Consequences of Competition Under Autocracy for Democratic Elections: From Imperial to Weimar Germany

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Abstract

How do authoritarian election practices affect democratic political outcomes? We argue that political parties' uneven access to state resources in a pre-democratic setting has lasting effects on their organizational development and electoral prospects after a democratic transition. When party elites are able to win authoritarian elections through manipulation, they under-invest in formal party organization and fail to cultivate stable voter linkages. After a democratic transition, poorly institutionalized parties are less effective at containing internal disagreements and representing their electorates, which undermines their electoral performance and increases voter defections to anti-system parties. We test this argument using an original district-level dataset on electoral disputes in German elections (1871-1912). We show that pro-regime parties' greater reliance on electoral manipulation in non-democratic elections predicts bigger electoral losses by their successor parties after democratization and that the Nazi Party secured more votes in districts with a history of electoral manipulation during the Great Depression.

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Introduction

There is a growing awareness of the benefits of party institutionalization in new democracies.[1] Researchers show that well-institutionalized mass political parties – organized in ways that make them organizationally autonomous from societal and state forces[2] – can dampen electoral volatility, prevent voter defections to anti-system parties, and increase satisfaction with democratic politics.[3] At the same time, there is relatively little work on how such parties emerge, especially during authoritarian rule, when access to state institutions and resources is extremely uneven.[4] This is an important omission because most democratic party systems have authoritarian origins[5] and because parties' origins continue to influence their development and electoral fortunes "even decades later."[6]

We study how varied access to state resources in autocratic settings affects party building and subsequent electoral outcomes. We start with the observation that investments in autonomous mass party organization and voter linkages are costly and occur only when few alternatives exist.[7] Elites allied with the authoritarian regime often have other ways of winning elections because they enjoy disproportionate access to the administrative and financial resources of the state.[8] We theorize that when elites can rely on external resources to win elections, they are less likely to build strong parties and to cultivate electoral linkages to voters. In particular, where ruling parties depend on state-sponsored electoral manipulation rather than their own mobilizational tools, they will be more weakly institutionalized; such parties will have weak linkages to voters and low party discipline, particularly in districts they won through state-sponsored manipulation.

We further argue that disparities in the types of organizational resources accumulated

[1] Bertoa 2017; Tavits 2013.
[2] Duverger 1959; Huntington 1968.
[3] Bernhard et al. 2015; Mainwaring and Zoco 2007; Schamis 2006.
[4] Levitsky and Way 2010.
[5] Riedl 2014.
[6] Panebianco 1988, 50.
[7] Bolleyer and Ruth 2018.
[8] Levitsky and Way 2010; Schedler 2013.

by parties under autocracy affect their electoral performance after a democratic transition.[9] First, since after a democratic transition former pro-regime parties no longer enjoy nearly monopolistic access to the state, if they also lack robust party structures and ties with voters, they will be less able to compete in the democratic period. These parties will perform poorly, particularly in districts where they had been most dependent on state support. Their under-institutionalization not only undermines electoral performance, but also has a second effect: it prevents them from successfully incorporating potential "spoilers," or the anti-regime elements that could subvert a post-transition democratic process.[10] This creates a supply of disaffected voters with ties to the old regime and weak links to existing political parties, who can be more easily mobilized by new anti-system parties. In this way, electoral practices from the predemocratic period cast a long shadow on the process of democratic consolidation after a transition.

We test this argument using an original dataset on electoral misconduct in Germany, one of the earliest adopters of universal male suffrage in Europe and, by the 1930s, a striking case of democratic failure. Starting in 1871, Imperial Germany held regular elections to the Reichstag, the national parliament, in which all males aged 25 and older could participate. In some parts of the country, practices that started effectively as an endorsement of Chancellor Bismarck's government at the polls gradually evolved into genuine competition. Elsewhere within Germany, electoral misconduct was commonplace and democratic procedures failed to take hold. Due to their ties to local state officials who managed elections and powerful economic actors with control over employment and capital, old-regime elites were especially likely to win mandates through manipulation.[11] We hypothesize that parties' access to external resources for influencing the vote in Imperial elections reduced their incentives to invest in formal party structures or cultivate a stable base of voters, which proved to be a liability after the democratic transition.

[9] Michael K Miller 2019.

[10] Grzymala-Busse 2020; Loxton 2014; Ziblatt 2017.

[11] Mares and Zhu 2015; Ziblatt 2009.

Using a panel dataset that combines district-level frequency and type of electoral manipulation in the imperial period with electoral outcomes before and after democratization, we find that electoral meddling by state officials for the benefit of the pro-regime parties results in greater electoral losses by these parties' Weimar successors after the democratic transition and during the Great Depression. We use qualitative evidence to show that the pro-regime conservative and liberal parties, which benefited from state meddling in elections the most, were organizationally "hollow"[12] and less autonomous at the end of the imperial period, and their Weimar successors, the DNVP and the DVP, inherited their organizational deficiencies after the transition. This indicates that while appearing beneficial in the short run, access to state-sponsored electoral manipulation disincentivized parties from establishing strong voter linkages and autonomous party organizations, and consequently, undermined their long-run performance.

This had long-run consequences for democracy itself. We find that the Imperial history of state-led electoral manipulation – but not private manipulation – predicts greater electoral gains of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, NSDAP*) during the Great Depression. We posit that districts with longer histories of state interference in the electoral process had larger numbers of disaffected voters with weak linkages to the established parties, who were more easily mobilized by the anti-system NSDAP during the crisis.

