Pre-analysis plan for: "The political costs of democracy violations: Evidence from a high-performing democracy"

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June 1, 2022

1 Aims and background

While democracy is currently under pressure in many countries across the globe, some democracies, such as Norway, are still considered highly robust. For instance, insights from regional, global and national surveys (such as World Values Survey) suggest that stated support for democracy is exceptionally strong among Norwegian respondents. Yet, a measure of stated support for democracy, or associated attitudes, may not capture citizens' genuine commitments to democratic principles. For instance, it could merely capture positive associations with the word "democracy", without a sufficient understanding of its substantive content or a deep normative commitment to democratic principles. In real life, individuals also face trade-offs between democratic principles and policy preferences. As a result, stated support for democracy may not translate into actual behaviour to defend or protect democracy if push comes to shove.

Analysing the United States, Graham and Svolik (2020) highlights how shallow individual commitments to democracy currently are (see also (Carey et al., 2020)). In brief, they find that American citizens are willing to trade off democratic principles for other policy gains when deciding between different political candidates running for office. This finding yields important insights into citizens (lack) of democratic commitments in a democracy under pressure (the United States), but we know less about how this plays out in democratic "posterchild" countries, where democracy is (considered) deeply consolidated and (currently) very safe, such as Norway. We also lack an understanding of why some individuals are more likely to trade off democratic principles than others. On this background Norway is selected as a "least-likely-case", to understand whether democratic commitments may vary even in one of the world's most stable and high-quality democracies.

We conduct a survey experiment among Norwegian citizens, to tease out how deeply rooted commitments to democracy really are in Norway, and under what conditions citizens will weigh them lower than other policies and principles they want to see realized in politics. We present respondents with a choice between hypothetical political candidates running for political office. The candidates are described in a series of choice-vignettes containing information about several experimentally manipulated attributes, including background characteristics (gender, occupational background, age etc.), political experience, party affiliation and policy preferences. Regarding policies, we focus on issues that map onto some of the most important dimensions of political competition in Norway (cf. e.g. Aardal and Bergh (2022)) , such as preferences for immigration policies,taxes, highway toll charges (a contentious issue in Norway), trans-rights and climate change. To gauge commitments to democracy, a selection of respondents are presented with candidates that violate some democratic institution or norm, for instance by expressing a willingness to ban public demonstrations, restrict freedom of expression or override the Norwegian Parliament (Stortinget). We will then consider the extent to which violations of democratic norms lead to reduction in support for these

candidates, averaged over other candidate-traits (such as e.g. party-afiliation) and whether respondents are willing to sacrifice democratic principle to secure preferences on policy issues they feel strongly about.

2 Overall research questions

The main questions we will investigate are:

- Do candidates' stated support for violations of democratic principles reduce voter support?
- Is this effect larger in Norway than in the United States (Graham and Svolik, 2018)?
- How much does democracy position matter relative to candidate traits such as policy positions, gender, partisanship, political experience?
- Does voter willingness to punish democratic violations vary with background factors such as education, profession or partisanship?
- Are respondents more likely to punish violations of some «models of democracy», such as liberal democracy, electoral democracy or participatory democracy?
- Are democracy violations punished less when they are done *to serve* a policy position, in contrast to when it is an incidental candidate-feature?

3 Design and sample

We conduct a candidate-choice conjoint survey experiment on a nationally representative sample. Respondents (naturally) get questions in Norwegian, but they are translated into

english in this pre-analysis plan. For most hypotheses, we will estimate the Average Marginal Component effect, for each component (value) of a candidate attribute.

Sample: Through YouGov, we collect a nationally representative sample of 2000 respondents. These are selected following YouGov's standard procedures and take part in an online survey on YouGov's platform.

Background questions: All respondents will first answer a set of background questions. 13 in total, including gender, age, education, household income, number of children, marital status, social media use, occupation, personal income, household status, whether the respondent lives in a town, city (urban) or village, and what they would vote in the next election.

Political preference questions: After the background questions, we ask a number of questions about political positions. We ask about respondents' degree of agreement with all significant political parties in Norway, whether they rate it as important to live in a democracy, which aspects of democracy they consider important, corresponding to different conceptions of democracy (free elections, free speech, independent courts, deliberation etc.). Then we ask about their views on a number of political issues, which will also appear in the conjoint. We ask whether they want to reduce or increase: Toll charges, immigration, wealth taxes, and oil production. We also ask about their views on transgender people's access to choose whether they want to use women's or men's bathrooms. Finally, we ask about respondents' views on what is important to teach children, corresponding to the "liberal values/authoritarianism" scale from (Norris and Inglehart, 2019): Independence or respect for elders, obedience or care, curiosity or good behavior.

