coefficients for intercepts have been excluded from the model. *$p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$*

Table 32 *Regression: The effect of International Observer Treatment on summary index*

	Summary Index
INT	-0.008 (0.015)
Intercept	0.484 (0.010)***
R-square	0.000
N	434

Note: *$p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$*

Table 33 *Ordinal Logistic Regression: The effect of International Observer Treatment on individual survey items*

	Free	MEC	Voters	Officials	Ballots	Counting
INT	-0.064	-0.024	-0.094	0.030	0.216	-0.176
	(0.173)	(0.178)	(0.177)	(0.251)	(0.178)	(0.176)
N	450	453	455	455	453	452

Note: Coefficients for intercepts have been excluded from the model. *$p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$*

Table 34 *Regression: The effect of Domestic Observer Treatment on summary index*

	Summary Index
DOM	0.007 (0.015)
Intercept	0.477 (0.010)***
R-square	0.000
N	434

Note: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table 35 *Ordinal Logistic Regression: The effect of Domestic Observer Treatment on individual survey items*

	Free	MEC	Voters	Officials	Ballots	Counting
DOM	-0.116	0.226	-0.017	0.074	0.044	0.078
	(0.173)	(0.177)	(0.177)	(0.181)	(0.177)	(0.176)
N	450	453	455	455	453	452

Note: Coefficients for intercepts have been excluded from the model. * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table 36 *Regression: The effect of International Observer Treatment on summary index, interacted with Partisanship*

	Summary Index
INT	-0.001 (0.017)
DPP	0.093 (0.021)***
INT*DPP	0.0127 (0.021)
Intercept	0.454 (0.012)***
R-square	0.095
N	434

Note: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table 37 *Ordinal Logistic Regression: The effect of International Observers Treatment on individual survey items, interacted with Partisanship*

	Free	MEC	Voters	Officials	Ballots	Counting
INT	-0.267	-0.055	-0.010	0.169	0.246	-0.398
	(0.216)	(0.218)	(0.215)	(0.222)	(0.216)	(0.219)
DPP	1.222***	0.273	0.401	0.513	0.647**	0.498
	(0.271)	(0.262)	(0.271)	(0.277)	(0.279)	(0.264)
INT * DPP	0.463	0.056	-0.273	-0.461	-0.169	0.591
	(0.372)	(0.370)	(0.379)	(0.384)	(0.382)	(0.372)
N	450	453	455	455	453	452

Note: Coefficients for intercepts have been excluded from the model. * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table 38 *Regression: The effect of Domestic Observer Treatment on summary index, interacted with Partisanship*

	Summary Index
DOM	0.004 (0.021)
DPP	0.098 (0.021)***
DOM*DPP	0.002 (0.029)
Intercept	0.446 (0.012)***
R-square	0.094
N	434

Note: *$p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$*

Table 39 *Ordinal Logistic Regression: The effect of Domestic Observers Treatment on individual survey items, interacted with Partisanship*

	Free	MEC	Voters	Officials	Ballots	Counting
DOM	-0.401	0.480	-0.077	0.134	0.102	0.086
	(0.216)	(0.219)	(0.215)	(0.222)	(0.216)	(0.218)
DPP	1.105***	0.667	0.167	0.370	0.641**	0.812**
	(0.273)	(0.264)	(0.270)	(0.276)	(0.269)	(0.269)
DOM * DPP	0.691	-0.727	0.182	-0.184	-0.148	-0.048
	(0.373)	(0.372)	(0.378)	(0.382)	(0.381)	(0.371)
N	450	453	455	455	453	452

Note: Coefficients for intercepts have been excluded from the model. *$p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$*

5

Conclusion

Elections are today the only accepted way to select the chief executive and members of the legislature in most countries in the world. Since the 'third wave of democratisation' (Huntington 1993) closed autocracies nearly everywhere have been replaced by regimes with competitive and regularly occurring multiparty elections. Elections do not however necessarily equate to democracy. For elections to be democratic they need to be inclusive, in that all citizens of adult age are able to participate, voters need to be able to make informed and free choices on who to vote for, and their choices must be faithfully recorded and honoured (Birch 2011, 17-26). In addition, democratic elections also need the losers' consent (Anderson, et al. 2005). Only when these core principles are satisfied do elections contribute fully to democratic governance.

