

Emotions and Support for Executive Aggrandizement

Evidence from Turkey

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Few voters prefer an authoritarian regime to a democratic one. Yet, there is an alarming trend of autocratization across the world, facilitated by the consistent electoral support that incumbents with authoritarian ambitions enjoy. Why do voters support incumbents dismantling democratic institutions? This article focuses on the role of partisan emotions to reveal the dynamics of voter support for acts of autocratization. Relying on two different survey experiments conducted in Turkey, I demonstrate that partisan emotions, i.e. anger at the opposition party and enthusiasm for one's own party, can convince incumbent party voters to support acts of aggrandizement, without shifting their overall regime preferences.

1 Introduction

After a period of liberal hegemony, a new wave of autocratization has characterized world politics during the last decade (Lührmann & Lindberg, 2019). The dominant form of democratic decline during this last wave of autocratization, however, differs from previous waves. During the 20th century, most democratic breakdowns occurred through the coups organized by non-democratic actors, and especially the military. There were also instances in which incumbents organized self-coups, dissolving the parliament and postponing elections. In our age, on the other hand, democracies die slowly, in the hands of incumbents elected through free and fair elections. It is increasingly common to see elected incumbents gradually dismantling democratic institutions and turning democracies into competitive authoritarian regimes, a process defined as “executive aggrandizement” (Bermeo, 2016). Concerningly, many aggrandizers benefit from sustained electoral support during this process. As Turkey slowly slid into authoritarianism during the last decade, for example, Recep Tayyip Erdogan kept winning elections in Turkey by large margins. Between 2002 and 2017, his party won five general elections, three local elections, and three referendums. Each election victory meant approval for Erdogan’s authoritarian tactics, further emboldening him to attack democratic institutions.

Voter support during autocratization is puzzling, especially because authoritarianism diminishes these very voters’ power to influence political outcomes. A vast literature in political science, going back to Easton (1957)’s seminal work, considers support for democracy as a stable political value, assuming that democratic values will guide voters to vote against authoritarian leaders (for a review, see Mattes, 2018). Yet, there are no significant differences between countries that went through executive aggrandizement and others with regards to democratic values. In Turkey, for example, the World Values Survey conducted in 2012, when the country was going through a radical process of executive aggrandizement, found support for democracy at 77 %, which was on a par with established democracies surveyed in the same wave.¹ This is not only about the discursive appeal of the “D-word”. Even when scholars avoid abstract statements referring to “democracy”, and measure the committed support to the principle of power-sharing and vertical accountability, they find similar results. For example, through an analy-

¹Support for democracy was measured as the proportion of voters who answered the question “How important is it for you to live in a country that is governed democratically?” with a score of 8/10 or higher. This proportion was % 88 in Sweden % 84 in Germany, % 77 in Turkey, % 75 in Spain, % 73 in Chile, % 73 in South Korea, and % 72 in the United States.

sis of LAPOP surveys conducted between 2006 and 2012, de Jonge demonstrates that around 80 % of Latin American voters reject executive coups on courts and congress (Kiewiet de Jonge, 2016). In Venezuela, which was going through a radical process of executive aggrandizement during those years, 83.2 % of voters rejected executive coups on legislative branches.

A different strand of research posits that authoritarian systems enjoy genuine popular support as long as they can deliver material benefits to the citizens (Magaloni, 2006; Rose, Mishler, & Munro, 2011). There is a certain truth in this argument. It is no coincidence that the most successful aggrandizers of the last decade, i.e. Putin, Erdogan and Chavez, all built their popular support in the era of fast economic growth in early 2000s, and the economic recession during 2010s eroded their popularity to a certain extent (Greene & Robertson, 2019; Judah, 2013; Kalaycioğlu, 2008; Nadeau, Bélanger, & Didier, 2013). Still, popular support for these regimes survived economic crises, and significant aggrandizement occurred after the end of economic boom period. In the case of Turkey, for example, Erdogan supporters approved a constitutional referendum that changed Turkey’s parliamentary system into a hyper-presidential one in 2017 amid an ongoing economic crisis.

As the limitations of democratic values and economic voting have become clear, the attention has shifted towards “partisanship”. Analyzing the voter behavior during the above-mentioned 2017 constitutional referendum in Turkey, Aytac, Çarkoğlu, and Yıldırım (2017) find that partisanship largely explains voting behavior of the incumbent voters. Similarly, Ahlquist, Ichino, Wittenberg, and Ziblatt (2018) demonstrate that, through an experimental study in Hungary, voters follow partisan cues to decide how to vote in a constitutional referendum on changing the electoral law (also see, Graham & Svobik, 2019). These works are promising, but there are still a lot to explain. How and why do partisan ties explain voting for authoritarianism? Is this simply cue taking in an overly technical topic, as rationalist theories of partisanship suggests (Shively, 1979)? Or, does partisanship account for certain visceral processes affecting our reasoning? If it is the latter, how can parties have this power in quite young party systems (Converse, 1969)?

