Appendix for *Effectiveness of Incumbent's Strategic Communication during Economic Crisis under Electoral Authoritarianism: Evidence from Turkey*

Contents

1 Background on the 2018 Currency Crisis and Government's Response in Turkey

The Turkish Lira lost about a third of its value against the US Dollar in 2018 with the year-to-date losses peaking at 45% in August. While the trigger for the August peak in losses was heightened political tensions with the U.S., the Turkish economy was already showing all the signs of an "overheated economy" with accelerated inflation, soaring debt, and record current account deficits by early 2018 (OECD 2018). Erdoğan had been pushing for strongly expansionary macroeconomic policies in the aftermath of the failed coup attempt in 2016 to boost his popularity and consolidate his one-man rule, leaving the economy vulnerable to external shocks. When the Central Bank raised interest rates to cool down the economy ahead of the snap general elections of June 2018, Erdoğan publicly denounced orthodox monetary policies, and said that he would have a bigger say in policy decisions if he won the upcoming elections. Indeed, after being elected as President, he took steps to reduce Central Bank independence and appointed his son-in-law as the Minister of Treasury and Finance. These moves severely undermined the credibility of monetary policy and confidence in the quality of public governance, sending the Lira into a tailspin. This currency shock led to a sharp increase in inflation, slowdown in economic activity, and rising unemployment.

The timing of the Lira's slide in 2018 was particularly alarming for Erdoğan as he faced a general election in June 2018 and local election in March 2019, and a severely weakened Lira would meant accelerated price increases during this period. Indeed, annual inflation reached 25% in October 2018 (from 10% in January) and closed the year at 20%, registering its highest level in fifteen years. The government took some rather desperate measures to curb rise in prices, especially of food items, by setting up food stands in several cities to sell vegetables and fruits at cut-rate prices, and threatening supermarket chains and wholesalers with fines.[1] Such measures had very limited effect, however, as Erdoğan refused to reverse course on expansionary monetary policy, and inflation remained stubbornly high.

While the main shock to the economy through the sharp depreciation of the Turkish Lira had happened in 2018, the Turkish economy was still under significant strain by summer 2019, the timing of our experiment. First, the Turkish Lira continued to depreciate against major currencies in 2019, losing about 9% of its value against US Dollar by the time of the survey compared to the start of the year. Second and more importantly, the macroeconomic fundamentals of the Turkish economy (inflation, unemployment, growth) were negatively affected by the currency crisis with a time lag. The average inflation during the first half of 2019 was still very high at around 19%, and only in the fall of 2019 did we observe a decrease in annual inflation to around 10-12% range. We observe a similar trend in other macroeconomic fundamentals: the Turkish economy registered three consecutive quarters of negative growth after the peak of the currency crisis (-2.8% in Q4/18, -2.3% in Q1/19, -1.6% in Q2/19) only to return to positive territory in the third quarter of 2019 with a meager growth of 0.9%. As a result, unemployment rate increased from 11.3% in August 2018 to 14.2% by the time of survey in July 2019.

Crucially for this research, Erdoğan and his allies have frequently resorted to both blame shifting and agenda setting during this period. Erdoğan ramped up his criticism of the Central Bank, blaming the Bank's policies for "helping to stoke rising prices."[2] After a political spat with the U.S. in summer 2018, he turned his target of blame to foreign actors. He blamed "an economic attack launched by the Trump administration" for the Lira's slide,[3] and argued that "the West tried to corner [Turkey] by applying pressure on the currency, interest rates, and inflation."[4] In terms of changing the political agenda, Erdoğan leveraged

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[1] "Turkish Food Fight Spreads With Fines, Raids as Inflation Stings," *Bloomberg*, February 10, 2019, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-02-10/turkish-food-fight-spreads-with-fines-raids-as-inflation-stings.

[2] "Erdogan plans to tighten his grip on Turkey's economy," *Bloomberg*, May 15, 2018, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-05-15/erdogan-plans-to-tighten-his-grip-on-turkey-s-economy.

[3] "Erdogan slams US over economic attacks," *TRT World*, September 14, 2018, https://www.trtworld.com/turkey/erdogan-slams-us-over-economic-attacks-20222.

