

Concerns for International Stature, Tendency for Redistribution and Decision to Turnout in Authoritarian Elections: A Survey Experiment from 2018 Russian Presidential Elections

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Abstract

When elections do not present real alternatives, the incentives of voters can not be attributed to the comparative advantage posed by a second option. Issues such as international prestige and nationalist sentiment, in the form of an electoral “rallying around the flag”, have been proposed as possible explanations. In this study, based on Item Count Techniques (ICTs), we employ a survey experiment of 1040 Moscow residents, in 5 treatment, control and placebo groups, to compare the effect of economic concerns to that of the international stature, on voter turnout in the context of the 2018 Russian Presidential elections. The survey experiment employs issue-based prior framing of participants. The results do not show an effect for nationalistic framing vis a vis the neutral frame. In contrast, the economic framing induces a significant departure from the neutral frame and placebo groups. The results reject the oft-cited priority of international prestige considerations over economic issues for the Russian voter.

Keywords: Competitive Authoritarianism, Economic Turnout, International Stature, Survey Experiment, Russia

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Introduction

The purpose of elections under authoritarianism is often understood in terms of their utility for coopting the elite and enhancing authoritarian governance ([Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009](#)), meanwhile the logic of the decision on the side of the electorate to turnout in inconsequential elections is not well understood. According to the classic theories of voting, the main motivation behind rational voting, on the individual level, is the balance between the comparative advantage of one candidate over the other, and costs of voting ([Riker and Ordeshook 1968](#)). When there is no real alternative on the ballot, the individual rational for voting is not a sufficient explanation ([Hassanpour 2017](#)). In the absence of an individual logic operating on the side of the voter, the most prominent explanations for engaging in inconsequential elections are of two main categories: one emphasizes the role of distributive politics ([Stokes et al. 2013](#)) in turning out the vote under authoritarianism. Patterns of clientelism, patronage and workplace compulsion motivate voting under authoritarianism ([Stokes 2005](#)), ([Diaz-Cayeros, Estevez, and Magaloni 2016](#)), ([Frye, Reuter, and Szakonyi 2014](#)). The second category of explanations consider the possibility of a voting motive apt to authoritarian political systems under international pressure and devoid of effective civic alternative, which is the possibility of a “rallying around the flag” effect in authoritarian elections based on concerns over international image and prestige, driven by international pressure and by opposition to punitive measures such as sanctions and external political pressure ([Hale and Colton 2017](#)), ([Frye 2017](#)).¹ Clientelist explanations for voting under authoritarianism are closely connected to welfare mechanism and workplace accommodations that are promised in return for political participation ([Stokes et al. 2013](#)). Explanations based on the “rallying around the flag” phenomenon are based on communal, not merely individual, utilities of voting ([Gerber, Green, and Larimer 2008](#)).

To adjudicate between these two distinct explanations in the context of authoritarian

¹Similar processes in the context of functional democracies, induce an increase in the popularity of the head of the state at the time of international pressure ([Lee 1977](#)), ([Baum 2002](#)).

elections, we devised and implemented a survey experiment of $N = 1040$ Moscow residents during the week prior to 2018 Russian Presidential elections. The survey employed a design based on a combination of *Item Counting Techniques* (ICTs) (Blair and Imai 2012) and *Framing* (Tversky and Kahneman 1981, Druckman 2001b). ICT application, i.e. a list experiment platform, was to account for the fact that participation in the Russian elections is a sensitive matter, and the respondents had good reasons for not divulging their real decision to participate in or abstain from voting.² The addition of three distinct frames for *neutral*, *economic-oriented* and *nationalistic* contextualization, was to distinguish the effects of economic concerns from those motivated by regard for international stature of the country (rallying around the flag phenomenon).

By framing the respondents based on nationalistic and economic insurance mechanisms separately, we aimed at distinguishing voting based on clientelistic and welfarist intentions from those that presumably operating under sentiments to join the following of a strong leader in the times of international crisis. In addition to control and treatment groups, a neutral treatment and a placebo test provided further robustness checks for the results.

While there has been a series of studies measuring turnout by utilizing ICTs or *list experiments* (see (Kalinin 2012) and (Holbrook and Krosnick 2010)), as well as existing studies of hegemonic authorities’ support in the face of economic difficulty (Frye 2017), our study is distinct from the prior ones, as first, it concerns a distinction between two prominent classes of reasons often proposed for explaining the logic of voting under authoritarianism on the individual level, and second, its focus is voter “turnout”, not support for the hegemonic authorities on the ballot.³

²In the context of ICTs, the respondents in the treatment group are given a series of innocuous questions plus a sensitive question of interest. They are asked to report the number of their positive responses to the collection of questions, not the exact answer to each question. The control group receives only the innocuous questions, and is asked to provide the sum of positive answers.

³There are evidence indicating that under authoritarianism turnout and support buying are two distinct processes, see (Nichter 2008).

The results of our survey experiment in Moscow demonstrate no discernible difference between *nationalistic* framing in the context of the ICT-based design and the *neutral* frame, hence rejecting the *rallying around the flag* explanation for voting under authoritarianism in the Russian context. Nevertheless, the results demonstrate a significant treatment effect for the economic framing treatment against the neutral baseline.

The effect is shown to be robust to applying a placebo treatment: when the economic framing is kept fixed, but the sensitive question is removed from the list of count item questions given to the respondents, the significant economic framing effect disappears. This implies the treatment effects are directly connected to the addition of the voting question to the list of queries posed to the respondents, and the voting query effectively interacts with the other questions on the importance of welfare provisions. Hence we argue that the existence such welfarist expectations, or their lack thereof, is highly correlated with the decision to take part in the election itself.

Moreover, an examination of demographic, socioeconomic and sociotropic (Blais and Dobrzynska 1998) determinants of count responses under various treatments, demonstrate the importance of economic and sociotropic factors in voting under authoritarianism: those enjoying more economic comfort, and expressing satisfaction with the current economic conditions were more prone to answer positively to the sensitive question on turnout.