As this thesis has sought to establish, however, elections in many countries face challenges in satisfying these principles, especially in unconsolidated democracies. Elections in these may fall short in many ways. Sometimes voters are denied their most basic rights to participate in elections due to election violence or attempts to disenfranchise voters. At other times, results in polling stations are manipulated, either grossly inflated through ballot box stuffing and result sheet forgery or suppressed through intentional invalidation and the destruction of votes. Or the electoral outcome is put into question due to irreconcilable partisan differences in views on the quality of the election process. The consequences of electoral malpractices and other challenges to electoral integrity can be a sharp

reduction in public confidence; they can lead to electoral boycotts and refusals to accept the election results; and, in extreme cases, cause the outbreaks of post-election riots and violence. In short, when elections do not work, they do not contribute towards democracy.

Elections will however always be central to democracy. Elections are the foundations that underlie democracy and without which democracy cannot work. Successful democratic consolidation thus depends on "getting elections right". It is therefore crucial to gain more understanding into the main challenges unconsolidated democracies face with regards to electoral integrity. What are the factors that determine whether and how electoral malpractices occur? How should we go about identifying or deterring electoral malpractices, where they occur and how they are carried out? And perhaps most importantly, how can electoral integrity be strengthened in unconsolidated democracies to overcome challenges?

This thesis has sought to examine potential strategies or remedies to combat electoral malpractices and to strengthen electoral integrity in unconsolidated democracies. The different possible strategies to do so can be categorised into three groups: 1) transparency-enhancing strategies which seek to provide increased transparency in the electoral process and reliable information about malpractices to strengthen electoral integrity; 2) capacity-building strategies which focus on strengthening the long-term professional, technical and financial capacities of central actors involved in managing and supporting electoral processes; as well as 3) coercive strategies, which seek to deter poor behaviour and outright fraud by seeking to hold perpetrators to account through different forms of sanctions.

The focus of this thesis has been on the first group of transparency-enhancing strategies and on electoral observation and electoral forensics as important tools to strengthen electoral integrity. By deploying election observers to individual polling stations on Elections Day, by carrying out careful forensics analysis of election results, and by reporting on the quality of the electoral process after the election, these measures have the potentials to support more effective use of capacity-building and coercive strategies, but also in themselves deter malpractices from occurring and support broader agreement among opposing parties regarding the integrity of the process.

To examine the viability of transparency-enhancing strategies, this thesis has presented three empirical studies focusing on 1) the impact of election observers the ground and their ability to safeguard women's rights to vote, 2) the potentials of election forensics methods to detect different types of electoral malpractices and even predict where they are likely to occur, and 3) the effect of election observer assessments on domestic elites. These studies were set in three different unconsolidated democracies: in Pakistan, Ukraine, and Malawi. I argued that these cases were particularly illustrative of the different phenomena under study. The empirical studies also used different empirical data and methodological approaches.

In this concluding section I summarise the main findings of the three studies and highlight their contributions to the overall literature. I also discuss their limitations and how further research could overcome these. I then discuss to what extent the findings of these studies can be generalised to the overall population of unconsolidated democracies and for which countries such generalisations are most appropriate. Finally, I set forward some policy recommendations with regards to transparency-enhancing strategies in general, and with regards to election observation and electoral forensics as potential tools to strengthen electoral integrity in unconsolidated democracies.