[4] "Erdogan: West's economic manipulation will be thwarted after Istanbul vote re-run," *Reuters*, May 18,

Turkey's involvement in several large-scale military operations in northern Iraq and northern Syria against Kurdish groups and Islamic State in the region since 2016, the latest of which had been launched in early 2018. This context presented Erdoğan with the opportunity to highlight the importance of security concerns to voters at the expense of the economy. This strategy was especially appealing as Turkish voters saw the AKP as more competent than other parties in addressing security threats (Aytaç and Çarkoğlu 2019). In his speeches, Erdoğan emphasized that the country has been "under attack by foreign powers," and criticized the opposition's efforts to put rising cost of living into spotlight as follows:

> While we fight against terrorists. . . look at what they [opposition] talk about. . . They talk about tomato, they talk about eggplant. . . Please think, think about how much a bullet costs! Think about the cost of the struggle against the terrorists. . . While our government succeeds at this, they [opposition] still talk about potatoes, tomatoes, onion. . . George, Hans want to hit at us...And they [opposition] are facilitating this![5]

Erdoğan's ally Bahçeli, the leader of the Nationalist Action Party (MHP), was more direct in downplaying the importance of the economy and highlighting security concerns:

> You [opposition] say the price of garlic increased by 89%, tomato paste by 90%, but have you ever heard of the cost of the fight against terrorism, the money spent on bombs, bullets, military operations? Aren't you ashamed to talk when Turkey has been through a ring of fire? If we eat less today, tomorrow we'll eat more, but if we lose the struggle for survival, everything is gone – there is no way back."[6]

The informational vignettes used in the survey were constructed using such actual statements by the politicians.

There is also some anecdotal visual evidence suggesting how some key elite constituents of Erdoğan support his strategy of emphasizing security concerns. In Figure A1 we see a banner put by the main conservative business association of Turkey (MUSIAD) during Erdoğan's visit to Bayburt, a small province in north-eastern Turkey. The banner can be translated as "We, the people of Bayburt, did not vote for the Chief [referring to Erdoğan] so

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2019, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-economy-erdogan/erdogan-wests-economic-manipulation-will-be-thwarted-after-istanbul-vote-re-run-idUSKCN1SO0PL.

[5]From Erdoğan's speech in Sivas delivered during an election rally on February 8, 2019, available [in Turkish] at https://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-tanzim-satis-noktalariyla-en-ucuz-fiyatlarla-urunleri-getiririz-404268.html.

[6]From Bahçeli's speech delivered in Amasya on July 27, 2019, available [in Turkish] at https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/politika/2019/07/27/bahceli-bombaya-harcanan-parayi-hesap-ettiniz-mi/.

that dollar falls, but so that the homeland does not fall." Again, the message is to highlight the security challenges of the country while downplaying economic concerns (in this case the depreciation of Turkish Lira).

Figure A1: A banner put during Erdoğan's visit to the city of Bayburt. It reads as: "We, the people of Bayburt, did not vote for the Chief [referring to Erdoğan] so that dollar falls, but so that the homeland does not fall."

The structure of the media in Turkey enabled Erdoğan and his allies to communicate their messages to large parts of society in an unchallenged manner. The Media Ownership Monitor-Turkey (http://turkey.mom-rsf.org/en/) is part of a global research and advocacy initiative by Reporters Without Borders that aims to create transparency on media ownership. According to their analysis, 9 of the 10 most-read dailies, 9 of the 10 most-watched TV channels, all of the 10 most popular radio channels, 7 of the 10 most-clicked news portals "belong to groups known to be close to the ruling AKP" and "generally broadcast in line with the president, government and AKP policies." Moreover, more than two thirds of the top 40 media outlets according to their audience shares are owned by business groups that have major investments outside of media that depend on state contracts, such as energy, construction, and mining. Overall, just four media groups share approximately % 71 of all media audience in the country, which the report highlights as a "high risk" for media freedoms. More detailed information about their methodology and analyses is available on their website.

The official observation report of the Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) regarding the latest general election of June 2018 also lays bare the media hegemony of Erdoğan and the AKP (available at https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/turkey/397046). The report highlights that "the media landscape is dominated by outlets whose owners are considered affiliated with the government or depend on public contracts, which limits the diversity of available views" (p. 17) and that "the incumbent president and his party enjoyed a notable advantage in the campaign, which was also reflected in excessive coverage by public and government-affiliated private media" (p. 1). In more detail:

> "Most popular broadcast media are seen as affiliated with the government, which limits the diversity of available views. The overall campaign coverage was characterized by unbalanced, extensive and unchallenged promotion of the incumbent president, including by the public broadcaster, while the main opposition candidate was negatively covered in the news and current affairs to such an extent that at times he received more coverage than any other contestant. Similarly, most of the monitored private television channels covered the incumbent and the ruling party more favourably and often criticized or completely ignored the opposition" (pp. 2-3).