Russia and the city of Moscow provide a unique case study for comparing the effect of international considerations versus clientelistic and welfarist approaches to voting under authoritarianism: the focality of international issues to Russian politics, and the occasional Russian antagonism against the West, is particularly salient among potential voters in Moscow, who are much closer to centers of Russian power. Hence non-existence of nationalistic effects vis a vis economic ones in Moscow, point in the direction of an even a stronger disparity in Russian provinces where local brokers more actively recruit voters for the hegemonic party, and where participation rates are higher than those in the Capital (Rundlett and Svolik 2016).

This study contributes to the existing empirical studies of voting under authoritarianism in three distinct ways: first, it formulates a dichotomous explanation for electoral participation under authoritarianism based on welfarist and communal utilities, second, it combines *list experiment* survey designs with framing techniques in order to devise a test of the verity of one of the explanations against the other, and third provides further information on the socioeconomic determinants of active voters under authoritarianism.

The paper is organized as follows, in the theory section we describe and formulate the components of voting under authoritarianism in two distinct classes, in the survey design section we outline the design, implantation and diagnostics of our survey experiment. In the results section the findings on the plausibility of economic explanation and rejection of the rallying around the flag logic are presented, finally the discussion section concludes.

Individual Logic of Voting under Authoritarianism: Clientelism or Rallying around the Flag?

When there is no alternative to status quo, the comparative advantage utility from choosing one option over the other disappears. In such a situation, the only possibilities for promoting participation involve lowering the cost of voting on the individual level via clientelism and targeted utility transfers to those in need, or to encourage action in unison, e.g. “rallying around the flag” or to vote based on habit and prior regularities, all of such processes increase the communal utility.⁴

Therefore, on the individual levels, the logic of political participation in its electoral

⁴In the following formulation (Riker and Ordeshook 1968), $B_i = 0$,

$$U_i = p_i B_i - C_i + \alpha_i D_i, \tag{1}$$

p_i is the probability that i ’s vote is pivotal, B_i is the perceived differential benefit from choosing the candidate over others, C_i cost of voting for i , and D_i comprises utilities which are not only a function of i .

format in autocracies, and inconsequential elections in general, is comprised of two parts: the voters' interaction with machines enticing (or coercing), and their experience of *external* (Gerber, Green, and Larimer 2008) communal utilities in the form of participation along with the rest of the electorate. The logic of the former is captured in the clientelism literature (Stokes et al. 2013), the latter is based on identifying with the rest of the electorate as a "community" and to find a compulsion to act in coordination.

The Russian context provides a unique case study to devise a test for the presence of either of the two electoral motives and their prominence: occasional confrontations with the outside world and the West prime nationalist sentiments that are often attributed to voting for autocracy (Frye 2017). Given the international position of Russia, if concerns for international stature do not motivate voters in Russia, then it is unlikely they motivate voters under any other instance of competitive authoritarianism.

The economic considerations, and the political machines that exploit them, are central to mobilizing voters in a varieties of democratic, hybrid and authoritarian contexts (Blais and Dobrzynska 1998), (Diaz-Cayeros, Estevez, and Magaloni 2016), (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007), (Blaydes 2010). In generating a stable patron-client relation, hegemonic parties, in particular attune their clients to welfare favors in exchange for electoral participation (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007). Economic difficulty is shown to motivate electoral participation when there are low levels of welfare provisions and to discourage voter turnout when there are high levels of welfare amenities (Radcliff 1992), (Pacek and Radcliff 1995). One can argue that low levels of welfare make voters more susceptible to clientelist schemes, either of irregular and pork barrel type, or regular and patronage-themed, hence voters facing scant welfare prospects are more likely to engage in clientelistic relations in order to compensate for lack of amenities at the time of economic difficulty.⁵

⁵For a discussion of economic voting and the economic determinant of voting see (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2000) and (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2008). In the Russian and Eastern European context, the effect of economic incentives, economic adversity (Rosenstone 1982) in particular, on turnout is dis-

The Russian voter, facing an extensive, hierarchical and at times decentralized network of electoral brokers ([Rundlett and Svolik 2016](#)), is particularly prone to welfarist framing of the turnout procedure. Workplace compulsion, a significant component of the political machine function in Russia, itself operates based on promises and threats of continuation and stoppage of welfare provisions that accompany a variety of occupations in Russia ([Frye, Reuter, and Szakonyi 2014](#)).

To take stock, voters under authoritarianism in general, and the Russian voter in particular, are faced with two sets of motives for voting: to vote for showing unity and support for the State at the time of potential international crises, or to vote with economic relations of patronage in mind. In the context of the survey experiment we outline in the next section, we have provoked both sets of sentiments using a framing strategy prior to inquiring about voting decision.

Voters are either motivated by economic concerns, some of which are regularly exploited by political machines, or they are influenced by “external communal utilities” that manifest themselves in the form of nationalistic sentiments as well as prioritization of international image while making local and intranational political decisions. In the following, we outline a procedure for distinguishing the two effects in the context of a survey experiment, and test the precedence of one of the two components over the other.

Survey Experiment, Design, Implementation, Diagnostics

To differentiate the effect of economic concerns and rallying around the flag over international concerns, we developed an ICT-based survey experiment with treatments that were distinguished based on preambles framing ([Druckman 2001b](#)), ([Druckman 2001a](#)), ([Tversky and Kahneman 1981](#)) the respondents in nationalistic or economic orientations, the respon-

cussed in ([Pacek 1994](#)), ([Kostadinova 2003](#)), ([Bahry and Lipsmeyer 2001](#)), ([Pacek, Pop-Eleches, and Tucker 2009](#)).

dents were asked to answer a list of questions and submit the sum of the number of positive answers, not individual answers. The main objective of the study was to compare the respondents’ reaction to the nationalistic framing to that of the economic one. The design combined elements from “list experiments” (Corstange 2009), (Imai 2011), (Blair and Imai 2012), with those of framing experiments to create an effective comparison between two sets of incentives for engaging in voting under authoritarianism.⁶