I believe that a focus on the role of emotions offers a promising avenue towards understanding why voters support aggrandizement. Emotions can be defined as “mental and physical responses to identifiable stimuli deemed consequential for individual or group objectives” (Miller, 2011, p. 577). The specific form of the emotional reaction emerges

based on the cognitive appraisal, such as threat perception, personal agency, and uncertainty. When we sense a threat, for example, we feel anger if we are certain about the source of the threat, and we feel fear if we are uncertain about its source or our ability to cope with it. In return, emotions inform individuals' reactions to the stimuli. Political psychologists have found that emotions have a significant effect on processing new information, and participating in politics (Brader & Marcus, 2013). Aware of the role that emotions play in politics, political campaigns frequently try to influence voters' emotions (Brader, 2005).

I argue that certain partisan emotions play a significant role during periods of aggrandizement by convincing incumbent voters to support authoritarian acts of the incumbent. Most incumbent voters, even in countries like Turkey and Venezuela, are supportive of the principle of democracy. They enjoy the power to choose who governs them, and they are skeptical of power-hungry leaders. Granted, they do not usually take seriously opposition protests about impending authoritarianism in the beginning. Yet, as the ruling party becomes increasingly blatant with authoritarian measures, even these voters show hesitation to support it. Emotions play a significant role during these moments of confusion of the incumbent voters. I argue that, anger at the opposition party and enthusiasm for the incumbent party convince incumbent voters to support aggrandizement, even if they are still against authoritarianism in principle.

The remaining part of this paper is formed of three sections. In the following two sections, I explore the impact of anger and enthusiasm on the behavior of incumbent supporters using two online survey experiments conducted in Turkey in Summer and Fall 2019. In the third section, I discuss broader implications of my findings.

2 Study 1: Partisan Anger Justifies Repression of the Opposition

2.1 The Role of Anger: Theory and Hypotheses

According to appraisal theories in political psychology, anger primarily arises from the appraisal of a harm inflicted upon the self by an intentional actor (Batson, Chao, & Givens, 2009; Hechler & Kessler, 2018). Blame attribution is central to the anger; research demonstrates that, for example, people are more likely to make causal judge-

ments about terrorist attacks when they are primed to feel anger, rather than sadness (Small, Lerner, & Fischhoff, 2006). As a result, angry individuals are more likely to take risks and confront the actor inflicting harm upon the self, with the goal of punishing or correcting the “unfair action”. Research demonstrates that angry individuals are more supportive of punitive policies (Hartnagel & Templeton, 2012; Johnson, 2009; García-Ponce, Young, & Zeitzoff, 2018), military campaigns (Cheung-Blunden & Blunden, 2008; Huddy & Feldman, 2011), and aggression during civil conflicts (Spanovic, Lickel, Denson, & Petrovic, 2010). Angry individuals are also more likely to rely on existing dispositions during their reasoning. In politics, this means that angry individuals will stick more closely to their partisan and ideological commitments (MacKuen, Wolak, Keele, & Marcus, 2010; Suhay & Erisen, 2018; Vasilopoulos, Marcus, Valentino, & Foucault, 2019).

In this study, I focus on partisan anger, i.e. anger felt at a political party. Partisan anger may derive from positive partisan identities; partisans are more likely to feel anger when they think that the rival party threatens their party’s electoral status (Huddy, Bankert, & Davies, 2018) or when their co-partisans are exposed to uncivil attacks from the rival party (Gervais, 2019). Yet, analyses of American election surveys demonstrate that it is also quite common to see the anger at one party as decoupled from strong attachment to another party (Groenendyk, 2018), a phenomenon that can be called as negative partisanship (Medeiros & Noël, 2014).

I argue that anger at the opposition party leads to support for aggrandizement in two different ways: convincing incumbent voters that the opposition party is used to violating democratic norms and generating a demand among incumbent voters for retribution against these violations.

To begin with the former, incumbent supporters become more likely to rely on the incumbent propaganda when they feel angry at the opposition party. Angry individuals are more likely to associate the out-group with negative character attributes (DeSteno, Dasgupta, Bartlett, & Cajdric, 2004), and they are more likely to be influenced by their existing identities (MacKuen et al., 2010). These effects matter during periods of executive aggrandizement, when the opposition parties protest about the incumbent attack on democracy and the incumbent tries to justify its authoritarian moves while still paying lip service to the norm of democracy. Anger at the opposition party leads incumbent voters to believe the incumbent propaganda and ignore opposition’s complaints.