In addition to these remarks, the observation team also conducted a qualitative and quantitative monitoring of five TV channels and five newspapers. They concluded that "campaign coverage was characterized by an extensive and unchallenged promotion of the incumbent" (p. 19). Specifically, four of the five monitored TV stations (including public broadcaster) "favoured Mr. Erdoğan and the AKP, often covering them jointly and providing them and average of 50.4 per cent of the total news and current affairs airtime." The presidential candidate of the main opposition party, Mr. Ince, received 28.2 per cent coverage but "half of the news and current affairs dedicated to Mr. Ince was in a negative tone" (p. 19). Of paid advertising time on the public broadcaster (TRT1), 70 per cent was dedicated to Mr. Erdoğan and the AKP, 9 per cent to Mr. Ince and the CHP (main opposition party). A Haber, one of the most-watch private news channels, "did not broadcast paid advertisement of any contestants other than the incumbent and the ruling party" (p. 20).

Finally, I should note that the strategies of blame shifting and agenda setting are frequently employed by other electoral autocrats during economic downturns. As the Russian ruble slid 16 per cent against the US dollar in just two days of December 2014, for example, President Putin blamed "western aggression" for economic woes in a three-hour press conference.[7] Analysts have noted that his speech had a "fiercely patriotic" tone and that Putin

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[7]https://www.ft.com/content/ad07ef96-8685-11e4-9c2d-00144feabdc0

was careful to trumpet about the annexation of Ukraine's Crimea.[8] This strategy could be seen as very similar to what we considered in the experiment. Similar to Erdoğan, another target of blame for Putin was the country's Central Bank.[9]

It is possible to give further examples from speeches of Hungary's Orban[10] or Venezuela's Maduro[11] using similar strategies. In the case of Venezuela, a regional middle-size power just like Turkey, critics of the Maduro have accused him of stoking armed confrontation with Colombia repeatedly (at least three times in 2015, 2019 and 2021), with the goal of shaping domestic politics and diverting attention away from economic problems of the country, again pointing to the agenda setting mechanism.[12]

2   Information about the Survey

The sampling procedure for the survey starts with the use of Turkish Statistical Institute's (TUIK) NUTS-2 regions. NUTS-2 stands for 'Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics' which is a standard for dividing regional units for statistical purposes in Europe (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/nuts/background). The target sample was distributed according to each region's share of urban and rural population in accordance with current records of the Address Based Population Registration System (ADNKS). Next, TUIK's household block data were used with block size set at 400 residents. Twenty voters were targeted from each block and no substitution was used; the addresses were provided by TUIK. Selection of individuals in households is done on the basis of reported target population of 18 years or older in each household according to a lottery method. If for any reason that individual could not respond to our questions in our first visit, then the same household is visited up to three times until a successful interview is conducted and no substitution was applied. The interviews were conducted face-to-face in respondents' households by Frekans Research (www.frekans.com.tr) between 24 June and 2 August 2019.

The questionnaire used in the survey is approved by Koç University Committee on Human Research (Protocol no. 2017.127.IRB3.069). Participation in the survey was completely voluntary and participants were not offered any compensation. Informed consent was sought

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[8]https://www.france24.com/en/20141204-west-dismantle-russia-putin-national-address-economy

[9]https://tinyurl.com/fm9p5ca3

[10]https://www.euronews.com/2020/02/16/hungary-s-orban-lashes-out-at-slow-eu-growth-sinister-menaces-and-george-soros

[11]https://www.forbes.com/sites/kenrapoza/2019/02/15/maduro-blames-trump-for-venezuelas-great-depression/?sh=4e7ec2d24186

[12]See, e.g., https://www.dw.com/en/venezuela-and-colombia-border-tension-fuels-fear-of-armed-conflict/a-50465410, https://www.dw.com/en/venezuela-and-colombia-border-tension-fuels-fear-of-armed-conflict/a-50465410, https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210217-venezuela-s-maduro-vows-tough-response-to-colombian-commando-unit

at the initial contact with potential participants: interviewers communicated the researcher name and affiliation, the general purpose of the research, how the person was selected for the interview (randomly), how long on average the interviews last, assurance of anonymity of responses in analyses, that their participation is completely voluntary and that they could withdraw from the interview any time they want. The contact information of the researcher was also provided. The interviews proceeded only after getting the consent of potential participants.