Our survey experiment was comprised of three main parts all conducted in person and face to face: first the respondents were asked to answer a number of questions on demographic parameters, such as age, education, gender, employment status, level of income and their sociotropic view of both the Russian economy and the Russian stature in the world.⁷ After answering these question and being ensured of the anonymity of the survey, depending on the treatment assigned to the respondent, the surveyors read a framing paragraph to the respondents aloud. The control group were not assigned a framing preamble. The four categories of treatment received neutral, economic (2 groups, same frame), and nationalistic framing directives. While the neutral framing passage merely provided bland information on the Russian elections and its regulations, the two economic and nationalistic frames were intended to invoke sentiments similar to those advertised by the authorities. The “nationalistic” frame emphasized the dangers posed by ignoring the polls and giving an opportunity to those open to compromise with the West over points of contention, such as the takeover of the Crimea. The economic frame emphasized the importance of sound economic policy, and invoked the recent economic crisis and the importance of continuing recovery. It also hinted at importance of social services. After respondents were read the content of the frames, they were asked to consider a number of questions (4 for the control

⁶Vote buying (Gonzalez-Ocantos et al. 2012), authoritarian responsiveness (Meng, Pan, and Yang 2017) and social desirability bias under electoral authoritarianism (Kalinin 2012) are examples of topics amenable to analysis via *list experiments* (Glynn 2013).

⁷The text of the questions, in both English and Russian are included in the appendix.

and economic placebo group, and 5 for the other three treatments, neutral, nationalistic and economic), and to report the number of positive answers to the questions. Four questions given to the control groups included questions that directly engaged with the respondents' tendency for welfare provisions and redistribution preferences. As such, they provided a link with patterns of distributive politics often cited as venues for clientelism and patronage under authoritarianism. Later, we will show that the reaction to these questions, while muted when the fifth sensitive question on participation in 2018 presidential elections was *not* included, was effectively activated after adding the sensitive question on the intent on participation in election.

Treatments: Neutral, Economic, Nationalist Framing

Neutral, economic and nationalistic *treatments* were passages read to the participants before they answered a list of questions that included the sensitive question on participation in the elections (the control group did not receive any of these treatment, and its question list lacked the sensitive question). Before reading the framing treatments to the participants, they were asked general questions about gender, age, education, employment, and income.⁸ Two more questions on the opinion of the respondents of the current Russian economic situation and future political prospect in the world. These sociotropic questions are shown to directly influence decisions to vote in functional democracies (Blais 2006), (Blais and Dobrzynska 1998). By controlling for them, we ensure the treatment effect is properly measured, because the preexisting views of the respondents on the Russian economy and international stature are already accounted for.

The general questions were followed by three treatments: in the neutral treatment, the respondents were read facts about the general electoral procedure in Russia. A part of the

⁸The income question was graduated based on the ability of respondent to buy fundamental items: food, appliances, car, no limitations. Such practice is common in questionnaire fielded by Russian public opinion institutions such as Levada etc.

passage is included below. Full paragraphs are included in the appendix.

Presidential elections is a procedure of direct, secret, equal and general voting which determines who will serve as the President of Russia for the next six years. These elections were held in 1991, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008 and 2012 ...

In the other two treatments, however, they received the common narrative in the Russian public sphere on nationalistic and economic themes. The goal was to frame the respondents in either nationalistic or economic platforms. Since 2014 and the Crimea takeover Russia has experienced both international and economic crises, and both of these themes are prominently present in the political narrative dominant in the country, and in the minds of the Russian voters making decision on turnout. Parts of the nationalist treatment are included in the following:

Today Russia needs a strong leader who can challenge the Western and European States together with the U.S., in order to overcome the crisis relations, to resist sanctions and to defend Russia's position in the international arena. Today is a turning point, ...

The economic treatment was designed based on a similar structure, but singled out the potential for economic crisis and welfare insecurities:

Today Russia needs a strong leader who can overcome the protracted economic crisis, increase the real incomes of Russians, and reduce the number of people living below the poverty line. Today is the turning point, ...

The control group did not receive any of such framing prompts. After reading the framing passage to the respondents, they were asked a number of questions.

List of Questions

The list of question posed to the control group contained two questions on the respondents' exact knowledge of the election date and their discussing the elections with their acquaintances. In addition to the general questions on the elections, the respondents were asked about their opinion on taxation, and welfare spending on *social* issues. The Russian public sphere is divided on taxation and welfare issues ([Russian Public Opinion Research Center 2017](#)), and the inclusion of these themes, in addition to ensured a mix of positive and negative responses necessary for ICTs. Furthermore, the inclusion of questions on taxation and welfare among innocuous questions, generates a baseline accounting for the respondents' opinion on economic issues before measuring their interaction with the treatment and the sensitive inquiry on voting. For each of the treatment groups, the sensitive question was added to the aforementioned four questions. The respondents were asked if they were planning to vote in the upcoming presidential elections. To ensure that the questions on social welfare and taxation did not interact with the respondents' response to the economic treatment, we included a placebo group, which received the treatment passage on economic issues, but did not have the sensitive question in their questionnaire, and checked the difference between their responses and that of the control. In the following we show that the survey responses in this group were indistinguishable from the main control group.

Sampling Procedure, Balance

The survey was conducted based on a quota sampling procedure, with a sample that was representative of the Moscow population on age, education and gender parameters, per each treatment. The survey implementation procedure is included in the appendix.

The age and education quotas were calculated from the Russian census results for Moscow ([Russian Federation Federal State Statistics Service 2010](#)), and were devised to represent the average Russian voter in age, income and education in the City of Moscow. The quotas used for age and education are included in Table (1). The procedure for income adjustment is

detailed in the appendix.

Table 1: Quotas, Age and Education

18-35, higher education 17.90%	35+, higher education 43.25%
18-35, no college education 11.87%	35+, no college education 26.98%

The average values of control variables are included in Table (2). These variables are measured through general questions asked at the beginning of the survey. Given our sampling heuristics, and lack of pre-designed randomization, none of the age, gender and education parameters show a deviation more than 10% from the control averages.