This paper advances the literature on party institutionalization by showing that access to state resources under autocracy does not necessarily result in strong authoritarian successor parties, as suggested by prior research.[13] Certain types of organizational resources can actually be a barrier for post-transition electoral performance and for subsequent democratic consolidation.[14] In particular, though the formal and informal organizational resources of the state may appear beneficial in the short run for ruling or regime-allied parties, such resources

[12]Schlozman and Rosenfeld 2019.
[13]Grzymala-Busse 2006; Kitschelt and Singer 2018; Loxton 2014; Stokes 2005.
[14]Grzymala-Busse 2020; Michael K Miller 2019; Slater and Wong 2013.

are not portable for competition in elections after a democratic transition.[15] In incumbent-led democratic transitions, authoritarian successor parties are often able to retain access to state resources through a negotiated or pacted transition, helping their post-transition survival.[16] In the much more common case of unplanned transitions via "rupture" (like the 1918/1919 German transition), however, such resources are not available. Two-thirds of democratization since 1800 have been of this sort – caused by international conflict, internal unrest or rivalries, and came as the result of incumbents trying to avoid it, while only one-third have been cases of "deliberate democratization" by incumbent political elites.[17]

Our research also contributes to the literature on the legacies of past democratic and authoritarian rule,[18] on subnational political regimes,[19] and on the consequences of electoral misconduct.[20] Our findings suggest that the effects of electoral manipulation are not limited to immediate electoral outcomes and may continue to influence politics in a given locality even once electoral integrity has been established. Finally, we offer a deeper, historical explanation for the subnational variation in the NSDAP success in the Weimar years by drawing attention to a key Imperial-era legacy – the pre-1919 electoral tactics of conservative and liberal political parties – and the resulting vulnerability of these parties' electorates to mobilization by the NSDAP during the Great Depression.

Electoral Manipulation as a Substitute to Party Building

Political parties are created because they help politicians to win office and implement their preferred policies.[21] Politicians' demand for parties thus depends on the availability and costs of alternative strategies for achieving these goals. For example, the arrival of television and other mass media facilitated campaigning and reduced politicians' incentives to build

[15] Loxton 2015, 161–62.
[16] Power 2018; Riedl 2014.
[17] Treisman 2020.
[18] Behrend and Whitehead 2016; Gerring et al. 2005; Hite and Cesarini 2004; Loxton 2015; Mickey 2015; Michael K. Miller 2013.
[19] Gervasoni 2010; Gibson 2012; Giraudy 2010; McMann 2018.
[20] Donno and Roussias 2012; Simpser 2013.
[21] Aldrich 1995.

political parties in order to win.[22] In post-1990 Russia, governors' political machines and politicized financial-industrial groups served as effective "party substitutes."[23]

We propose that parties' access to state resources following the introduction of elections is one of the most important contextual factors that influences the incentives for autonomous party building and the type of party organization that develops. One of the defining characteristics of electoral competition under autocracy is an uneven playing field.[24] In multiparty elections, pro-regime parties not only benefit from overt state repression of the opposition, but also enjoy disproportionate access to state administrative and financial resources.[25] As a result, they often secure mandates because state employees – election officials, tax collectors, and the police – coordinate and finance their campaigns, inflate their vote shares, or promote their platforms in state media. The uneven distribution of political power in authoritarian states thus makes electoral manipulation less costly and more attractive than building a party organization from scratch.

We argue that elites' access to the tools of electoral manipulation offered by the state affects their incentives to invest in party building. When and where state support is readily available and sufficient to win seats, elites will have weaker incentives to invest in territorially encompassing party structures, recruit professionals to raise and deploy party funds, or strengthen their connections to voters and activists. State-sponsored electoral manipulation thus substitutes for party building. These dynamics are self-reinforcing: parties that win the district through state intervention at time t will wind up organizationally weaker and thus more likely to resort to state aid to win the same district at $t + 1$, and so on.

We further argue that under-investment in party organization under autocracy has long-run implications for electoral outcomes after a democratic transition. Most obviously, the withdrawal of state support combined with the absence of independent organizational resources will translate into greater electoral losses in democratic elections for former auto-

[22] Mainwaring and Zoco 2007.
[23] Hale 2010.
[24] Levitsky and Way 2010.
[25] Schedler 2013.

cratic regime loyal parties. Organizational weakness will also increase the old regime parties' dependence on interest groups for funding, reducing their policy-making autonomy and undermining their responsiveness to voters. Further, former pro-regime parties in autocracies typically represent political and economic elites who have the most to lose from democratization. These voters, therefore, are most likely in Juan Linz's phrase– to be "disloyal" or at best "semi-loyal" democrats.[26] Thus, when the successor parties to ruling or regime-supporting parties are unable to win at least some democratic elections, especially in uncertain economic times, these same voters also have more incentives to form or support alternative, anti-system political parties and subvert the democratic process.[27] Within a country, this effect, we contend, is likely to be most pronounced in districts where the old-regime parties most relied on state support in the pre-democratic period and failed to cultivate linkages with voters.

To be sure, manipulating the vote may itself necessitate developing organizational capacity and accumulating economic resources. For example, vote buying often requires substantial organizational structures.[28] Parties may also cultivate links to large private employers who can intimidate their employees and monitor their electoral behavior to ensure support for the correct party.[29] The use of electoral manipulation undermines party building only when such organizational resources come from *outside* the party and are *no longer available* after the democratic transition.[30] These conditions are most applicable to state-sponsored manipulation: an unplanned democratic transition is more likely to deprive old-regime parties from accessing state resources than private resources. Some forms of private electoral influence, on the other hand, remain accessible in democratic settings. For example, in the United States businesses have been shown to exert control over how their employees vote

[26]Linz and Stepan 1978.