As the survey included a vignette experiment, randomly selected subgroups of the sample were presented with different statements of politicians (and nonpartisan experts) about the state of the economy. Yet these statements constituted no deception: they were constructed using politicians' and pundits' actual statements and examples are provided in Part 1 of the appendix (further examples are available upon request).

Descriptive statistics of the sample are presented in Table A1 and covariate balance check across experimental groups is presented in Table A2.

Table A1: Descriptive statistics of the sample.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Female	2,027	0.52	0.50	0	1
Age	2,003	42.2	15.8	18	92
Education	2,019	3.3	1.5	1	6
Region	2,027	5.5	3.6	1	12
Kurdish	2,027	0.16	0.37	0	1
Religiosity	1,962	7.4	2.0	0	10
Unemployed	1,997	0.10	0.30	0	1
Urban	2,027	0.85	0.35	0	1

Note: Explanation of variables – *Education*: Highest level of education attained (1=no formal education, 2=primary, 3=secondary, 4=high secondary, 5=continuing college, 6=college). *Region*: NUTS-1 geographical regions indexed from 1 to 12. *Kurdish*: Coded 1 for individuals who can speak Kurdish, 0 for others. *Religiosity*: Respondents were asked to indicate how religious they considered themselves (0=not religious at all, 10=very religious). *Unemployed*: Coded 1 for individuals who are currently unemployed but are looking for a job/willing to work, 0 for others. *Urban*: coded 1 for urban residents, 0 for rural residents.

Table A2: Covariate balance check across experimental groups.

Variable	All Sample	Control	Treatment 1	Treatment 2	Treatment 3
Observations	2,027	257	262	250	250
Female	0.52	0.46	0.51	0.52	0.54
Age	42.2	41.7	42.6	43.3	42.3
Education	3.3	3.3	3.2	3.1	3.3
Region	5.5	5.5	5.6	5.4	5.5
Kurdish	0.16	0.18	0.16	0.16	0.16
Religiosity	7.4	7.5	7.5	7.4	7.4
Unemployed	0.10	0.11	0.10	0.11	0.08
Urban	0.85	0.87	0.85	0.87	0.85
Variable	**Treatment 4**	**Treatment 5**	**Treatment 6**	**Treatment 7**	***p-value***
Observations	256	249	252	251	N/A
Female	0.55	0.55	0.52	0.51	0.53
Age	41.9	40.5	42.3	43.3	0.56
Education	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.2	0.64
Region	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.4	0.99
Kurdish	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.17	0.99
Religiosity	7.3	7.5	7.4	7.4	0.91
Unemployed	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.09	0.93
Urban	0.84	0.84	0.85	0.84	0.98

Note: The p-values in the last column refer to an F-test of a regression model predicting the row variable from treatment assignment.

3   Treatment Vignettes and Outcome Questions

The vignettes used in different experimental groups are presented in Table A3.

Table A3: Vignettes used in different experimental groups.

Group	Vignette
Control	A salient issue on the economic agenda is the substantial increase in cost of living recently, that is, the increase in prices of many products and services.
1 - Incumbent blames foreign powers	[CONTROL] + Speaking on this matter, the chairman of the AKP and President Erdoğan said that the main reason for the increase in cost of living is originated abroad. Erdoğan pointed out that economic manipulations by foreign powers led to instability in Turkish economy and price increases.
2 - Experts blame foreign powers	[CONTROL] + Speaking on this matter, experts with no political affiliation said that the main reason for the increase in cost of living is originated abroad. Experts pointed out that economic manipulations by foreign powers led to instability in Turkish economy and price increases.
3 - Incumbent blames world economy	[CONTROL] + Speaking on this matter, the chairman of the AKP and President Erdoğan said that the main reason for the increase in cost of living is originated abroad. Erdoğan pointed out that developments in world economy led to price increases in many raw materials.
4 - Incumbent blames domestic institutions	[CONTROL] + Speaking on this matter, the chairman of the AKP and President Erdoğan said that the main reason for the increase in cost of living is the neglect of some institutions of their duties. Erdoğan pointed out that institutions like the Central Bank failed to take timely action.
5 - Incumbent highlights security concerns	[CONTROL] + Speaking on this matter, the chairman of the AKP and President Erdoğan said that Turkey and the region has been facing serious security challenges. Erdoğan pointed out that Turkey's struggle for survival is more important than increased cost of living.
6 - Experts highlight security concerns	[CONTROL] + Speaking on this matter, experts with no political affiliation said that Turkey and the region has been facing serious security challenges. Experts pointed out that Turkey's struggle for survival is more important than increased cost of living.
7 - Incumbent highlights security concerns (conspiratorial)	[CONTROL] + Speaking on this matter, the chairman of the AKP and President Erdoğan said that Turkey has been under economic and political attack by foreign powers that threaten the country's security. Erdoğan pointed out that Turkey's struggle for survival is more important than increased cost of living.

