

When do Agents Deliver the Vote?: Vote-Popularity Function in Electoral Manipulations

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Abstract: While there are a large number of studies examining the determinants of electoral manipulation, scholars have not effectively addressed why there are varying degrees of manipulation. This is in part because previous scholarship has focused on the demand side of electoral manipulation such as under what conditions are *political elites* driven to rig the process. However, this one-sided analysis provides an incomplete picture and specifically overlooks the varying degrees of electoral manipulation because important actors are left out of the equation. Fortunately, scholars have begun to look at the supply side of electoral manipulation based on the principal-agent approach. The key argument is that agents tend to tamper with an election if their principals are more likely to emerge victorious. Although the principal-agent approach has shed light on the importance of agents in determining the intensity of manipulation, one important question has not been fully answered: How do the agents predict the electoral fortune of their principals, and as a result, make a strategic decision whether to engage in electoral manipulation actively (or passively)? In this paper, I argue that agents use the economy as a key proxy of winning probability of their principals in a given election. Good economy increases incumbents' likelihood of electoral victory, and this makes the agents blatant in their electoral misconduct, eventually resulting in a high degree of manipulation. I estimate the probability of incumbents' electoral victory in a sample of 449 elections from 78 electoral authoritarian regimes from the 1900s to 2015. I find convincing support for my theory, as the winning probability is a function of economy, and the magnitude of electoral manipulation is a function of winning probability.

Keywords: principal-agent, vote-popularity, electoral winning probability, electoral manipulation