[27]Grzymala-Busse 2020; Loxton 2015; Riedl et al. 2020; Slater and Wong 2013; Ziblatt 2017.

[28]Stokes 2005.

[29]E.g., Frye, Reuter, and Szakonyi 2014; Mares 2015.

[30]Sometimes the old-regime parties are able to preserve control of authoritarian enclaves within democratic states and to continue to win seats through electoral manipulation (e.g., Mexican PRI, see Loxton 2015, 165). In this setting, their enduring institutional advantages undermine the quality of democratic competition. See Gibson 2012; LeBas 2013; Schedler 2013.

and mobilize their workers for the benefit of corporate interests by threatening them with dismissal.[31]

There is no question that electoral manipulation under autocracy also weakens opposition parties.[32] Yet after the transition, opposition parties – and the constituencies they represent – are less likely to view the new democratic rules as undermining their economic or political power. Post-transition organizational strength of the opposition side may thus be less critical to the survival of new democracies.[33] It is possible that democratic backsliding becomes likely, albeit for different reasons, when either the opposition or the old-regime parties are too weak *relative* to one another.[34]

To sum up, when party elites can rely on outside resources to manipulate the vote, they are less likely to invest in formal party organization or to cultivate links with voters. As a result, such parties will be under-institutionalized, with lower discipline and weaker roots in society, particularly in electoral districts where they depended on state support the most. After a democratic transition, these parties will sustain greater electoral losses in such districts, provided they no longer have access to state manipulation. Organizationally weak parties will also be less responsive to voters, more susceptible to factionalism and fragmentation and less able to contain radical insiders. And finally, especially given the fact that their core constituencies are loyalists of the former pre-democratic regime, organizational weakness at both party and district level will make their members and voters more likely to defect to anti-system parties.

[31] Hertel-Fernandez 2018.
[32] Donno and Roussias 2012.
[33] But see counterarguments in LeBas 2013, Schedler 2013.
[34] Lust and Waldner 2016.

Elections in Germany before and after 1918

German Empire (1871-1918)

We provide evidence for this argument by analyzing the long-run consequences of manipulation in Germany, which adopted universal male suffrage in Reichstag elections in 1871. Over the next 40 years and 13 elections, MPs from 397 single-member districts were elected using a uniform electoral system with majoritarian voting rules. Scholars generally agree that the national elections in Germany were more democratic than in most European countries at the time.[35] All men aged 25 or older could vote. All votes counted equally. Electoral contests were increasingly competitive: already in 1871, only eight Reichstag candidates (in a total of 397 districts) ran unopposed.[36] Often a second round (*Stichwahl*) occurred to ensure that the winner secured over 50% of the vote. Between 1871 and 1912, turnout rose from 50.7% to 84.5%. During this period, political parties began to invest in nation-wide organizations and programmatic development and grew increasingly entrepreneurial.[37] Sheri Berman argues that campaigns and elections contributed to the "professionalization of the political class" and increased the M.P.s' "attachment to parliament and suffrage."[38]

At the same time, the Reichstag was subordinated to the non-elected executive and its powers were limited to approving and amending legislation. Between 1878 and 1890, the associations, meetings, and publications of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) were banned.[39] Other authoritarian features included the late introduction of the secret ballot (1903), growing malapportionment, and severe suffrage restrictions in powerful state legislatures.

In addition to these national-level restrictions, electoral misconduct was widespread at the district level. As we document using an original dataset on electoral violations reported in 1871-1912, 18% of all seats in the German Reichstag were won through various forms of

[35] Anderson 2000; Berman 2001; Ritter 1990.
[36] Anderson 2000.
[37] Kreutzer 2001.
[38] Berman 2001, 446.
[39] SPD candidates continued to participate in the Reichstag.

manipulation and misconduct. Some of the most widespread violations involved excluding eligible voters on electoral lists, closing the polls early, excluding electoral observers, and designing ballots and ballot boxes in such as way as to undermine the secrecy of the vote. Altogether these procedural violations affected 81% of the challenged mandates. In addition to violations of procedural nature, in 57% of cases, state and local government officials intervened directly to benefit a specific party. They threatened sanctions for supporting the wrong candidate, banned meetings and confiscated the ballots of the opposition, and endorsed and actively campaigned for pro-regime parties. Civil servants were not only expected to vote for specific candidates, but could be disciplined for remaining "indolent" during the campaign.[40] In 1898-1907, the Prussian state ministry went as far as to disseminate secret "guidelines" on the behavior of state officials during the elections.[41] Prussian governors sometimes used discretionary funds to subsidize electioneering costs for the pro-regime candidates.[42] State interference was not confined to Prussia: Baden, Württemberg, Sachsen, Bayern, and other state administrations resorted to similar manipulation strategies.[43]