The wordings of outcome questions are presented in Table A4, and Figure A2 presents the distributions of control-group respondents' answers. The distributions of *Responsibility* and *Salience* are heavily skewed towards higher values with means of 7.3 and 8.0, respectively. The distribution of *Approval* is more evenly distributed with a mean of 3.7.

Table A4: Outcome questions of the experiment.

Outcome Variable	Question
Responsibility	When you consider the recent increase in cost of living, how responsible do you think is the government for this situation? Could you answer on a 0-10 scale where 0 means the government is "not responsible at all" and 10 "completely responsible"? [0–10 scale follows]
Salience	How important is increased cost of living for your political preferences if you consider it together with other problems facing Turkey? Could you answer on a 0–10 scale where 0 means increased cost of living is "not important at all" for your political preferences and 10 "very important"? [0–10 scale follows]
Approval	To what degree do you approve or disapprove government's economic policies dealing with increased cost of living? Could you answer on a 0–10 scale where 0 means that you "strongly disapprove" and 10 "strongly approve"? [0–10 scale follows]

Figure A2: Distribution of outcomes of interest in the control condition.
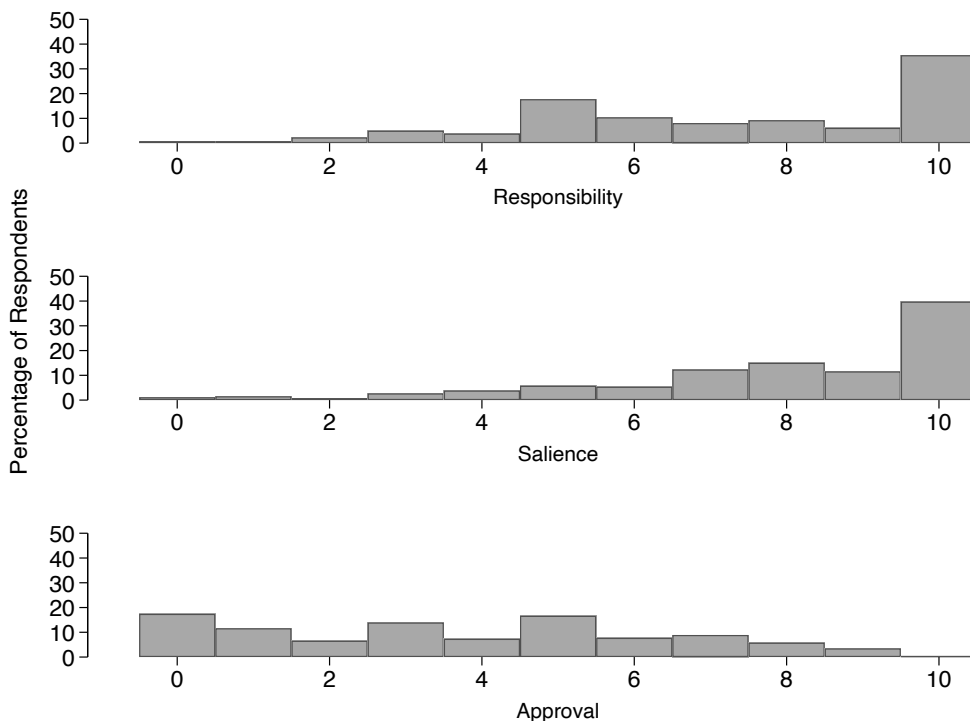
4 *Approval* Variable and Support for Incumbent

One of the outcome questions in the experiment, *Approval*, probed respondents to what degree they approved or disapproved government's economic policies dealing with increased cost of living. Here I present evidence from the survey that this *Approval* variable is a significant predictor for the overall approval of Erdoğan and voting for the AKP, even after accounting for several relevant factors.