Parameter, Treatment	Control	Econ. Frame (Placebo)	Neutral Frame	Economic Frame	Nationalist Frame
Age	40.31	42.25	43.27	44.07	43.73
Female	51.4	51.4	50.5	49.5	51.9
Education	60.6	60.6	61.5	60.6	61.1
Employment	70.7	60.1 ⁹	70.7	71.1	66.8
Income	3.96	3.692	4.09	3.85	3.63
Econ. Sociotropic	2.73	2.71	2.33	2.41	2.77
Intl. Sociotropic	2.16	2.436	2.18	2.08	2.59

Table 2: The average values of control variables, based on general questions in the survey’s preamble, $N = 208$ for each group.

Quota sampling of the respondents was performed in eight districts of Moscow during the last week prior to the election registration deadline (March 8-11, 2018).

Results

Item count techniques have been used to detect and measure social desirability bias in turnout reports. Comparing measure of turnout based on ICT to direct turnout reports reveal substantial inflation of voter participation in democracies (Holbrook and Krosnick 2010), (Karp and Brockington 2005), (Selb and Munzert 2013) and autocracies (Kalinin 2012). In the following we use the ICT results primarily for comparing the effect of nationalist framing of the survey respondents on voter turnout vis a vis the same effect resulting from an economic frame. On the other hand, we show that turnout estimates resulting from the survey experiment, are as inflated as those that have been reported for direct responses in the previous round of Russian Presidential elections.

A comparison of distributions of positive answers to the list questions in the experiments demonstrates that the responses after nationalist framing do not differ significantly from those of the neutral framing. Finally, a breakdown of the determinants of the positive response to the sensitive question on turnout shows self-reported levels of income to interact positively with nationalist frame, after controlling with economic satisfaction and other background variable, other than that effect, the nationalist frame does not demonstrate a significant interaction with any of the background parameters.

The number of positive answers to the list questions are included in Table (3). There is a “design effect” (Blair and Imai 2012): the number of 5 positive answers for economic framing exceeds the number of 4 positive answers for the control. Later using a Least Squares regression design we control for background parameters in order to mitigate the treatment’s effect on control questions in the list.

In addition to such considerations, there is evidence on Russian respondents’ inflating their turnout reports in face to face interviews, even when the answer to the sensitive question is masked in the summation of positive answers, and the social desirability bias is on par with answers to direct questions.¹⁰

¹⁰In direct questions, inflation of turnout self-report on the 30% level and more are not uncommon, both

Table 3: Frequency of Positive Answers

Controls, # Positive Answers	One	Two	Three	Four	-
Control	8	106	87	7	-
Economic Frame (No Sensitive Q)	13	84	89	22	-
Treatment, # Positive Answers	One	Two	Three	Four	Five
Neutral Frame	3	20	93	84	7
Nationalist Frame	2	23	90	90	3
Economic Frame	7	48	65	56	32

Difference in Means

The average number of positive responses for each of the treatment groups is 3.35, 3.28, 3.33 for neutral, economic and nationalist treatments. Compared to the control group’s average number of positive responses 2.45, these treatments demonstrate reported rates of turnout of 83 to 90 percent. As expected, the social desirability bias inflates the responses (Kalinin 2012), but in our case, the social desirability bias is evident, even when the answer to the sensitive question is masked with a list experiment’s multiplicity. The official statistics of voter turnout in Moscow was 59.9 % (Russian Central Election Commission 2017).

Such high levels of social desirability bias, even after the implementation of a list, point into the direction that the answers to the sensitive question are not fully truthful, and the assumption of truthfulness in list experiments (Blair and Imai 2012) does not apply here.

Furthermore, the average number of positive answers to for the placebo treatment (economic framing, but with questionnaire without sensitive questions) was not significantly different from those of the control group. Figure (1) includes a depiction of the averages.

Difference in Distributions

Given the facts that the responses to the sensitive question are not fully truthful and that there are design effects, instead of using simple difference in means test, we use Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for identifying the difference between the *distributions* of the number of “yes”

in democracies and autocracies, see (Karp and Brockington 2005) and (Kalinin 2012).

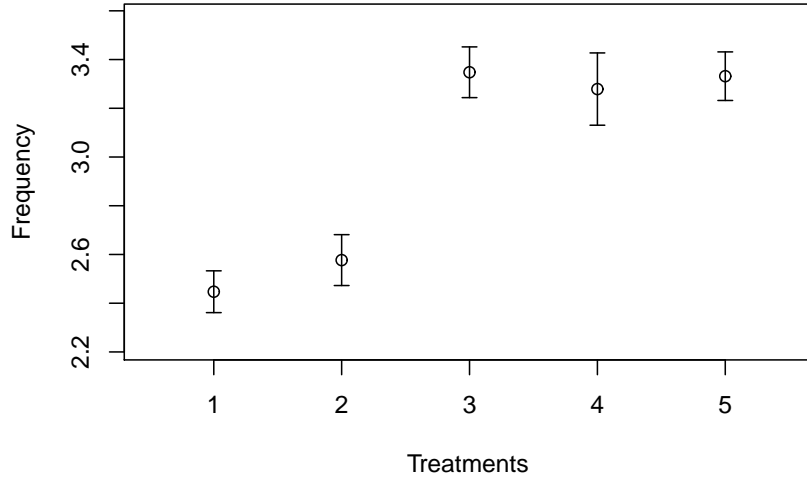


Figure 1: Mean frequency of positive responses for control, econ. placebo controls, and neutral, economic and nationalist frames, left to right.

answers, not merely their average. The results of the K-S distribution difference tests are included in Table (4). Smoothed versions of the distributions themselves are included in Figure (2).