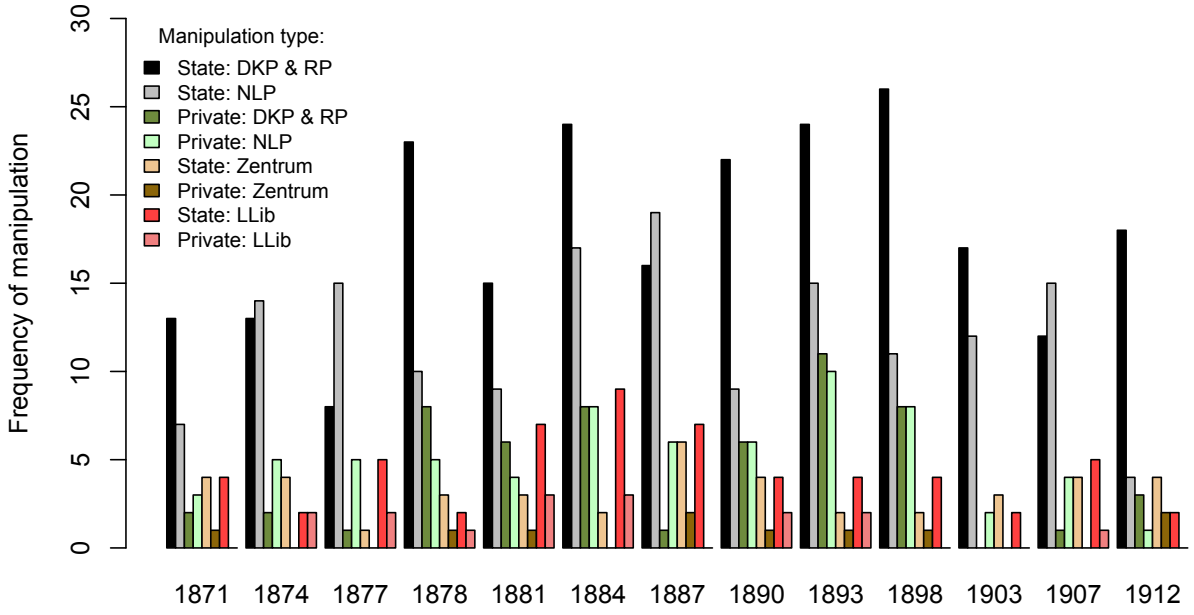
In 20% of contested mandates, private actors also sought to influence the vote. Wealthy landowners would deliver ballots in the name of their hired hands, and factory owners would threaten their employees with layoffs and reductions in wages for supporting the SPD. Priests and bishops as well as military clubs (*Kriegsvereine*) also sometimes intervened, distributing ballots for specific candidates and marking their opponents as undesirable.[44] At the same time, Germany stood out in the absence of electoral violence and large-scale ballot fraud, and vote buying was limited to providing beer, sausages, and cigars.

Most forms of misconduct benefited the parties allied with the government: the German Conservatives (*Deutschkonservative Partei, DKP*), the Imperial Party (*Reichspartei, RP*), and the National Liberals (*Nationalliberale Partei, NLP*). Electoral misconduct was

[40] Arsenschek 2003, 194.
[41] Arsenschek 2003, 197.
[42] Fairbairn 1990, 821.
[43] Arsenschek 2003, Ch.3.
[44] Most elections involved multiple forms of misconduct, so the percentages do not add up to 100%.

found in 29.4% of the DKP, 32.9% of the RP, and 24.7% of the NLP mandates. Broadly speaking, these parties represented the interests of "property-owning Protestants," including the landed Junkers, the German nobility, and big business.[45] As Sperber notes, "The liberal and conservative notables counted on government influence to bring through their candidate, sometimes to the point that the authorities became annoyed at being expected to do all the campaigning for them."[46] State officials essentially functioned as "a subsidiary party organization for the pro-regime parties."[47] The SPD and the Center Party were typically disadvantaged by the manipulation that favored the pro-regime parties, though parliamentary records also include incidents that benefited the opposition.

Figure 1: Electoral manipulation by the type of manipulation and the benefiting party.



[45]Sperber 1997, 109.
[46]Sperber 1997, 130.
[47]Arsenschek 2003, 220.

We argue that for the pro-regime liberal and conservative party elites, who, unlike the "outsider" Catholic and Socialist elites, were closely aligned with the state, the tools of electoral manipulation supplied by the executive became a ready "substitute" for party organization. In districts where they secured seats with the help of local officials, they postponed organizational investments and remained groups of "notables, who were active only in parliament or during an election campaign."[48]

The Weimar Republic (1919-1933)

Germany emerged out of WWI as a parliamentary democracy. The 1919 Constitution introduced proportional representation, enfranchised women, and lowered the voting age from 25 to 20, thus expanding the electorate by nearly 37 million people.[49] Control of the state passed into the hands of former outsiders such as Germany's Social Democrats. And elections were now, at all levels of government, free and fair.[50] These major institutional transformations were precipitated by defeat in WWI, the strengthening of organized labor, and the United States' preference for negotiating with a democratic state.

Without the tools of electoral manipulation at their disposal, the old-regime "parties of notables" faced an uncertain future. They could no longer rely on the efforts of the conservative state officialdom to improve their electoral performance. Under the new election law, the management of elections remained in the hands of the Ministry of the Interior, but the new regime brought with it a transformed state hierarchy: for the first time in German history, a representative of the working class, the Social Democratic Party (SDP), controlled the executive, and in 1919 Germany's Minister of the Interior was himself a Social Democrat.[51] The full scale of the transformation reached even Prussia, altering it from Germany's most reactionary state into one of SPD's most reliable strongholds —with a Social Democrat also running the state's Interior Ministry.[52] The uncertainty was exacerbated by

[48]Ritter 1990, 32.
[49]Falter 1991, 24.
[50]See Orlow 1986. This of course does not apply to elections after Nazi seizure of power in January 1933.
[51]Lau 2018, 87.
[52]Orlow 1986.

the transition from majoritarian to a PR system, which "required an organizational quantum leap."[53] Under PR, nation-wide party organization and a strong brand became crucial for electoral success.