Second, as incumbent voters believe that the opposition party violates norms and

harms their interests, they become more intolerant of opposition activities and more supportive of retributive measures. Anger is associated with the belief that the other party has violated a norm, and they deserve a punishment for this. Applying this to the context of autocratization, we can expect that angry incumbent supporters will be more supportive of government actions that will “punish” opposition actors.

I do not expect that anger at the opposition party will have a significant effect on regime preferences and support for authoritarian rule -including authoritarian rule by one’s own party. Political values are usually formed around abstract and general ideals. Judgements ensuing from partisan anger, on the other hand, are rather particular and contextual. Incumbent voters do not significantly change their regime preferences when they are angry; they only approve the punishment of a wrongdoing.

2.2 Data

In order to measure the impact of partisan anger on the behavior of incumbent voters, I conducted an online survey experiment in Turkey during June 2019. Turkey has been the scene of one of the most clear cases of executive aggrandizement during the last decade (Esen & Gumuscu, 2016; Bermeo, 2016). Under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) gradually dismantled democratic institutions and replaced them with a personalistic, authoritarian regime. The gradual autocratization of Turkey lasted for more than a decade, and facilitated by the consistent support of the AKP voters.²

Under the current hyper-presidential system of Turkey, the only remaining channel to meaningful political power for opposition parties is the mayorship of major cities. Local politics has become especially significant when the main opposition party, Republican People’s Party (CHP), won mayorships of both Istanbul and Ankara, two most important cities of Turkey, in the 2019 Turkish local elections, held on March 31. The election result was a shock for the ruling party, which had governed those cities for more than two decades. The especially dramatic one for the AKP was the defeat in Istanbul; the government candidate lost the election with a margin of 0.03 %. Rather than accepting the defeat, the AKP chose to force the Supreme Electoral Council to cancel

²The party never obtained less than 40 % of votes in a general election, and Erdogan won the presidential election twice, both times by getting more than 50 % of votes in first round. In the same vein, AKP voters approved two constitutional referendums, which radically changed Turkey’s institutional makeup, in 2012 and 2017.

the Istanbul election. The Supreme Electoral Council acquiesced to the AKP's pressure, and announced repeat elections in Istanbul to be held on June 23. Arguably, this was the AKP's most blatant attack on the democratic institutions in Turkey. By not recognizing the election result, the AKP was pushing the threshold between competitive authoritarianism and full authoritarianism.

My survey utilizes this unfortunate moment for Turkish democracy to study how partisan anger affects voter behavior. The survey was conducted right before the repeat election in Istanbul, between June 1 and June 21.³ All of the survey participants were incumbent supporters that were registered to vote in Istanbul. I define incumbent supporters as participants who had either voted for the incumbent party in the previous election or defined themselves as AKP partisans. Those who did not provide any of these conditions were filtered out.

To measure the support for aggrandizement, I first asked voters their attitudes towards the election cancellation:

- Do you think that the decision to cancel the March 31 election was correct and fair?

After this question, I asked respondents to rate these six statements on a scale extending from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree":

- CHP supporters should not be allowed to organize election campaign in my neighborhood.
- If the CHP wins the Istanbul election again, the election should be completely cancelled.
- Media organizations that constantly broadcast pro-CHP news should be shut down.
- If the CHP wins the next presidential election, they should not be allowed to govern the country.
- If he deems it necessary, the president should be allowed to cancel elections and rule the country without elections.
- When there is a national crisis, the president should be allowed to disband the Parliament and rule without the Parliament.

³I used the online opt-in panel of Next Generation, a public opinion research company based in Turkey. Unsurprisingly, compared to the population of the AKP supporters, survey participants are more educated, have higher income, and more partisan. I control for these variables in all the analyses conducted in this paper.

As it can be seen, these statements are ordered in terms of their abstractness and harshness. First two statements include limited measures against the CHP, and they are only relevant for the context of repeat elections. Third and fourth statements include more radical and broader measures against the CHP. They are no more limited to Istanbul elections. Finally, last two statements are the the most abstract ones. The last one is the statement used to measure authoritarian preferences in LAPOP surveys. Importantly, the order of the statements has been randomized for survey participants.