5.1 Key empirical findings and contributions to the study on electoral integrity

This thesis has sought to examine different transparency-enhancing strategies to strengthen electoral integrity. The first study presented in the thesis examined the impact of election observers in individual polling stations and asked whether they can help support women's rights to vote. Gender discrimination, marginalisation, and direct attempts to ban women from voting or standing in elections, and other infringements that *de facto* disenfranchise women, remain serious concerns in many unconsolidated democracies. Election observer organisations have acknowledged these challenges and increasingly emphasise women's electoral rights and participation as central concerns and give special attention to these in their observation reports. Past research has also documented that election observer can deter a range of malpractices on the ground. Even so, very little is known about the

potential impact of election observers, when deployed to individual polling stations, on female participation or disenfranchisement. Can their presence contribute to safeguarding women's right to vote? Can they even increase female participation? Or does their presence potential have unintended or even detrimental effects on female electoral participation? The study took advantage of the random allocation of domestic observers during the 2008 General Elections in Pakistan to examine their causal effect on turnout in female-only polling stations.

The key empirical findings of this study indicated that election observers were able to deter more brazen attempts of female disenfranchisement in those polling stations where they were present. The study confirmed a statistically significant negative effect of observer presence on the likelihood the female-only polling stations would have zero turnout, which was robust to different resampling scenarios. It was noted however that due to the concentration of the outcome variable to one region it was difficult to verify whether observer had the same effect in other parts of the country. Given the difficult context in which observers work in Pakistan, however, this effect should be applauded. The study nonetheless also revealed that observers did not increase average turnout in female-only polling stations, suggesting that they did not deter more incremental forms of disenfranchisement. Instead, the presence of election observer in female-only polling stations was associated with a decrease in female turnout. While it was not possible to determine the exact causal mechanism, the possibility remained open that observers may have depressed female participation, for example through increased voter identification requirements or in some other ways.

This study further developed our understanding on the possibilities of election observers to deter malpractices when they are deployed to individual polling stations. Past research here has primarily considered the effects of election observers on malpractices such as ballot box stuffing, vote stealing, and violence (Hyde 2007, Enikopolov, et al. 2013, Asunka, et al. 2019). The study on Pakistan presented in this thesis opened an entirely new area of enquiry by examining the impact of observers on female participation and disenfranchisement. The study emphasised the challenges that observers may face in many unconsolidated democracies with regards to safeguarding women's right to vote. It also highlighted that observer may

have unintended consequences when it comes to female participation, which need further examination. This finding speaks to a literature which has emphasised the possible negative externalities involved in efforts to strengthen electoral integrity (Simpser and Donno 2012, Daxecker 2012, von Borzyskowski 2019).

The second empirical study presented in the thesis sought to examine different types electoral malpractices carried out on Election Day. An enabling factor for electoral malpractices is that they occur in secret, away from possible witnesses, making them difficult to verify, or to hold perpetrators to account. Therefore, one avenue to strengthening electoral integrity is by making the electoral process more transparent and calling out electoral malpractices when they occur. The second study seeks to advance the theory and methods to do so. The study is set in Ukraine and sought to explore how perpetrators select between different malpractices. In particular, the study asks how local support for the fraudulent party impacts on the choices and trade-offs of different types of electoral malpractices to either inflate or suppress votes in individual polling stations. In examining this question, I use electoral forensics methods to identify deviating patterns in the electoral data that are consistent with specific types of malpractices.

The empirical findings of this study showed that, in line with my theoretical expectations, the occurrence of different malpractices at polling stations was heavily influenced by the local support of the party identified by election observer reports and past research as the main perpetrator of fraud during the elections. Patterns indicative of vote inflation through multiple voting, ballot box stuffing and result-sheet forgery were most severe and noticeable in polling stations and areas where this party had overwhelming support. In contrast, in places where it lacked support, in opposition strongholds, patterns instead suggest that votes had been suppressed through malpractices such as intentional invalidation.

These findings contribute to the theoretical understanding of the factors that determine how perpetrators choose between different electoral malpractices. Whereas the conventional view has been that electoral competition increases the likelihood of malpractices, this study argued the dynamics at the local level are different. Rather than intensifying malpractices, increased competition at the local level was identified as a key factor that makes malpractices more difficult to carry

out, forcing perpetrators to resort to various forms of vote suppression and covert malpractices. It is instead the absence of competition at the local level that enables perpetrators to employ the most overt malpractices to inflate votes. These insights can help inform efforts to detect – and eventually to deter – different malpractices in unconsolidated democracies.