Unlike the SPD and the Catholic Center Party, the conservative and liberal parties had to start virtually from scratch. The German Conservatives (DKP) and Free Conservatives (*Freikonservative*) as well as smaller right-wing factions responded to the new political realities by overcoming their divisions and coalescing into the German National People's Party (DNVP). The party's base was broadened to include various urban-, middle-, and working-class elements.[54] The DNVP members were united by their opposition to the new democratic state, the Versailles peace treaty, and "socialist-inspired revolution."[55] The party's program advocated the expansion of the power of the head of state and emphasized the national "German spirit" and the exclusion of all foreign influence from schools and public life. Its economic policy was full of contradictions: the agrarian interests within the party demanded protective tariffs for German agriculture; the Christian Socialist faction advocated for workers' right to join trade unions and share in the profits of their employers; the industrialists opposed socialization.[56]

The liberals regrouped into two new parties: (1) the German Democratic Party (DDP) on the left, composed from the majority of members of the Progressive People's Party and left-wing members of the NLP, and (2) the German People's Party (DVP) on the right, which absorbed most of the NLP members. The DDP positioned itself as a bridge between the bourgeoisie and the working class and joined the Weimar coalition, together with the SPD and the Center Party. The DVP, on the other hand, emphasized its national and bourgeois character and initially opposed the Weimar Republic. Both parties now relied on heterogeneous social bases, which included middle-class entrepreneurs, civil servants,

[53]Kreutzer 2001, 97.
[54]Chanady 1967.
[55]Chanady 1967, 67.
[56]Chanady 1967, 70.

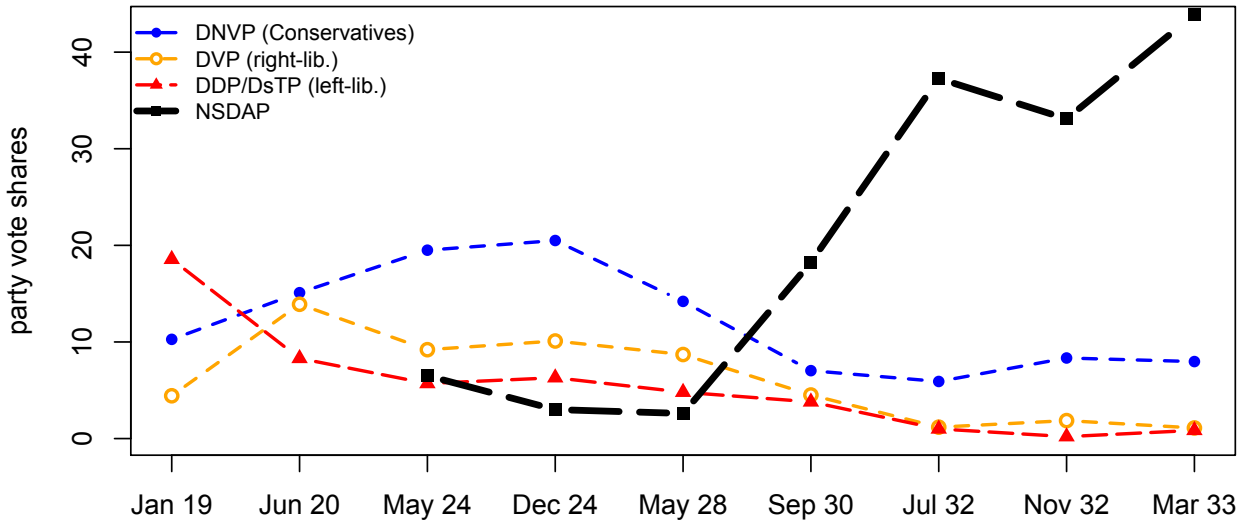
professionals, and even a small group of labor leaders.[57] Despite this, they were soon mocked as *Bonzenparteien* (parties of captains of industry) for their reliance on the funding from big business.[58]

In 1924-28, the so-called "golden age" of Weimar, the conservative and liberal parties regained some support at the polls relative to their poor performance in the first two Weimar elections. However, the onset of the agricultural crisis in 1927 and of the Great Depression in 1930 reduced their votes to single digits, as shown in Figure 2. Fueled by the defections from the liberal and conservative parties as well as successes among previous non-voters,[59] support for the NSDAP rose from a mere 2.6% in May 1928 to a striking 37.3% of the vote in July 1932. From then on, a pro-democracy governing coalition was not even possible. In January 1933, Hitler was appointed Chancellor, and in the March 1933 election, marred by intimidation and violence, the NSDAP support reached 43.9%.

We propose that the historical legacies of electoral misconduct in Imperial Germany and the resulting organizational weakness help explain the poor electoral performance of the liberal and conservative parties in the Weimar period. With a long history of victories delivered to them by state officials, the three parties allied with the pre-1914 authoritarian regime – the DKP, the RP, and the NLP – failed to construct their national and local party organizations or to develop a broad and loyal electorate. Their Weimar successors – the DNVP and the DVP – inherited "hollow" organizations.[60] Dependent on outside pressure groups and unable to represent their electorates, these parties were vulnerable to voter and elite defections, especially during crises. In this way, the legacies of manipulation from the imperial period became a "heavy burden" on the Weimar successors of the old-regime parties.[61] The weakness of the German right had another important consequence: it increased the pool of disaffected voters who could be mobilized by the NSDAP.