Candidate choice experiment: After answering the set of background questions and political preference questions described above, respondents will participate in either of two conjoint experiments. Both conjoints present respondents with a set of binary choices between hypothetical political candidates, where they will be asked to select the candidate

Figure 1: Example from YouGov survey

YouGov

	Politiker 1	Politiker 2
Lokal- eller rikspoltiker	rikspolitiker	rikspolitiker
Alder	65 år	35 år
Kjønn	Mann	Kvinne
Parti	Kristelig folkeparti	Miljøpartiet de grønne
Yrkesbakgrunn/politisk erfaring	Jurist	Tidligere rørlegger
Politisk standpunkt 1	Vil øke bompengene	Vil senke antall flyktninger Norge tar imot
Politisk standpunkt 2	Vil redusere norsk olje og gassutvinning	Vil ikke la transpersoner kunne velge om de vil benytte dame eller herregarderober
Nylig politisk uttalelse	I et nylig radiointervju uttalte kandidaten at «for å løse viktige samfunnsutfordringer kan det noen ganger være nødvendig at den sittende regjeringen gjennomfører politikk som stortingsflertallet er mot»	I et nylig radiointervju var kandidaten ikke villig til å ta avstand fra en partikollega, som hadde sagt at en politisk motstander «fortjener litt god gammeldags juling»

that they find most appealing. The text each respondent gets is: "Here we will ask you to choose the politician that appeals most to you", and then they get choice-cards like the one in figure 1:

All candidates are (randomly) assigned age, gender, party and occupation (former teacher, former plumber, former lawyer, or MP). Then the two conjoints differ.

Conjoint 1 is given to 70% of respondents (1400), and it contains the following three attributes:

- **Political position 1 (Polpos1)** (6 values): *The candidate wants to:*
  - *Increase the wealth tax nationally*
  - *Lower the wealth tax nationally*
  - *Receive more refugees to Norway*
  - *Reduce the number of refugees Norway receives*
  - *Increase toll charges*
  - *Reduce toll charges*

- **Political position 2 (Polpos2)** (5 values): *The candidate wants to:*
  - *Reduce Norwegian oil and gas extraction*
  - *Maintain norwegian oil and gas extraction at current levels*
  - *Let transgender people be able to choose whether they want to use women's or men's bathrooms*
  - *Do not allow transgender people to choose whether they want to use women's or men's bathrooms*
- **Democracy violation (demviol1)** (6 values):
  - *In a recent radio interview, the candidate was not willing to distance himself from a party colleague, who had said that a political opponent "deserves some good old-fashioned beating"*
  - *In a recent radio interview, the candidate stated that "in order to solve important societal challenges, it may sometimes be necessary for the current government to implement policies that the parliamentary majority is against"*
  - *In a recent radio interview, the candidate stated that "some political opinions are so harmful to society that demonstrations for them should not be allowed."*
  - *In a recent radio interview, the candidate stated that "in order to solve the most important societal challenges, it may sometimes be necessary to implement policies that violate the Constitution."*
  - *In a recent radio interview, the candidate commented on revisions to the Procurement Act*
  - *In a recent radio interview, the candidate commented on new public administration models*

- The first four values on this variable are "democracy-violations" while the last two are "neutral" statements.

Conjoint 2 is given to 30% of respondents (600), who will get a statement attribute with the following values (where 50% are case-specific democracy-violations, and 50% will get case-specific statements that are "neutral" without democracy-violations:

- **Case-specific democracy-violations:** (16 values): *The candidate claimed in a radio interview:*
  - *The fight against discrimination against transgender people is so important that democratic principles sometimes have to be broken*
  - *The fight against transactivism is so important that democratic principles sometimes have to be broken*
  - *The fight against racism is so important that democratic principles sometimes have to be broken*
  - *The fight against increased immigration is so important that democratic principles sometimes have to be broken*
  - *The fight against climate change is so important that democratic principles sometimes have to be broken*
  - *The fight against climate hysteria is so important that democratic principles sometimes have to be broken*
  - *The fight against inequality is so important that democratic principles sometimes have to be broken*
  - *The fight for high taxes is so important that democratic principles sometimes have to be broken*

- *The fight against discrimination against transgender people is important*
- *The fight against transactivism important*
- *The fight against racism is important*
- *The fight against increased immigration is important*
- *The fight against climate change is important*
- *The fight against climate hysteria is important*
- *The fight against inequality is important*
- *The fight for high taxes is important¨*

- The first 8 of these statements are "case-specific democracy violations", while the last 8 are "neutral case-specific" statements

4 Hypotheses

4.1 Conjoint 1:

Our first, and most general expectation, is that there is a cost to violations of democratic principles. Citizens in most modern democracies care about democracy, and most have a basic understanding of what democracy means in practice. Hence, holding everything equal we expect Norwegian citizens to punish politicians that violate some democratic principle. This means that the Average Marginal Component Effect (AMCE) of democracy-violations (demviol1) is expected to be negative.