The third study sought to examine how transparency-enhancing strategies impact on domestic elites. One way in which these strategies can support democratic consolidation processes is by providing neutral and credible information on the quality of the election process. Such information can reduce suspicions and rumours, they can help verify accusations of malpractices, or refute false ones and, ultimately, can help opposing parties to reach greater agreement on the quality of the election process. But do domestic elites, and in particular the politicians that participated in the elections, really listen to elections observers? When observers raise concerns about the electoral process, do domestic elites update their own views? If so, are these effects the same across all elites, or do they vary along partisan lines? The third study made use of an elite-level survey carried out in Malawi to gauge politicians' evaluations on electoral integrity with regards to the 2014 presidential elections. The survey also contained an embedded experiment to assess whether reminding politicians that observers had raised concerns about the election quality had noticeably impact on their own views.

The key empirical findings of this study showed, in line with past research on ordinary voters, that partisanship had a powerful role in shaping politicians' evaluations on the integrity of the elections. Systematically, the politicians belonging to the winning side expressed more positive evaluations compared to politicians from the losing side; an association that was robust to the inclusion of multiple control variables. On the other hand, the study does not find any effect of reminding politicians that election observers had raised concerns about the quality of the election. Whether this null result reflected the limited possibilities for election observers to influence politicians or if it was due to reasons specific to the survey, however, needs to be evaluated in further research.

These findings contribute to the scholarship on perceptions of electoral integrity and especially the winner-loser gap in these, which has been identified in

many unconsolidated democracies (Andersson, et al. 2005, Malnoldo and Seligson 2014, Moehler and Lindberg 2009). This was the first study including a larger sample of respondents that verified that these gaps also firmly exist among political elites. The study also took some tentative steps in examining whether politicians update their own evaluations on the quality of elections in line with observer assessments - again a topic that has only been examined among ordinary voters before (Bush and Prather 2017, Robertson 2015)

5.2 Limitations

All three studies presented in this thesis have limitations, either due to constraints on the research design or methodology or availability of data. Here I go through the key limitations in each study and propose directions for future studies to overcome these.

In the case of the first study set in Pakistan, the ambition was to examine how election observers impact on female participation and attempts to disenfranchise women. The focus on female-only polling stations enabled me to distinguish specifically female turnout. As noted in chapter 2, a limitation of the study, however, is that it is unable to verify the casual mechanisms between election observers and average turnout in female-only polling stations. As noted, there is small but statistically significant negative effect of election observers on average turnout in female-only polling stations, but the study is unable to determine whether this is due to potential ballot-box stuffing in other polling stations or because the presence of election observers depresses female participation. One potential solution to this would be to compare the impact of election observers in male-only and female-only polling stations. In case the negative effect on turnout in female-only polling stations is due to observers deterring ballot-box stuffing, then we would reasonably expect to find similar negative effects on turnout in male-only polling stations. In case however the negative effect on turnout is specific to observer presence on female voters, than we would not expect to see such effects in male-only polling stations. Future research efforts should therefore complement this study by also examining observer effects in male-only polling stations to more clearly determine the causal

mechanisms. This of course requires a substantial data collection effort of coding turnout figures in at least 13,000 polling stations (the same number as female-only polling stations); an effort that I was not able to carry through in this thesis.

A further limitation to the Pakistan study, which has also been highlighted in chapter 2 is the fact that possible displacement effects are not studied. Past research has documented that when election observer are present in one polling station, perpetrators often relocate to other polling stations to commit electoral malpractices (Ichino and Schundeln 2012, Asunka, et al. 2019). Examining such effects in the Pakistan study would help us determine whether female disenfranchisement is specific to a local polling station, and thus likely perpetrated by polling station officials, or if it is carried out by outside actors whose agenda is to limit female participation. Studying potential displacement effects with regards to ballot-box stuffing could also help determine the causal mechanisms described above. Future research efforts should therefore seek to include analysis of displacement effects in the research design. Again, this would require considerable data collection efforts, and preferably, local knowledge of specific locality names, in order determine the exact location of individual polling stations. With the aid of the 1998 Census of Pakistan, I was able to identify the location of a small sample of polling stations in which observers had gone to a different polling station than the one they were supposed to. This data collection effort was already considerable but would be small in comparison to collecting location data for all 13.000 female-only polling stations, not to speak for all 40,000 male-only, female-only and mixed polling stations in Pakistan.