One of the questions in the survey asked respondents to what degree they approved or disapproved Erdoğan in general on a 0-10 scale (0="strongly disapprove," 10="strongly approve"). Another question asked them to state which party they would vote for if there were a general election that day. In Table A5 I present models predicting *Erdoğan's Overall Approval* (model 1) and *Vote for the AKP* (model 2). Here I use only control-group respondents in the survey (*N*=262) because both the overall approval and vote choice questions preceded the experiment. In the models in Table A5 I rename the original *Approval* variable as *Approval (Economy)*.

In Table A5, we see that *Approval (Economy)* is a highly significant and substantively important predictor of both Erdoğan's overall approval and the likelihood of voting for the AKP. Recall that the models control for a number of socio-demographic factors, and perhaps more importantly, for AKP partisanship. In model (1), one-point increase (on a 0-10 scale) in respondents' approval of government's economic policies corresponds to 0.45-point increase (again on a 0-10 scale) in Erdoğan's overall approval on average. This effect increases to 0.85 points if we had not controlled for AKP partisanship. In model (2), a voter with value of *Approval* at its median (4) has about 17% probability of voting for the AKP if we keep other covariates at their mean values. This probability increases to 37% for voters with *Approval* at its 75th percentile (6) and to 82% for voters with highest level of *Approval* (10).

As such, there is a very close correspondence between our *Approval* outcome question in the experiment and overall approval of Erdoğan and electoral support for the AKP.

Table A5: Erdoğan's Overall Approval and Voting for the AKP – Control-group Respondents Only.

Outcome variable:	(1) Erdoğan's Overall Approval		(2) Vote for the AKP	
	Coef.	*SE*	Coef.	*SE*
Approval (Economy)	0.45***	(0.09)	0.51**	(0.17)
Female	0.43	(0.33)	−1.38*	(0.59)
Age	−0.01	(0.01)	−0.02	(0.03)
Education	−0.01	(0.12)	−0.08	(0.22)
Kurdish	−0.60	(0.59)	−2.33*	(0.98)
Religiosity	0.26**	(0.08)	0.19	(0.24)
AKP Partisan	4.12***	(0.48)	5.83***	(0.92)
Constant	0.77	(1.04)	−5.58*	(2.58)
R-squared	0.66		0.77	
Observations	231		238	

Note: Models (1) and (2) are OLS and logistic regressions, respectively. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. Models include regional fixed effects. Explanation of variables – *Education*: Highest level of education attained (1=no formal education, 2=primary, 3=secondary, 4=high secondary, 5=continuing college, 6=college). *Kurdish*: Coded 1 for individuals who can speak Kurdish, 0 for others. *Religiosity*: Respondents were asked to indicate how religious they considered themselves (0=not religious at all, 10=very religious). *AKP Partisan*: Respondents were asked whether they "felt close' to a political party; those who answered affirmatively and pointed to the AKP were coded 1, others were coded 0. $^*p < 0.05$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{***}p < 0.001$.

5   Experimental Results with Additional Controls

Table A6: Average treatment effects with additional controls.

| Outcome variable:	(1) Responsibility		(2) Salience		(3) Approval	
	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE
Incumbent–Blame–Foreign	−0.54**	(0.22)	−0.01	(0.19)	0.35	(0.24)
Experts–Blame–Foreign	−0.54**	(0.22)	0.06	(0.18)	0.20	(0.25)
Incumbent–Blame–Global	−0.13	(0.22)	0.05	(0.19)	0.14	(0.24)
Incumbent–Blame–Domestic	−0.23	(0.22)	0.20	(0.19)	−0.04	(0.24)
Incumbent–Security	−0.03	(0.22)	−0.68**	(0.20)	0.70**	(0.24)
Experts–Security	−0.29	(0.21)	−0.56**	(0.20)	0.64**	(0.24)
Incumbent–Security (Consp.)	−0.23	(0.22)	−0.46*	(0.21)	0.58*	(0.25)
Constant	7.39**	(0.34)	8.41**	(0.29)	3.49**	(0.38)
Observations	1,968		1,975		1,968	

Note: OLS regressions with robust standard errors in parentheses. Models include controls for gender, age, education levels, and regional fixed effects. Significance levels are based on FDR-controlled p-values. $^*p < 0.1$, $^{**}p < 0.05$.