The results in Table (4) and Figure (2) demonstrate that while the economic framing treatment’s distribution is significantly different from the neutral and nationalist’s distributions, the nationalist framing treatment’s distribution is **not** significantly distinct from the neutral treatment. In other words, **the nationalist treatment does not induce any departure from the neutral framing, while the economic framing does.**

Later after disaggregating the components of positive answers we show that nationalist framing does not show significant interactions with background parameters other than **self-reported levels of income.**

	Control	Econ. (Placebo)	Neutral	Econ.	Nationalist
Control	-	0.4907	< 0.01	< 0.01	< 0.01
Econ. (Placebo)	-	< 0.01	< 0.01	< 0.01	< 0.01
Neutral	< 0.01	< 0.01	-	0.01524	1
Econ.	< 0.01	< 0.01	0.01524	-	0.02642
Nationalistic	< 0.01	< 0.01	1	0.02642	-

Table 4: Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests for difference of distributions, control and treatments, p-values.

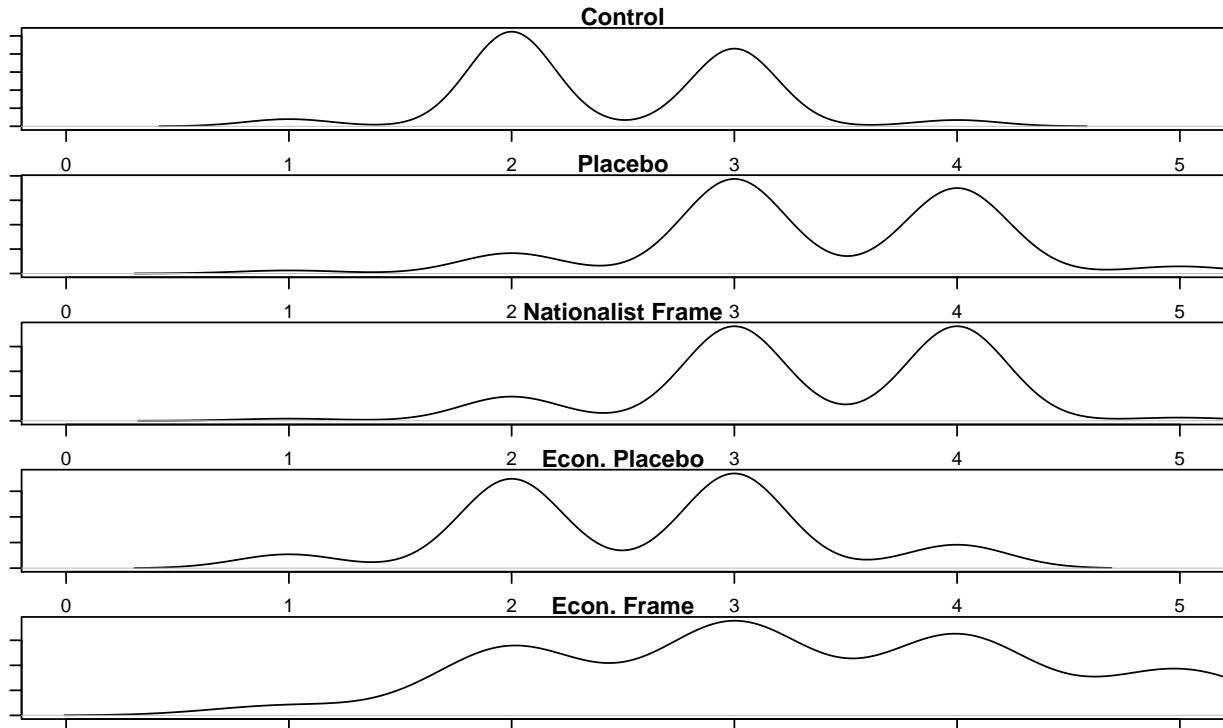


Figure 2: Distribution of Positive Responses, Four Treatments.

Propensity for Welfare and Redistribution, Nationalist Inclinations, and Engagement in Authoritarian Elections

To ameliorate design effects and the persistence of high levels of social desirability bias, one can conduct multivariate regression analysis using data from Item Count Techniques (Imai 2011), (Holbrook and Krosnick 2010). We use the very same design to account for two issues, first the possibility of an interaction between control questions and the framing that can affect answers in ways that are absent in the control group with no framing; second, the issue with social desirability bias inflating the numbers in addition to the desire to turnout. Such a method is highly plausible because social desirability bias has a consistent and lasting sociodemographic base (Holbrook and Krosnick 2010).

The model applied in the following (Blair and Imai 2012) analysis is as follows,

$$Y_i = X_i\beta + T_iX_i\delta + \epsilon_i, \quad (2)$$

where the control variables X are interacted with the treatment T . Here β s constitute the answers to non-sensitive (control) questions on the control group's questionnaire, and δ s represent the determinants of a positive answer to the sensitive question in the treatment group.

We control for the background parameters, such as age, education, gender, and employment as well as the respondents' sociotropic view of the economic and international situation, in addition to their self reported levels of income level.¹¹

The components of individual decision to turnout

The results of the regression analysis are included in Tables (5), (6), and (7) and the most pertinent coefficients are plotted in Figure (3). The main take away from these tables lies in

¹¹It is also possible to match the respondents between the nationalist and economic treatments, and measure the difference in treatment levels.

the results on interaction terms summarized in Table (7). First, note that in line with goals of quota sampling, almost none of the interactions of the treatments with background variables such as gender, age, education, and self-reported employment in Table (6) are statistically significant on the 5% level. Moreover, the components of positive answers to the control questions in Table (5) are in line with the questions asked on attention to the elections and opinion on taxation and welfare. In Table (5) the treatment effects themselves are most pronounced for the economic frame, more importantly the nationalist frame treatment is less effective than the neutral frame treatment across the models presented.

The interaction between the neutral, economic and nationalist treatments and the controls on respondents' sociotropic income level and their view of the country's economy and international prospects in Table (7) are highly indicative of the components of the respondents' turnout behavior. With full set of controls, the nationalist frame does **not** significantly interact with any of the sociotropic parameters, other than income, and positively at that: in other words, nationalist frame's overall weak effect increased by income, those who reported higher levels of income were more likely to be swayed by nationalist framing to report intend to vote. Economic framing on the other hand, as expected, shows significant interactions with both self-reported income and economic satisfaction, and even in model (4) interacts significantly with international prognosis in the expected direction. Neutral frame, nonetheless, shows significant interactions with both self-reported variables on income and economic satisfaction, but does **not** interact significantly with the nationalist prognosis. Based on this, and the other aforementioned significant interactions of the experimental frames and economic satisfaction and income variables, it is fair to say that self-reported income and economic situation is highly influential on decisions to vote in the context of our survey experiment: the more economically dissatisfied, and pecuniary impoverished the respondents are, the more likely they abstain from voting.