The Ukraine study sought to use the 2004 Ukrainian presidential elections to identify different electoral malpractices to either inflate or suppress votes at individual polling stations. Specifically, the study looked at malpractices such as multiple voting, ballot-box stuffing and result-sheet forgery, as well as different efforts to disenfranchise voters or to intentionally invalidate their votes. The choice of malpractices that were focused upon was motivated as both past research and election observer reports have emphasised that these were widespread during the 2004 presidential elections. Other potential malpractices, including those that occurred prior to Election Day, were not however examined. This choice invariably

impacts on the interpretation of the electoral integrity in these elections, and which side ultimately benefitted or were harmed by them. This is a limitation in the study. Further research should therefore expand the focus of possible malpractices, and the forensics methods to identify them, thus allowing for alternative interpretations of the findings. One possible avenue is to examine tabulation fraud occurring when votes form individual polling stations were collated at constituency level. Election forensics approaches that seek to detect deviant patterns in the digits of result-sheets could possibly be used for this (Beber and Scacco 2012, Mebane 2009).

Finally, the survey experiment carried out in Malawi sought to estimate the effect of reminding politicians that election observers had raised concerns. While this study did not find any treatment effects, this may have been a result of the timing and design of the experiment. The timing of the experiment in particular is a limitation. The survey was carried out several years after the election and hence at a time when observer assessments were unlikely to be salient. Future research should seek to replicate the survey-experiment at a better time, closer to an election. Alternatively, rather than focusing on a specific election, the survey questions gauging politicians' evaluations on electoral integrity could focus on a permanent electoral institution, such as the electoral commission.

Another limitation in the survey experiment regards the design of the treatment. As described in chapter 4, it was decided to sensitise all respondents to the concerns of irregularities and potential fraud, and then to remind randomly selected respondents that either international or domestic observer missions in particular had lifted up such concerns. While this assured that respondents were comparable, and the results were not driven by simply the reminder of fraud, it also resulted in a comparatively weak treatment. Further research should therefore consider different methods by which the treatment could be made stronger. One possibility is to show respondents a copy of the election observer report, or possibly even a video of a representative of the observer mission summarising their findings.

5.3 Generalisability

As discussed in the introductory chapter, the cases studied in this thesis were selected primarily because they feature very prominently the different phenomena under study. In this sense, they can be seen as illustrative cases which, by studying them in-depth, can give us a more detailed and elaborate understanding of the given phenomenon. To what extent then can we generalise the findings from the empirical studies to other unconsolidated democracies? Primarily, generalisations should be extended to other unconsolidated democracies that share similar features with regards to the specific area of study.

In case of the Pakistan study, we may consider generalising some of the findings to other countries that display similar features like Pakistan when it comes to female participation, both electorally and in the broader society. As discussed in the introductory chapter, one way to identify these is by comparing countries classified by Freedom House as Partly Free with regards to female civil society participation using Varieties of Democracy's index (see figure 1). Based on this comparison, countries that share similarly low levels of female participation are found in South Asia, Middle East and North Africa (Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Egypt, Libya, Maldives, Turkey, Yemen), Sub-Saharan Africa (Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Gabon, Guinea, Niger, Zimbabwe), Latin America (Bolivia, Ecuador, Haiti), and Europe (Albania, Kosovo). Most of these countries regularly invite both international and domestic election observers to monitor their elections. It would be reasonable to assume that the findings from the Pakistan study would be relevant also in these, and that observers would face similar opportunities and challenges in seeking to safeguard women's right to vote in elections in these countries.