[57] Jones 1988, 26–27.
[58] Kreutzer 2001, 110.
[59] Falter 1990, 69.
[60] Schlozman and Rosenfeld 2019.
[61] Ritter 1990, 48.

Figure 2: Changes in support for the Conservative and Liberal Parties and the rise of the NSDAP in the Weimar elections.



What are the observable implications of this argument? First, because electoral manipulation in the Kaiserreich disproportionately benefited the conservative and liberal parties, we expect these parties to be organizationally weaker when compared to the parties that did not rely on electoral manipulation. Second, the subnational variation in the occurrence of manipulation for the benefit of liberal and conservative parties in imperial elections should predict the magnitude of electoral losses by their Weimar successors after the democratic transition and during the Great Depression. We anticipate electoral manipulation by state actors to be particularly consequential after the transition. Finally, we expect the NSDAP to have gained more votes in districts with higher manipulation in imperial period.

Original dataset on manipulation in Imperial Germany

While the actual occurrence of electoral manipulation in 19th-century Germany is unobservable, the extent of manipulation can be gleaned from the records of the Reichstag. The

Reichstag had a constitutional right to scrutinize electoral procedures in each district, to investigate allegations of electoral misconduct, to rescind disputed mandates, and to publicize uncovered violations.[62]

Under Art. 9 of the Voting Law, electoral proceedings were public and any eligible voter could file a petition (without any financial cost) about the occurrence of misconduct within ten days of the election. The petitioner had to provide evidence and list witnesses. Ahead of the election, newspapers urged citizens to report "anything at all untoward" immediately.[63] In addition to monitoring the procedure themselves, political parties distributed brochures listing the most important electoral norms and regulations to voters.[64] The complaints were investigated by the standing Committee on Election Disputes (*Wahlprüfungskommission*), consisting of MPs selected proportionally to their parties' Reichstag representation.[65] The Committee also conducted an independent review of electoral process in each district. It then voted on whether the extent of the violations and the quality of evidence warranted the annulment of the disputed mandate or further investigation. An election was annulled only if the winner no longer held majority after subtracting the votes gained through electoral misconduct.[66] The Reichstag also publicized the uncovered violations and censured state officials or private individuals involved.[67]

Between 1871 and 1914, 974 electoral disputes came up for the Plenum vote. Most occurred in Prussia, which accounts for 71% (N=688) of disputes and 59% of electoral districts (N=236).[68] To ensure that the electoral disputes reflect manipulation rather than procedural errors and to distinguish between different forms of manipulation, we studied charges behind each disputed mandate. In 43 out of 974 cases (4.5%), the petition was withdrawn and/or few specifics about the alleged violation are provided. We do not count

[62] Arsenschek 2003, 15.
[63] Anderson 2000, 282.
[64] Arsenschek 2003, 110.
[65] The Committee had 14 members, on average. Arsenschek 2003, 62.
[66] This was extremely rare, because of the near impossibility of determining how many votes were affected through various forms of misconduct and the Committee's partisan preferences.
[67] Arsenschek 2003, 146–155.
[68] Arsenschek 2003, 114.

these elections as manipulated. We further coded the remaining 931 disputed elections in terms of *who was accused of distorting free and fair elections* following the conservative criteria applied by the Reichstag itself. Attempts to deliver victory to specific parties by state officials was reported in the majority (57.0%) of cases; 19.7% of cases involved private employers and landlords; clerics, military clubs, and candidates themselves were involved in electoral misconduct in 7.9% of cases. "Undue" state influence often accompanied other violations for which local officials were responsible, such as failing to publicize the election date, excluding electoral observers, designing irregular ballots and ballot boxes, or closing the polls early (81% of challenged elections involved procedural violations of this sort).

We provide detailed information on coding rules in Appendix Section A and present an example that covers several types of manipulation at once. In the district of Groß Wartenberg-Oels (Breslau) in the 1893 election, RP candidate Wilhelm von Kardorff benefited from state, private, and church influence as well as procedural violations. The electoral lists in this district lacked appropriate signatures, voters were added to the electoral lists without proper justification, and the electoral board (*Wahlvorstand*) violated impartiality by endorsing von Kardorff (coded as "procedural violation"). In addition, several pastors confiscated the ballots of the liberal candidate and distributed RP ballots instead (coded as "church manipulation"). Furthermore, the royal district councilor of Groß-Wartenberg traveled to the individual communities in his district, appointing community leaders and judges and asking them to facilitate von Kardorff's victory; the chief magistrate of Ellguth assigned his clerk to distribute 500 ballots and leaflets in local villages, while another district official went from house to house confiscating liberal and distributing conservative ballots (coded as "state manipulation"). "Private manipulation" also occurred: landlords confiscated liberal and SPD ballots, threatened their employees and lessees with financial repercussions, and checked their employees and tenants' ballots at polling stations on election day.[69]

Figure 3 plots subnational variation in the total number of old-regime parties' (DKP,RP

[69]Report of the Election Examination Committee Nr. 220 (1895) in Verhandlungen des Reichstages, Vol. 142, 1. 1894/95, pp. 942-46.

and NLP) mandates affected by state and private manipulation. Two or more forms of manipulation sometimes occurred in the same district, consistent with the example above.