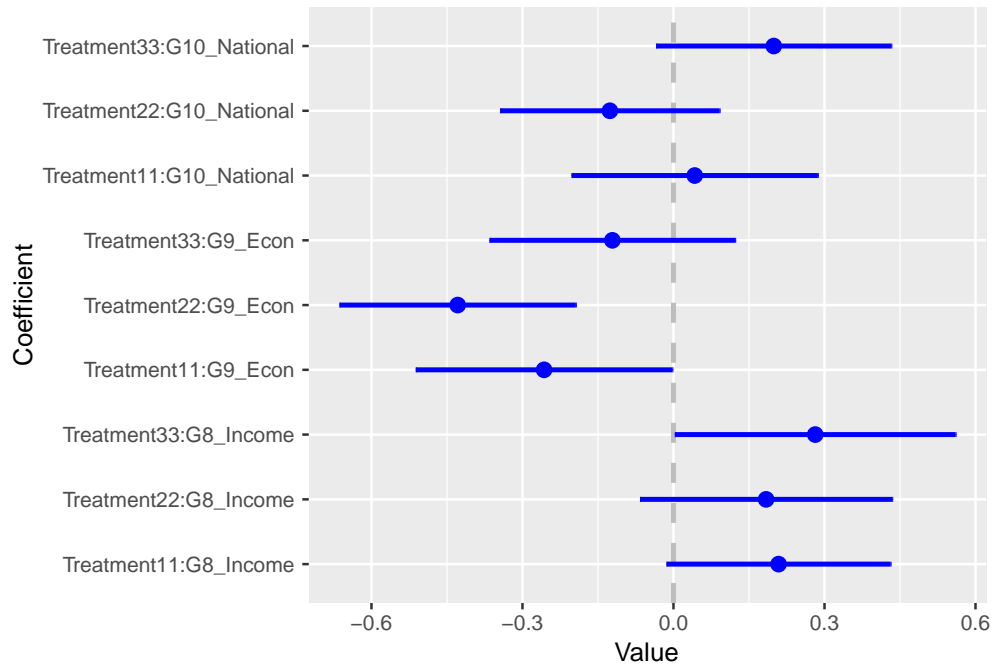


Figure 3: Interaction terms, treatments with income, economic status self reported, and international prognosis, from Table (7), two-sided 5% significance level confidence intervals.

Table 5

	<i>Dependent variable: Positive_Count</i>			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Neutral Frame	0.499 (0.790)	-0.171 (0.484)	1.522** (0.577)	-0.489 (0.626)
Econ. Frame	1.027 (0.775)	-0.822 (0.547)	1.862*** (0.515)	-0.338 (0.675)
Nationalist Frame	-0.080 (0.828)	0.029 (0.533)	1.189* (0.529)	-0.412 (0.730)
Gender	-0.059 (0.123)	-0.054 (0.114)	-0.044 (0.123)	-0.074 (0.118)
Age	0.005 (0.005)	0.007 (0.005)	0.006 (0.005)	0.004 (0.005)
Education	-0.073 (0.127)	-0.025 (0.119)	-0.085 (0.127)	-0.053 (0.124)
Employment	-0.010 (0.151)	-0.045 (0.131)	-0.037 (0.149)	-0.060 (0.138)
Income	-0.073 (0.080)	-0.020 (0.073)		-0.076 (0.077)
Econ. Satisf.	0.063 (0.080)		0.068 (0.080)	
Intl. Prognosis	-0.195** (0.075)		-0.190* (0.075)	-0.155* (0.069)

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table 6

	<i>Dependent variable: Positive_Count</i>			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
⋮				
Neutral Frame:Gender	0.334 (0.173)	0.284 (0.160)	0.320 (0.173)	0.337* (0.171)
Econ. Frame:Gender	-0.016 (0.172)	0.040 (0.161)	-0.024 (0.172)	-0.032 (0.169)
Nationalist Frame:Gender	0.074 (0.179)	0.037 (0.161)	0.079 (0.179)	0.099 (0.177)
Neutral Frame:Age	0.002 (0.007)	0.001 (0.006)	0.002 (0.007)	0.005 (0.007)
Econ. Frame:Age	0.010 (0.007)	0.008 (0.006)	0.008 (0.006)	0.013* (0.006)
Nationalist Frame:Age	-0.002 (0.007)	-0.002 (0.006)	-0.004 (0.007)	-0.001 (0.007)
Neutral Frame:Education	-0.047 (0.185)	-0.004 (0.171)	0.003 (0.184)	-0.035 (0.184)
Econ. Frame:Education	-0.130 (0.183)	0.007 (0.171)	-0.108 (0.183)	-0.116 (0.182)
Nationalist Frame:Education	-0.030 (0.194)	-0.105 (0.171)	0.074 (0.187)	-0.051 (0.193)
Neutral Frame:Employment	-0.167 (0.217)	-0.033 (0.190)	-0.082 (0.213)	-0.107 (0.209)
Econ. Frame:Employment	0.051 (0.217)	0.043 (0.194)	0.133 (0.210)	0.095 (0.207)
Nationalist Frame:Employment	-0.115 (0.224)	-0.058 (0.193)	0.008 (0.216)	-0.065 (0.216)