The independent variable is anger at the opposition party. I used self-writing tasks to manipulate anger, a method becoming increasingly common among political psychologists (Erisen, 2018). Two hundred participants were randomly assigned to two groups: anger and control. In order to induce anger, I asked respondents in the treatment group to write what makes them angry at the CHP or CHP supporters. Participants in the control group were instructed to write what they do to relax; the goal here was to create an emotion-free atmosphere for these participants. After the treatment, all participants answered the same questions. At the end of the survey, I asked respondents how they feel towards the CHP and the AKP to check whether the treatment has been successful.

2.2.1 Manipulation Check

To begin with, the anger treatment has been effective to stimulate anger at the opposition party, as it can be seen from Table 1.

Table 1: Manipulation Check

	CHP-Anger	CHP-Anger (w. controls)	CHP-Fear	CHP-Fear (w. controls)	AKP-Enthusiasm	AKP-Enthusiasm (w. controls)
Treatment: Anger to CHP	0.694*	0.874**	0.123	0.207	0.130	0.166
Base: <i>Daily Routine</i>	(0.021)	(0.004)	(0.641)	(0.460)	(0.631)	(0.499)
<i>N</i>	202	183	202	183	202	183

p-values in parentheses: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Controls are age, education, income, gender, and partisanship strength. Dependent variable ranges from 1 to 7.

Participants exposed to the anger treatment felt significantly more anger at the CHP. Importantly, the groups did not differ with regards to other partisan emotions, i.e. enthusiasm for the AKP and fear from the CHP.

To get a better grasp of the sample, I analyzed what respondents wrote about the CHP. I do not expect this exercise to provide inferences representative of the population of AKP voters, but it can still be informative for interpreting findings of this survey. To begin with, twenty respondents told that they did not feel anger at the CHP: they had

some disagreements but these did not amount to “anger”. This is close to the finding in a representative survey that 30 % of the AKP supporters in Istanbul do not feel anger towards the CHP (Erdogan, Kemahlioglu, Moral, Kalaycioglu, & Toros, 2019).

The analysis of the remaining eighty respondents reveals three distinct sources of the anger at the CHP. On the one hand, a group of respondents complain about CHP’s and CHP supporters’ negative attitudes towards religious voters and religion. These answers reflect the secular-Islamist social cleavage in Turkey, and fit with the definition of “negative partisanship” (Medeiros & Noël, 2014). Secondly, there is a group of respondents who complain about the opposition style of the CHP, depicting its leaders as liars who oppose every positive step the AKP takes. Most of these responses include positive references to the AKP and Recep Tayyip Erdogan as well. The anger of these voters seems to be derivative of their positive feelings towards the AKP. As CHP leaders criticize the AKP’s policies, these partisans feel threatened and insulted. Finally, there is a third group of responses, in which respondents accuse the CHP with affiliation with “terrorist groups,” mainly with reference to the Kurdish political movement of Turkey. This discourse has been frequently used by Erdogan during the campaign period to demonize the CHP (Esen & Gumuscu, 2019); seemingly, it has been successful to a certain extent.

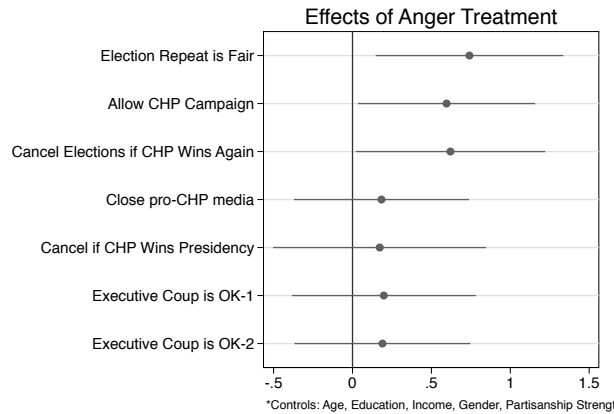
2.3 Findings

I use ordered logistic regression to test the effect of anger treatment on support for seven different statements. The range of the dependent variable extends from zero for “strongly disagree” to four for “strongly agree.” Figure 1 presents results from the analysis.

To begin with, angry partisans are more likely to believe that it was fair to repeat elections. This finding is quite interesting in itself given the timing of the survey. After March 31, Turkey was completely focused on Istanbul elections. Endless recounts lasted more than a month, and parties started their election campaigns immediately after the announcement of election repeat. In this context, we would expect that voters had already developed strong opinions. Even under these circumstances, however, anger treatment had an impact on the perception of fairness of election cancellation.