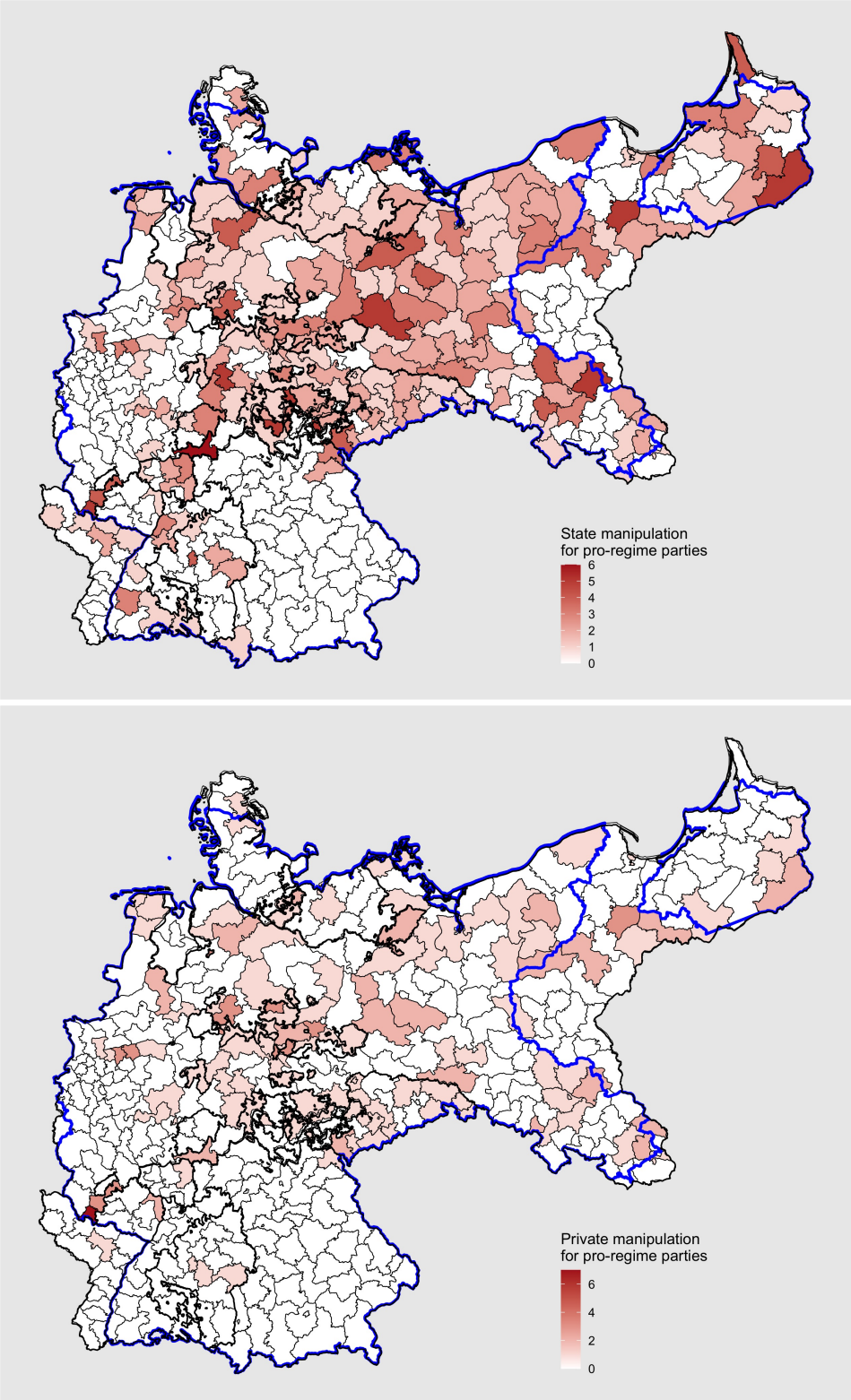
While our ability to separate allegations against state and private actors from procedural violations strengthens our confidence in data quality, using allegations of manipulation to measure its actual occurrence is not unproblematic. The records of electoral disputes probably understate the old-regime party elites' actual reliance on manipulation.[70] The fear of reprisals may have deterred voters from filing petitions and naming witnesses in districts where manipulation was particularly egregious. Supporters of the losing side also had fewer incentives to protest indistricts where challenging the result seemed hopeless.[71] Importantly, the underreporting of electoral misconduct in most-affected districts biases against our hypothesis that higher manipulation leads to greater electoral losses after democratization.

Electoral disputes could also reflect, in part, the presence of genuine electoral competition in a district and the willingness to protest. Yet making an unsubstantiated accusation against local political and economic elites was costly, and the Reichstag discarded petitions unsubstantiated by evidence.[72] In addition, existing cross-national analyses of post-election protests indicate that they are strongly correlated with the evidence of election-day falsification and are not simply an expression of "moral grievances about unfair and corrupt electoral practices."[73]

Why did manipulation occur in some districts but not others? Research has emphasized socio-economic differences across German constituencies, including the extent of landholding inequality[74] as well as occupational heterogeneity and skill level of the workforce.[75] We replicate these analyses using aggregate measures of total, state, and private electoral misconduct in Appendix Table A.5. Figure 4 indicates that electoral manipulation was less prevalent in