Hypothesis 1: The AMCE of democracy-violations is negative

Second, we expect that this effect is larger overall, in Norway than in the United States. In the United States, (Graham and Svolik, 2020) found an overall negative effect of democracy-violations on willingness to vote for a candidate, but only to a limited extent - as candidates with democracy-violations lost 11.7 of votes in total. This finding aligns with recent insights that the US is currently undergoing a democratic erosion (e.g. Maerz et al., 2020), and findings that the American public is highly polarized, which could indicate that the cost of democracy-violations may be less pronounced. Norway, on the other hand, has consistently been ranked among the highest performing democracies in the world according to global democracy measures such as V-Dem (Maerz et al., 2020). Although also Norwegian voters are polarized on many issues, including along the "urban-rural" dimension, Norway is less politically polarized than the U.S., and significantly less so along partisan identities. Hence, we expect that the cost of giving up preferred policy positions in order to punish anti-democratic behavior to be lower in the Norwegian context.

Hypothesis 2: The negative AMCE of democracy-violations is stronger in our sample than what is found in the US sample of Graham and Svolik (2020)

Third, we expect that democracy-violations will matter less for the given voter if the politician takes a policy-position the voter agrees with, or is from a party the voter agrees with. We also expect a democracy-violation to have a larger effect the further away from a voter the candidate is on the political spectrum. This yields:

Hypothesis 3: The AMCE of democracy-violations becomes more negative the further away the candidate is from a voter on a given policy position

Hypothesis 4: The AMCE of democracy-violations becomes more negative the further away the candidate is from a voter on the left-right political spectrum

Hypothesis 5: The AMCE of democracy-violations becomes more negative if the candidate is from another party than the one supported by the voter.

Finally, we expect that individuals with certain characteristics should be more likely to punish candidates with democracy-violations than others. In particular, we expect that highly educated individuals should be more critical towards behavior that violates democratic principles. Educated individuals should be more likely to be familiar with democratic principles, and thereby be aware that the political candidates are in fact violating democratic principles. There is also some evidence that educated individuals have more "liberal" or "democratic" values, which would imply that education gives rise to more commitment to democratic principles, and thereby a stronger willingness to punish non-democratic behavior. This should yield the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 6: The AMCE of democracy-violations becomes more negative if the respondent has higher education

Since we include a battery of questions tracking "authoritarian" values, we also formulate the expectation that individuals with more authoritarian values will punish democracy-violations less. This yields:

Hypothesis 7: The AMCE of democracy-violations becomes more negative if the respondent has more authoritarian values

4.2 Conjoint 2:

In this conjoint, given to 30% of respondents we test whether the democracy-violations for specific causes elicit less support than the specific causes supported with no democracy-violating intention. Hence, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 8: The AMCE of democracy-violating intentions for specific causes will be overall negative

Since the cause-specific violations relate to specific causes voters may or may not agree with, we expect them to be more accepted when voters agree with the cause.

Since we want to investigate whether democracy-violations for specific causes are more accepted than generic democracy-violating statements (made by candidates who support different causes), we want to test whether the punishment for democracy-violations varies with the cause it is stated in the name of. We therefore interact the democracy-violating intention for a cause with the respondent-level support for that cause. For each cause c we interact the cause-specific democracy violation for c with the support for c of the respondent.

Hypothesis 9: The AMCE of democracy-violating intentions for specific causes c will decrease with the degree of agreement with c

Since we expect that democracy-violations *for* specific causes voters agree with should be stronger than democracy-violations by candidates that incidentally support causes voters agree with. We expect that the interaction between voter cause-agreement and democracy-violations to be stronger in conjoint 2 than in conjoint 1. We formulate this as:

Hypothesis 10: The interaction effect in hypothesis 9 should be stronger than the interaction effect in hypothesis 3

4.3 Analysis

We will test the hypotheses above by plotting the AMCE's and the interactions. When investigating the interactions (sub-group analysis) we will follow the prescriptions in (Leeper, Hobolt and Tilley, 2020). All hypotheses tests will be adjusted to the number of hypotheses using the Bonferroni correction. In addition to deductive testing of the hypotheses proposed

above, we will conduct a range of analyses in a more exploratory fashion that will not be presented as tests of a theory.

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