When we look at the remaining six statements, we see that the anger treatment has a significant impact on the first two of them, but not others. First two statements are directly about Istanbul elections, and include milder measures of repression, compared to

Figure 1: Effects of Anger on Support for Executive Aggrandizement and Executive Coup



others. Remaining statements, and especially the last two ones, are abstract and general, better reflecting preferences for an authoritarian rule. Thus, it seems that, anger does not lead to a general support for authoritarianism. This is not necessarily relieving news, however; after all, aggrandizers do not need principled support for authoritarianism to establish an authoritarian regime. Rather, what they need is a group of voters that may lend them support at critical moments. This is how executive aggrandizement works, and this analysis demonstrates that this is exactly what anger does.

3 Study 2: Partisan Enthusiasm Keeps Incumbent Supporters In Line

In this section, I focus on the other part of the story: partisan enthusiasm. As the scholarly community has largely been preoccupied with the increasing partisan hostility, which reveals itself through anger, negative partisanship, and incivility, we tend to ignore positive emotions, which seem less potent and less threatening. Yet, partisan enthusiasm characterizes many of the aggrandizing regimes as much as partisan anger does (e.g., see Havlík & Voda, 2018; Love & Windsor, 2018; Montiel & Uyheng, 2020). This section demonstrates that partisan enthusiasm also plays a significant role during periods of executive aggrandizement. Incumbent voters who feel stronger enthusiasm for the ruling party become more supportive of acts of executive aggrandizement; when they lose their

enthusiasm, they become more critical.

3.1 The Role of Enthusiasm: Theory and Hypotheses

Enthusiasm is aroused when there is a stimuli indicating that a goal has been met or will be met. Feeling of enthusiasm informs us that the current environment is rewarding. As a result, enthusiastic individuals tend to follow their existing predispositions. When they process a message, they rely more on the source of the message rather than its content (Lerner, Li, Valdesolo, & Kassam, 2015; Marcus, Neuman, & MacKuen, 2000).

Some sources of political enthusiasm can be listed as the enactment of desired policies, the lead ones party has in the polls, the smile of a charismatic politician, or the use of uplifting music in campaign advertising (Brader & Marcus, 2013; Huddy et al., 2018). When partisans feel enthusiasm, their party identities play a more significant role during opinion formation (Brader, 2005), and they participate more in politics to support their parties (Valentino, Brader, Groenendyk, Gregorowicz, & Hutchings, 2011). These effects are the same with those of anger, yet the existing literature usually finds that enthusiasm has weaker effect sizes compared to anger (Suhay & Erisen, 2018; Valentino et al., 2011).

In this study, I argue that incumbent voters become more likely to support executive aggrandizement when they feel enthusiastic about the incumbent party. This is simply because partisans feel more confidence in their party at those moments, hence pay less attention to counter-arguments during their reasoning. Even though opposition parties protest against aggrandizement, these protests fall on deaf ears, and they fail to influence the opinion of incumbent voters. When incumbent supporters feel less enthusiasm, on the other hand, they go through a more critical process of reasoning, and become more open to opposition arguments.

3.2 Data

In order to test the influence of partisan enthusiasm during periods of executive aggrandizement, I conducted another online survey experiment in Turkey in October 2019. By that time, the opposition candidate had won the repeat election in Istanbul, yet, there were rumors that the government could remove opposition mayors of Istanbul and Ankara through legal means, a tactic the government has frequently used against Kurdish mayors during the last few years. Erdogan and the Interior Minister Suleyman

Soylu repeatedly threatened opposition mayors of Ankara and Istanbul with removal.⁴ Thus, as the main dependent variable in this study, I asked respondents whether they supported the removal of Istanbul and Ankara mayors.

In order to manipulate partisan enthusiasm, I again used self-writing tasks. There are some important differences between this study and Study 1, however. There are three different treatment groups in this study: enthusiasm, anger, anxiety. Unlike the previous study, I did not mention party names in any of the treatment conditions; instead, I asked participants to write down what made them enthusiastic/angry/anxious about the political and economic situation in Turkey. In addition to these, I formed two control groups: political and non-political. For the former, I asked participants to write down what they thought about the current situation of Turkish politics. In the second control group, I told participants to write down a regular day of theirs. This design aims to provide a stronger understanding of the causal mechanisms at work. Five hundred participants, who were either voters of the AKP or partisans of the AKP, were randomly assigned to each of these groups.

In order to give participants a chance to think thoroughly on the issue and to follow how their decision changes as they think more, each respondent was asked twice about their support to the removal of opposition mayors. First, right after they were exposed to the treatment, second, after they read eight different statements on this issue. Four of these eight statements defended the removal of mayors, while the other half criticized. As explained above, we would expect enthusiastic voters to stick to their partisan identities both the first time and the second time. On the other hand, partisans that are not enthusiastic should be more likely to change their minds.