6   Effects of Partisanship

To identify partisans in our sample, I asked respondents whether they feel close to a particular political party. Respondents who answered affirmatively were asked to name the party in a follow-up question.[13] I coded those who declared feeling close to the AKP and its ally (MHP) as government partisans (about 38% of the sample). Finally, those who declared feeling close to the main opposition CHP and its allies (IYI Parti and SP) are coded as opposition partisans (about 24% of the sample). Figure A3 plots the distribution of outcome questions for government and opposition partisans in the control condition. As expected, there is a significant partisan divergence in responsibility, salience, and approval evaluations. In comparison to opposition partisans, government partisans find the government substantially less responsible for the increase in cost living, consider the economy less important vis-à-vis other problems the country has been facing, and display higher levels of approval for government's economic policies.

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[13]Those who answered this question negatively are coded as independents (about 26% of the sample).

Figure A3: Distribution of outcomes of interest across partisan groups (control condition).
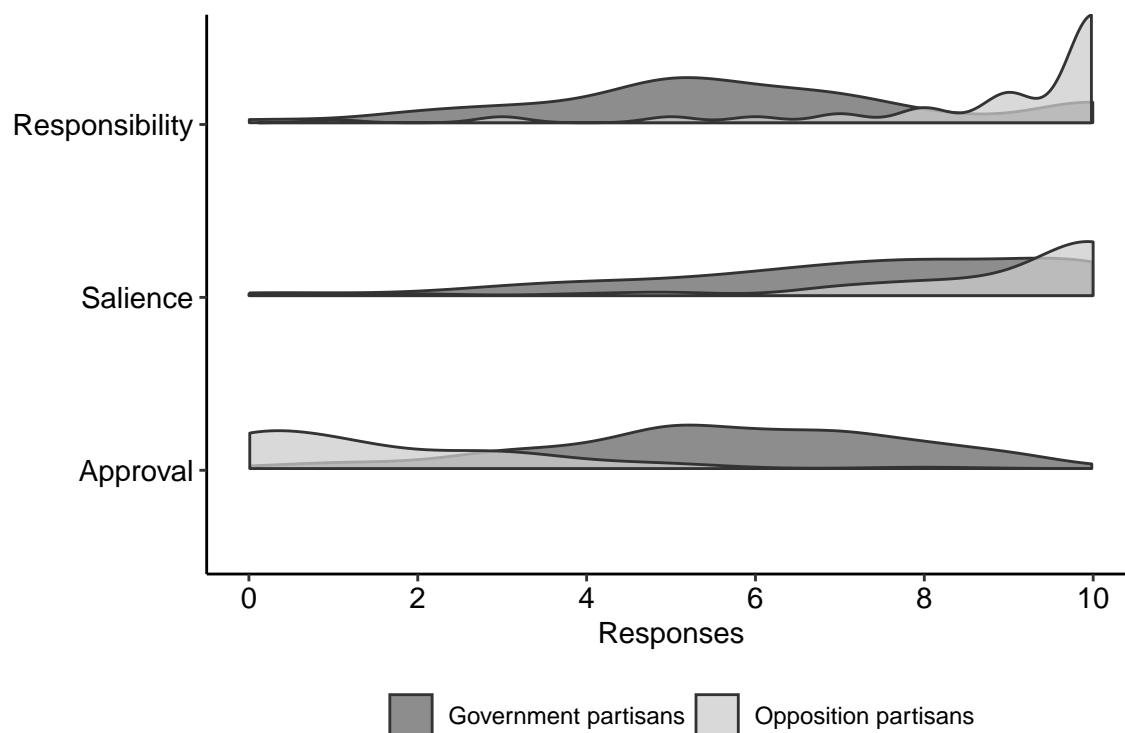
In Figure 1 in the main text, reproduced below as Figure A4, I present estimates of average treatment effects of manipulations on outcomes of interest for different subgroups of the sample. I am interested in three subgroups: those who identify themselves as partisans of the incumbent AKP and its ally MHP (*Government Partisans*, about 38% of the sample), partisans of the opposition alliance (*Opposition Partisans*, about 24% of the sample), and those who do not identify themselves as partisan of any party (*Independents*, about 26% of the sample).[14]

We observe a number of relevant patterns. First, government partisans reacted slightly stronger to statements by Erdoğan than those by the nonpartisan endorser, but the differences are small and we do not observe such an effect among other subgroups. Second, in none of the treatment groups do opposition partisans' perceptions of government responsibility, issue priority, or government approval exhibit a meaningful change compared to the control

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[14]These three groups make up about 88% of the sample. The remaining respondents are those who declined to give an answer to the partisanship question (about 8.5%) and those who identify themselves with the pro-Kurdish party HDP (about 3.5% of respondents). I did not include HDP partisans into opposition partisans in the analysis because HDP was not part of the formal electoral alliances formed in the latest general election in 2018. When I include HDP partisans as "Opposition partisans" in the analysis, my substantive results do not change. These results are available upon request.

group. That is, opposition partisans seem to be unresponsive to messages from both the incumbent and nonpartisan experts. This result might be a reflection of the high level of polarization in the country.