With regards to the Ukraine study, we may consider generalising findings to other unconsolidated democracies that have experienced similarly flawed elections with widespread malpractices as the 2004 Ukrainian elections. One way to identify such countries, as discussed in chapter 1, is by comparing countries classified as Partly Free on Varieties of Democracy's index on other election irregularities (see figure 2). Based on this comparison, countries with similarly flawed elections as

Ukraine are found in former Soviet Union (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia), Sub-Saharan Africa (Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mauritania and Zimbabwe), as well as Honduras and Yemen. It would be reasonable to expect that local support for the fraudulent party in election in these countries would similarly shape incentives for different malpractices to either inflate or suppress votes.

Finally, with regards to the Malawi study, we may consider generalising findings to other unconsolidated democracies that like Malawi often experience controversies around elections and in which public confidence in electoral authorities is limited. One way to identify such countries is by comparing countries classified as Partly Free with regards to the share of respondents that in the World Value Survey and Afrobarometer survey responded that they believed that vote counting was fair (see figure 3). Based on this comparison, countries with similarly low levels of public trust in electoral procedures include countries in the former Soviet Union (Georgia, Ukraine), Sub-Saharan Africa (Liberia, Mozambique, Kenya and Zambia) as well as Latin America (Colombia, Haiti). It would be reasonable to assume that the findings regarding partisanship as a key determinant for politicians' evaluations on electoral integrity would be replicated in these countries. Whether the same can be said about the experimental effects would however require further research.

5.4 Policy Recommendations

Finally, based on the studies presented in this thesis, a set of policy recommendations can be made with regards to the strategies and measures examined in this thesis. Overall, regarding transparency-enhancing strategies, this thesis has argued that these can support electoral integrity in unconsolidated democracies in many ways. One enabling factor for malpractices is the lack of transparency or credible information about electoral processes in many unconsolidated democracies as it allows perpetrators to carry them out without fear of getting caught. It also fuels suspicion and tensions following controversial elections, as accusations of malpractices in contexts of limited transparency are difficult to either substantiate or

refute. Measures that can increase transparency in electoral processes include deploying election observers to individual polling stations, carefully analysing election results using electoral forensics methods, as well as providing credible reports of the electoral quality following the election. These measures are both a precondition for the effective use of other strategies, such as capacity building and coercion, but also serve to deter electoral malpractices. The empirical studies presented in this thesis have found some support for these assumptions but have also identified challenges that need to be considered. Based on the findings, the following recommendations can be made.

Firstly, with regards to the deployment of election observers to individual polling stations past research has verified that these have the potential to deter electoral malpractices in those polling stations where they are present. This thesis also found evidence that election observers deterred brazen attempts to disenfranchise female voters. Despite this potential to deter malpractices, the thesis highlighted that election observers can also unintentionally depress female participation. Their presence may increase voter identification requirements, which in many unconsolidated democracies is likely to disproportionally affect women. It is therefore recommended that election observer organisations investigate in more detail how their practices may impact on female voters, including how their presence impacts on voter identification requirements and how they are perceived in local areas and how this in turn could affect female participation rates.

Secondly, with regards to election forensics, this thesis showed that the potential to identify patterns consistent with different types of electoral malpractices to either inflate or suppress votes. With the aid of robust theory, it is also possible to predict where such patterns are likely to occur. For electoral forensics methods to work, it is however necessary to access disaggregated electoral data, preferably at the level of individual polling stations. Many unconsolidated democracies release polling station data following their elections to increase the transparency around the electoral procedures, however, many do not. It is therefore recommended that further work is done to convince governments and electoral authorities in unconsolidated democracies to release such data; something that could be made a precondition for receiving electoral assistance.

Finally, the studies carried out in this thesis suggest that further research should be conducted on transparency-enhancing strategies to strengthen electoral integrity in unconsolidated democracies. Such research efforts should look further into the impact and potential consequences of election observers and possibilities to detect malpractices through election forensics, as well as other measures to enhance the transparency of electoral processes in these countries.

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