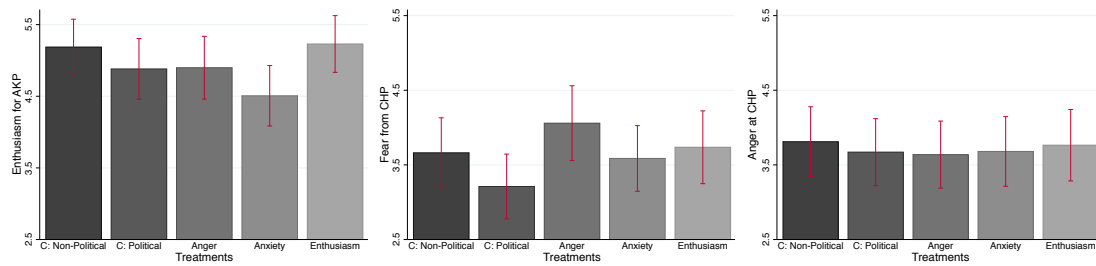
3.2.1 Manipulation Checks

To check whether treatments worked as intended, I asked respondents, at the end of the survey, to what extent they feel enthusiastic for the AKP, angry at the CHP, and afraid of the CHP, on a scale from one to seven. Results are visually presented in Figure 2 with error bars.

To start with, none of the treatments created a significant change across levels of anger at the CHP. To remind, differently from the first study on anger, I did not ask respondents what made them angry at the CHP; instead, participants wrote down what

⁴<https://www.voanews.com/europe/crisis-looms-erdogan-targets-istanbul-mayor>

Figure 2: Levels of Enthusiasm at AKP, Fear from CHP and Anger at CHP



made them angry about the Turkish politics. Apparently, anger about the political and economic situation of the country does not directly prime negative emotions towards the main opposition party. Interestingly, anger about the situation of the country led to increased fear from the CHP.

When we compare levels of enthusiasm, located on the left-hand side of the Figure 2, we see statistically significant changes across treatment groups. Surprisingly, however, enthusiasm treatment is not the primary source of the variation across levels of enthusiasm. Enthusiasm levels are same for the enthusiasm and non-political-control groups, while lower in all other groups (political-control, anger, and anxiety). I believe that this implies a ceiling effect: AKP partisans hold strong positive feelings towards their party even when they are not primed to think about political issues. When they think about the current political situation of the country, however, their level of enthusiasm erodes. The most significant drop occurs among the voters in the anxiety condition. Participants in the anxiety condition feel significantly less enthusiastic towards the AKP, compared to voters in the political control condition, non-political control condition, and the enthusiasm condition.

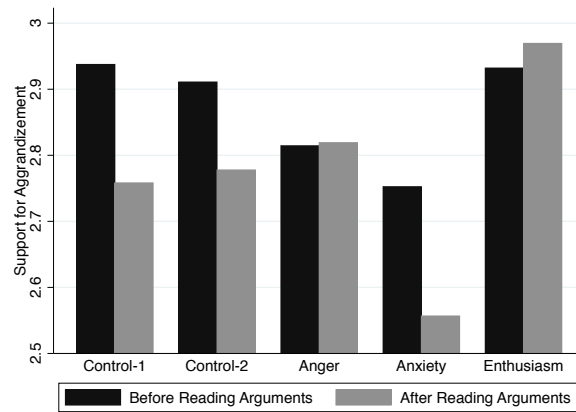
To get a better idea of the data, I analyzed the content of written responses to treatment questions. In the enthusiasm condition, around twenty of the respondents did not provide an enthusiastic answer; half of them explicitly said that there was nothing to be enthusiastic about Turkey’s current condition. Most of the remaining eighty respondents, on the other hand, responded with partisan themes: Erdogan’s leadership, material services provided by the AKP, and AKP supporters’ mobilization against the coup attempt in 2016. Finally around twenty participants responded with nationalist themes, such as Turkey becoming a leader country in the world or Turkey’s “victories” in the “war against terror” in Syria. Respondents in anxiety and political-control groups provided quite a different content; economic problems predominated both. In the anx-

iety condition, around sixty of all respondents complained about economic problems, while twenty respondents were worried about the war in Syria and the refugee issue. In the political control group, most respondents were critical about the situation in the country.

3.3 Findings

First, let’s compare how support for the removal of opposition mayors varies across treatment groups and the two times the question was asked. To remind, all respondents answered this question twice: right after the treatment and after reading four supportive and four critical statements about the issue. Figure 4 demonstrates the mean values that the dependent variable takes across all these conditions. The scale of the dependent variable extends from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree).