Second, earlier we had seen that the incumbent's blaming of foreign powers for economic difficulties (*Incumbent–Foreign Powers* treatment) led to a decline in perceptions of government responsibility in the crisis in the overall sample (in model (1) of Table 2 in the main text). The analysis by partisanship reveals that this decrease in responsibility attribution to government is driven by government partisans only. Government partisans in this treatment group also displayed higher levels of approval for government's policies, yet we do not see a similar effect among opposition partisans or independents.

In contrast, the effect of incumbent's emphasis on security concerns seems to have resonated among both government partisans and independents. When Erdoğan highlighted the security challenges the country have been facing and downplayed economic concerns (*Incumbent-Security* treatment), both government partisans and independent respondents considered the economy as less important compared to corresponding subgroups in the control condition. In addition, the positive effect of the agenda setting strategy of the incumbent on government approval is again observed among both government partisans and independents. We see a similar dynamic in the other two agenda setting treatments (*Experts-Security* and *Incumbent-Security (Consp.)* as well.

Figure A4: Average treatment effects by partisanship.
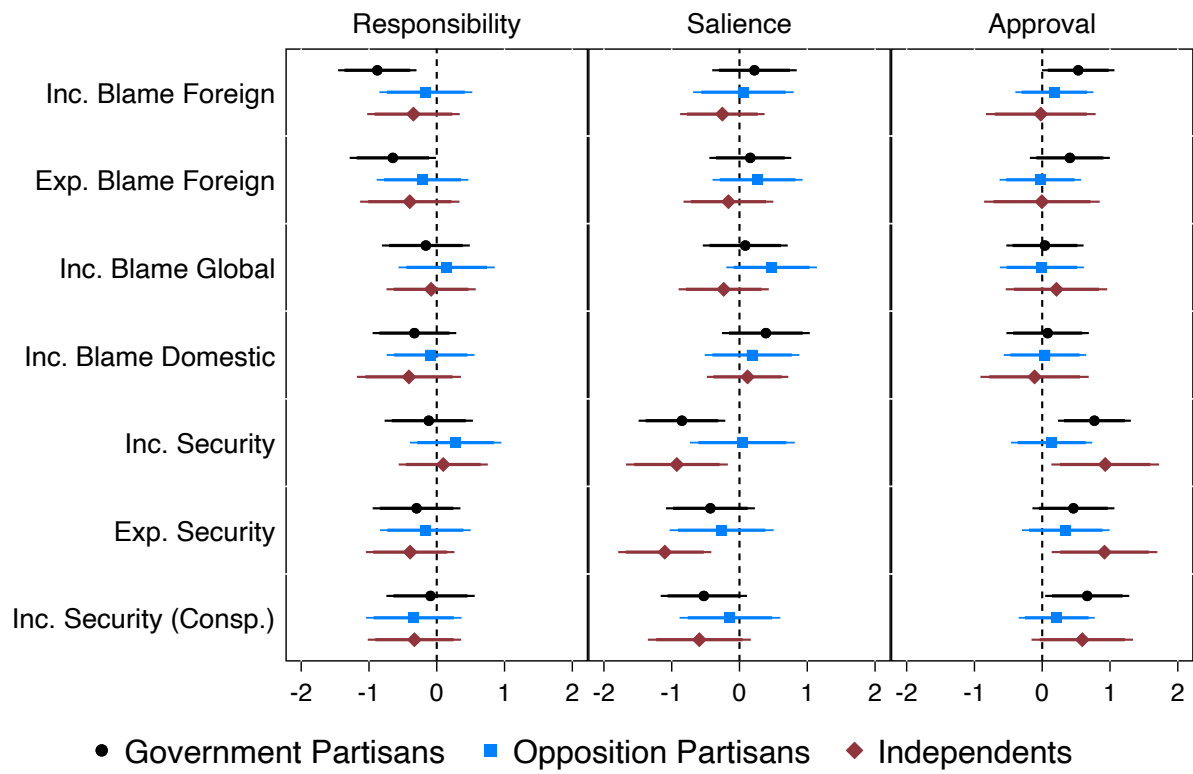
Note: Lines display 95% confidence intervals around the estimates.

References

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