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table 7

	<i>Dependent variable: Positive_Count</i>			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
⋮				
Neutral Frame:Income	0.209 (0.114)	0.218* (0.099)		0.275* (0.107)
Econ. Frame:Income	0.184 (0.128)	0.318** (0.115)		0.296* (0.123)
Nationalist Frame:Income	0.282* (0.142)	0.271* (0.113)		0.295* (0.135)
Neutral Frame:Econ. Satisf.	−0.257* (0.130)		−0.334** (0.123)	
Econ. Frame:Econ. Satisf.	−0.429*** (0.120)		−0.461*** (0.117)	
Nationalist Frame:Econ. Satisf.	−0.121 (0.124)		−0.181 (0.121)	
Neutral Frame:Intl. Prognosis	0.042 (0.125)		0.017 (0.125)	0.0004 (0.122)
Econ. Frame:Intl. Prognosis	−0.126 (0.111)		−0.138 (0.111)	−0.260* (0.105)
Nationalist Frame:Intl. Prognosis	0.199 (0.119)		0.159 (0.118)	0.132 (0.111)
Constant	2.863*** (0.509)	2.335*** (0.368)	2.551*** (0.375)	3.064*** (0.440)
Observations	644	795	644	658
R ²	0.319	0.232	0.310	0.292
Adjusted R ²	0.284	0.208	0.280	0.262

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

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Supporting Information

SI 1: Survey Text, Original

SI 2: Survey Text, Translation in English

SI 3: Description of Survey Implementation Procedure

SI 1: Survey Text, Original

респондент #

Ваше мнение важно для нас, исследование целиком анонимное, мы спрашиваем только общую информацию для статистики.

0. Хотели бы вы принять участие в исследовании?

Да Нет → закончить интервью

1. Пол: М Ж

2. Являетесь ли вы гражданином РФ?

Да Нет → закончить интервью

3. Вы проживаете в Москве?

Да Нет → закончить интервью

4. Сколько полных лет вам исполнилось?

– лет Если меньше 18, то закончить интервью

5. Какое у вас образование?

1. Начальное, среднее, среднее специальное или ниже

2. Высшее или выше

6. Вы работаете?

Да Нет

7. К какой из следующих групп населения вы скорее могли бы себя отнести?

1. Нам не хватает денег даже на питание

2. Нам хватает денег на питание, но не хватает на одежду.

3. Нам хватает денег на питание и одежду, покупка более дорогих вещей, таких как телевизор или холодильник, вызывает у нас проблемы

4. Мы можем покупать некоторые дорогие вещи, такие как холодильник или телевизор, но не можем купить автомобиль

5. Мы можем купить автомобиль, но не можем сказать, что не стеснены в средствах

6. Мы можем ни в чем себе не отказывать

8. Если говорить о текущем состоянии дел в российской экономике, Вы довольны или недовольны экономической ситуацией в России?

1. Полностью доволен (-а)

2. Скорее доволен (-а)

3. Скорее недоволен (-а)

4. Совершенно не доволен (-а)

99. Затрудняюсь ответить

9. Как, по вашему мнению, изменится положение России в мире и её вес на общемировой политической арене в ближайшие два года?

1. Значительно улучшится

2. Скорее улучшится

3. Скорее ухудшится

4. Значительно ухудшится

99. Затрудняюсь ответить

Пожалуйста, внимательно прочитайте следующий текст. После прочтения вам будут заданы 5 вопросов, связанных с текстом.

Текст 1 (нейтральный)

Выборы Президента Российской Федерации – процедура прямого, тайного, равного и всеобщего голосования по определению Президента России на ближайшие 6 лет. Данные выборы проводились в 1991, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008 и 2012 годах. Президент Российской Федерации избирается сроком на шесть лет гражданами Российской Федерации на основе всеобщего равного и прямого избирательного права при тайном голосовании. Избранным считается зарегистрированный кандидат, который получил более половины голосов избирателей, принявших участие в голосовании. Число избирателей, принявших участие в голосовании, определяется по числу избирательных бюллетеней установленной формы, обнаруженных в ящиках для голосования.

Текст 2 (экономический)

С помощью своего голоса вы можете определить развитие России, кто и в каком направлении ее поведет. Сегодня Россия нуждается в сильном лидере, который сможет бросить вызов Западу, Европе и США, преодолеть кризис отношений, устоять перед санкциями и отстоять свои позиции на международной арене. Сегодня – переломный момент, и кандидаты в президенты предлагают различные сценарии развития российской политики. Некоторые из них даже рассматривают передачу Крыма в международное пользование. Возможно ли допустить такое? Решать вам. Сегодня вы голосуете за то, какую роль в мире Россия будет занимать завтра.

Текст 3 (идеологический)

С помощью своего голоса вы можете определить развитие России, кто и в каком направлении ее поведет. Сегодня Россия нуждается в сильном лидере, который сможет преодолеть затянувшийся экономический кризис, увеличить реальные доходы россиян, уменьшить число людей, живущих за чертой бедности. Сегодня – переломный момент, и кандидаты в президенты предлагают различные сценарии развития российской экономики,

которые, несомненно, повлияют и на ваши доходы. Некоторые из них даже рассматривают отмену социальных выплат. Возможно ли допустить такое? Решать вам. Сегодня вы голосуете ногами за то, какой рубль получите завтра.

Внимательно прочтите следующие вопросы. Выберите «да» или «нет» для каждого. Подсчитайте, сколько «да» в ваших ответах. Скажите мне только их суммарное число.

А. Знаете ли вы, когда состоятся выборы президента РФ? Да/Нет

Б. Разговаривали ли вы о политической и экономической ситуации в России с членами своей семьи и друзьями за последние 7 дней? Да/Нет

В. Должен ли президент России повысить налоги? Да/Нет

Г. Должен ли президент России повысить расходы на социальную сферу? Да/Нет

А. Знаете ли вы, когда состоятся выборы президента РФ? Да/Нет

Б. Разговаривали ли вы о политической и экономической ситуации в России с членами своей семьи и друзьями за последние 7 дней? Да/Нет

В. Должен ли президент России повысить подоходный налог? Да/Нет

Г. Должен ли президент России повысить расходы на социальную сферу? Да/Нет

Д. Будете ли вы голосовать на выборах президента России 2018 года? Да/Нет

Количество ответов «Да»:—

SI Section 2: Survey Text, Translation in English

Respondent No –

Your opinion is important for us, this survey is anonymous, we only ask for general information and statistics.