Figure 4: Effects of Emotions on Support for Executive Aggrandizement

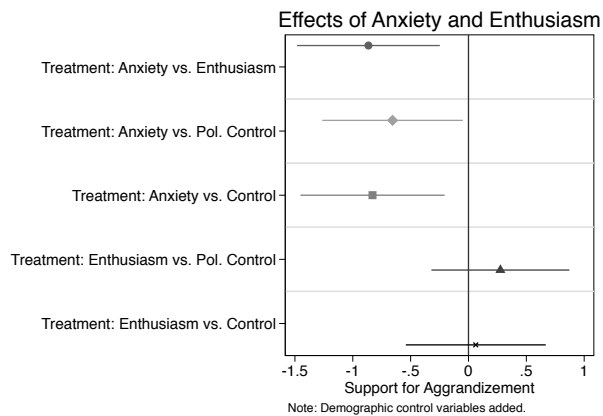


The figure reveals that those in the anxiety condition demonstrate lowest levels of approval for executive aggrandizement, both after the first question and after they read supportive and critical arguments. In control conditions, initial levels of support are close to the enthusiasm condition, yet partisans in these groups diverge from the partisans in the enthusiasm condition when they read arguments on the issue. Participants in the control conditions change their minds and become more critical while participants in the enthusiasm condition become even more supportive. This is in line with the argument that enthusiastic, and angry, voters closely follow their existing predispositions during reasoning. The difference between the enthusiasm condition and two control conditions,

regarding the change between the first answer and the second answer, is statistically significant, with a p value of 0.024.

Are the final differences across treatment groups statistically significant, and is it really about the changing levels of enthusiasm? In order to answer these questions, I first conduct an ordered logit regression. Below, Figure 5 compares levels of statistical significance for five different pairs of treatment groups. These pairs are listed on the left-hand side of the coefficient plot. To be clear, these are not variables in the same model; each represents the explanatory variable of a different model.

Figure 5: Effects of Treatment Groups on Support for Executive Aggrandizement



To start with, on the top of five pairs is the effect of the anxiety treatment when compared to the enthusiasm treatment. This is the model in which the difference becomes most clear. The effect is similarly significant when each of two control conditions are chosen as the base condition to the anxiety treatment. There is no such effect, on the other hand, when control conditions are used as the base condition to the enthusiasm treatment. As I have demonstrated above, there is no significant difference across the enthusiasm treatment and control conditions regarding the level of partisan enthusiasm.

First three models are significant; but are these effects really mediated by enthusiasm, as argued above? This question is especially crucial because I use the anxiety condition to make arguments about the effects of the enthusiasm.

Table 2 presents the proportion of effects mediated by partisan enthusiasm in the first three models. Results demonstrate that enthusiasm mediates these effects to a significant degree, ranging between 25 % and 39 %. Once we control for the partisan enthusiasm, the relationship between treatments and outcomes falls below the conventional level of

statistical significance in all three models.

Table 2: The mediation of treatment effects by enthusiasm for the AKP

		Coefficient	p value
Treatment: Anxiety-Enthusiasm			
	Total Effect	-0.23	0.005**
	Direct Effect	-0.14	0.078
	Mediated by Enthusiasm	-0.09	0.011*
	Proportion	0.39	
Treatment: Anxiety-Control (Pol.)			
	Total Effect	-0.16	0.039*
	Direct Effect	-0.12	0.11
	Mediated by Enthusiasm	-0.04	0.085
	Proportion	0.25	
Treatment: Anxiety-Control (Non-Pol.)			
	Total Effect	-0.18	0.018*
	Direct Effect	-0.013	0.108
	Mediated by Enthusiasm	-0.06	0.033*
	Proportion	0.33	

Note: Controls (age, gender, education, income, partisanship strength) are added.

To summarize, Study 2 demonstrates that when partisans lose their enthusiasm for the incumbent party, they become less supportive of the executive aggrandizement. Below, I discuss this finding from a broader perspective.

4 Discussion and Conclusion

Incumbent supporters may support acts of autocratization even when they reject authoritarianism in principle. As the AKP's authoritarian agenda becomes more blatant, it becomes harder for the AKP voters to turn their faces away. Authoritarian steps like election cancellation force the AKP voters to decide: will they approve the consolidation of power at the hands of Erdogan and his family? Emotions play a significant role at these moments of confusion of the incumbent voters.

When voters are angry at the opposition party, they become more likely to support authoritarian measures. The AKP voters in the anger treatment group recalled how the seculars in the country had repressed their freedom and how CHP supporters looked

down upon them. After recalling these events, they felt anger at the CHP, which made them to believe the AKP propaganda that the CHP had stolen the Istanbul election on March 31. While they still did not approve an authoritarian regime in the country, they became more supportive of measures to repeat elections. Thus, provoking anger at the opposition party helped the AKP to overcome resistance to authoritarianism among AKP voters. Enthusiasm at the ruling party leads to similar results. Our findings from the second study demonstrate that incumbent voters become critical of executive aggrandizement when they think about the problems in the country and lose their enthusiasm for the AKP. As a result, these voters adopted a more critical position about the executive aggrandizement.