0. Would you like to participate in the survey?

Yes No→end of interview

1. Sex:

M F

2. Are you a resident of the Russian Federation?

Yes No→ end of interview

3. Do you live in Moscow?

Yes No→ end of interview

4. How old are you?

– y.o. If younger than 18, end the interview

5. What is your level of education?

1. Elementary, Secondary general education, dual education or less.

2. University level education or higher.

6. Do you work?

Yes No

7. Which of these population groups do you belong to?

1. We do not have enough money for food.
2. We have enough money for food, but we can not buy clothes.
3. We have enough money for food and clothes, but buying more expensive items such as a TV set or a fridge is a problem for us.
4. We can buy some expensive items such as a TV set or a fridge, but we can not buy a car.
5. We can buy a car, but we can not say that we are not on a budget.
6. We can buy as we please, no limitations.

8. Talking about the current state of affairs in the Russian economy, are you satisfied with the economic situation in Russia?

1. Absolutely satisfied
2. More satisfied than unsatisfied
3. More unsatisfied than satisfied
4. Absolutely unsatisfied
99. Cannot tell

9. How do you think the Russian position and its political weight on the worldwide political arena will change in next two years?

1. It will become much better
2. It will likely become better
3. It will likely become worse
4. It will become much worse
99. Cannot tell

Please read carefully the following text. After you are finished with the reading, you will be asked 4 (5) questions related to the text.

Neutral framing

Presidential elections is a procedure of direct, secret, equal and general voting which determines who will serve as the President of Russia for the next six years. These elections were held in 1991, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008 and 2012. The President of the Russian Federation is elected for a term of six years by the citizens of the Russian Federation on the basis of universal, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot. A registered candidate who receives more than half of the votes of those who took part in the voting shall be considered elected. The number of voters who took part in the voting is determined by the number of ballot papers of the prescribed form cast in the ballot boxes.

Nationalistic framing

Your vote can determine Russia's future development, its leader and the trajectory it will follow. Today Russia needs a strong leader who can challenge the Western and European States together with the U.S., in order to overcome the crisis relations, to resist sanctions and to defend Russia's position in the international arena. Today is a turning point, presidential candidates propose different scenarios for the development of the Russian policy. Some of them even consider handing over Crimea, for foreign use. Is it possible to allow this? You decide. Today you vote for what role Russia will play in the world tomorrow.

Economic framing

Your vote can determine Russia's future development, its leader and the trajectory

it will follow. Today Russia needs a strong leader who can overcome the protracted economic crisis, increase the real incomes of Russians, and reduce the number of people living below the poverty line. Today is the turning point, and presidential candidates propose different scenarios for the development of the Russian economy, any of which will undoubtedly affect your income too. Some of them even consider the abolition of social benefits. Is it possible to allow this? You decide. Today you vote for what kind of ruble you get tomorrow.

Read the following questions attentively. Choose “yes” or “no” for each one. Count how many “yes”es you have in your answers. Tell me only the total number.

A. Do you know when the presidential elections of the Russian Federation will take place?

Yes/No

B. Have you been talking about the political or economic situation in Russia with members of your family or with your friends during the last seven days? Yes/No

C. Should the Russian President raise taxes? Yes/No

D. Should the Russian President increase spending on social issues? Yes/No

(with sensitive question)

A. Do you know when the presidential elections of the Russian Federation take place?

Yes/No

B. Have you been talking about the political or economic situation in Russia with members of your family or with your friends during the last seven days? Yes/No

C. Should the Russian president raise income tax? Yes/No

D. Should the Russian president increase spending on social issues? Yes/No

E. Will you vote during the presidential elections of the Russian Federation in 2018?

Yes/No

Number of answers “Yes”: –

SI Section 3: Description of Survey Implementation Procedure

The experiment survey was conducted during the last week prior to the end of registration period for participation in the 2018 Russian presidential elections, which was on March 12, 2018. A team of 5 experienced surveyors were hired, carefully instructed and supervised. The survey took place on the 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th of March with the pilot conducted on March 6, 2018. Surveyors were sent to 8 different locations pre-chosen based on the criteria of medium inhabitant's income (see Table (8) for the list of districts with income indicators included), the districts were chosen from a range of middle income and low, differentiating from 40,000 to 75,000 rubles. Each day 4 surveyors asked 52 people each, working with one framing for a day. Surveyors received different framings to work with every day in order to avoid any bias influencing the results. Each surveyor received the quota requirements for every day of work (and, thus, for each portion of framings), which they managed to meet successfully every day. The surveyors approached respondents on in pre-chosen districts. The completed surveys were collected and transcribed on the same day. The scans of completed surveys are available upon request.

In total, 1197 people took part in the survey, with 1040 surveys used, apart from the pilot. The quota samplings were updated each day to preserve the balance among the treatment groups.

Таблица 8: Average monthly salary of large and medium-sized enterprises and non-profit organizations' employees in the districts selected for implementing the survey, in Rubles

District name	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Average 2012-2016
Кузьминки (Kuzminki)	47295,7	56557,1	51830,9	72471,0	59669,7	75700,54
Выхино-Жулебино (Vykhino-Zhulebino)	63336,2	97252,5	70796,4	73059,9	74057,7	40457,94
Вешняки (Veshnyaki)	31472,9	33447,3	38184,5	44836,7	54348,3	46548,24
Люблино (Lyublino)	45460,5	41275,7	43364,9	49222,2	53417,9	59851,14
Печатники (Pechatniki)	50823,4	53625,6	58934,1	66214,2	69658,4	67276,56
Нижегородская (Nizhegorodskaya)	63174,8	68375,5	67452,4	67824,5	69555,6	46069,76
Рязанский (Ryazanskyi)	34523,4	43404,9	45072,2	47942,2	59406,1	42339,58
Марьино (Marino)	38629,6	39159,7	40560,2	42455,1	50893,3	75700,54
Moscow	61529,6	69008,8	75611,0	78602,5	87615,1	74473,4