It can be argued that these findings repeat what previous research has already demonstrated. For example, we knew that authoritarian regimes that can deliver material benefits had legitimacy in the eyes of vast portions of the people (Magaloni, 2006; Rose et al., 2011), and voters in democracies were willing to let the president bypass the legislature and court when they think that the economy was strong (Singer, 2018). Yet, taking emotions into account, rather than limiting ourselves to the study of material conditions, significantly broadens our perspective. Emotions are responsive to various kinds of stimuli besides material conditions. Most importantly, leaders spend a lot of time and energy to manipulate anger and enthusiasm (McDermott, 2018), and this is especially the case in aggrandizing regimes. Love and Windsor (2018) demonstrate that Chavez' discourse was filled with appeals evoking enthusiasm and anger. In most of his speeches, Erdogan aims to inflame feelings of his supporters; famously, he once defended his rhetorical style saying that the anger was an oratorical art.⁵ Manipulative power of authoritarian leaders becomes especially strong when they can control the media environment in their countries. As this research demonstrates, Erdogan's charismatic leadership and Turkey's increasingly assertive foreign policy are associated with enthusiasm for many supporters of the ruling party, distracting attentions away from the problems of the country. Turkish politics is also filled with partisan anger. A research conducted before the repeat election in Istanbul found that 70 % of AKP voters in Istanbul felt anger at the opposition candidate, while 69 % of opposition voters felt anger at Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Like all other experiments, experiments in this study primarily talk about their own

⁵<http://www.gazetevatan.com/ofke-de-hitabet-sanati-161818-siyaset/>

contexts. Emotional reactions are built on enduring goals, expectations, and narratives (Phoenix, 2019). Turkey is currently one of the most affectively polarized countries in the world (Lauka, McCoy, & Firat, 2018). Origins of affective polarization in Turkey can be traced back to the historical social cleavage around secularism and religion (Sommer, 2019), increased politicization of state resources (Laebens & Ozturk, 2020), and charismatic ties between Erdogan and the AKP voters. The current intensity of the affective landscape in Turkey makes it easier to evoke consequential emotional reactions from voters. I believe that this experimental design would produce weaker results in a context not characterized by a similar level of affective politics.

It is also important to consider limitations to the discursive power of incumbents to sustain these effects. Emotions do not last forever; human beings are quite capable at regulating their emotions and adjusting their expectations. Arguably, partisan anger can reproduce itself to a certain extent, through the incivility of partisan groups towards each other; this is especially the case when partisanship is rooted in deep social cleavages. A significant portion of the AKP supporters in our sample were angry at the CHP because of the behavior of CHP partisans. Yet, the CHP's political strategy during the last few years has been decreasing polarization in the country; the slogan of the opposition candidate in the Istanbul election was "radical love" (Esen & Gumuscu, 2019). In such an environment, the incumbent may find it difficult to sustain partisan anger forever.

It may be even harder to sustain enthusiasm for a long period. Building a bright vision for the future, economic development, domestic political victories and an aggressive foreign policy may help the incumbent to gain enthusiastic support from voters. However, enthusiasm eventually ebbs away as people adjust their expectations accordingly. For example, Greene and Robertson (2019) demonstrate that the annexation of Crimea by the Russian state created an enthusiasm boost in Russia, significantly improving Putin's approval ratings. Yet, even the effects of this major event lasted for two years, and then completely evaporated. In the meantime, however, these emotionally intense periods open a window of opportunity for authoritarian leaders to consolidate their power.

Finally, we should also be careful not to conclude that emotions usually leads to democratic decline and a calm and dispassionate form of politics is needed to sustain the democratic equilibrium. To the contrary, opposition parties need to evoke enthusiasm and anger among their supporters especially under competitive authoritarian regimes. These emotions can substitute for the lack of material resources and help mobilizing people against the emerging authoritarian rule. In fact, opposition parties won local

elections in Istanbul and Ankara, despite the AKP's widespread use of state resources, mainly because they could imbue voters with a sense of enthusiasm, as a result of which thousands of opposition voters voluntarily worked on the election day to prevent election fraud.

To summarize, as we consider the role of emotions during periods of executive aggrandizement, we need to take into account the interaction between contextual factors and political agency. This article, in this sense, offers a beginning point.

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