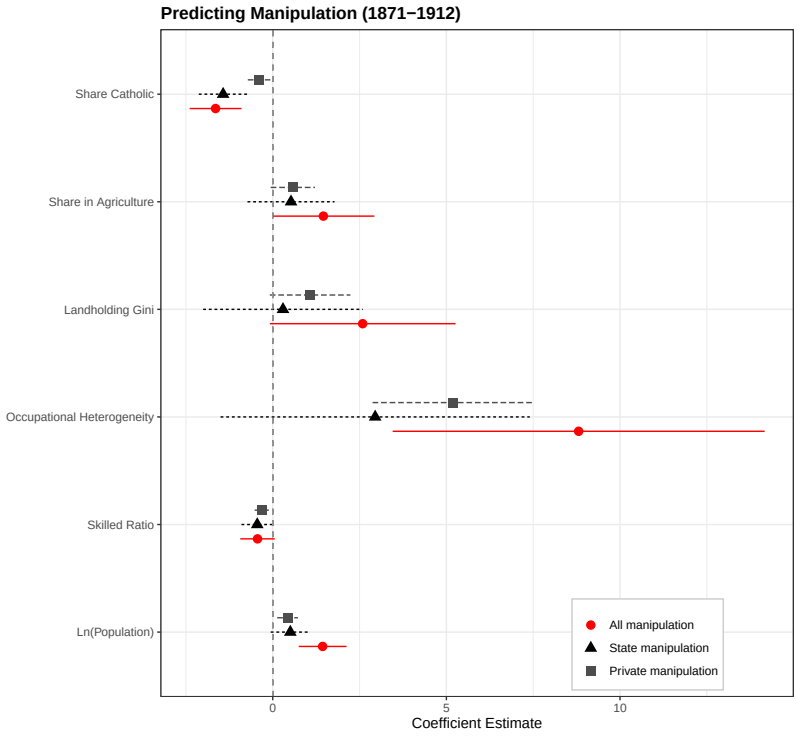
[70] Arsenschek 2003, 30.
[71] Arsenschek 2003, 113.
[72] Arsenschek 2003.
[73] Luo and Rozenas 2017, 27.
[74] Ziblatt 2009.
[75] Mares 2015; Mares and Zhu 2015. Election-specific factors also mattered: manipulation may have been both more likely in tight races and typically targeted the SPD, a common enemy for conservative and liberal notables and for imperial authorities alike.

Figure 3: Electoral manipulation by state officials and private employers benefiting the pro-regime parties (DKP+RP, NLP) at the district level. The borders of the Weimar Republic are marked in blue. Thicker black lines are state borders.



predominantly Catholic districts; occupational heterogeneity and lower skill level also predict the frequency of private manipulation. At the same time, only the share of Catholics and skilled ratio consistently predicts state manipulation in multivariate regression.

Figure 4: Socio-economic predictors of electoral manipulation in Imperial Germany. Estimates and 95% confidence intervals are based on regressions in Table A.5.



Electoral data at the level of imperial districts

We examine the pro-regime parties' performance at the level of imperial electoral district before and after the democratic transition (*Wahlkreis*, N=355).[76] The results for the very first democratic election, in 1919, are available only at the level of larger units (N=35) and are discussed in the Appendix. The data from Weimar period were aggregated to the level of 355 imperial districts, which are larger and stayed constant for all thirteen elections.[77]

[76]The total number of districts in Imperial Period was 397; the dataset excludes 34 districts that Germany lost after WWI.

[77]One exception is parts of three large cities, which are aggregated upward into three city-units: Berlin, Breslau, and Hamburg.

We use party support from the first round of imperial elections, which is more comparable to electoral outcomes under the post-1919 PR system than the two-party runoff. Because we are interested in how electoral manipulation affected the performance of parties with differential access to the authoritarian state, we omit the shares of Weimar-era parties with no obvious imperial predecessors, opposition parties (the SD and Zentrum), and parties that split off the main imperial successor parties, the DNVP and the DVP, in post-1919 elections. Support for these new and splinter parties enters our analysis indirectly, through the changes in the vote shares of the main parties of interest. We grouped the pro-regime political parties into two camps with clear successors in the Weimar period. The conservative camp includes the RP and the DKP in imperial period and the DNVP in the Weimar period. The right-wing liberal camp includes the NLP and the LRP[78] in the imperial period and the DVP in the Weimar period.[79] When a given party did not compete in a given district in a particular election, its vote share is coded as NA (this applies only to imperial elections).

We focus on vote shares after 1890, considered a turning point in Imperial Germany when mass politics began to replace the politics of notables. In the post-1890 period, the Socialists' style of campaigning was gradually adopted by other parties, starting with the Center, then the conservatives, and finally the liberal parties.[80] By the 1893 elections, the Socialist ban lapsed; the electoral term was extended from three to five years; restrictions on party organizations were lifted, and Chancellor Bismarck resigned. At the same time, state officials continued to intervene on behalf of the old-regime parties.

Empirical Strategy

The key identification problem is that electoral manipulation is deployed strategically: state and private agents intervene in places where they expect their preferred party to lose in the short or medium term. Although manipulation is certainly endogenous, we are able to

[78]The LRP competed between 1871 bis 1874 and merged into the NLP afterward.

[79]Other main political groupings were the left-wing liberals, fragmented for most of the imperial period and united into DDP (DsTP) after 1919; the Social Democrats, and the Catholic Center.

[80]Sperber 1997, 19.

exploit an exogenous source of *temporal* variation in the pro-regime parties' access to the tools of manipulation – Germany's democratization. In 1919, the electoral playing field was suddenly leveled; the National Liberals and Conservatives could no longer win seats through state officials' efforts since the Ministry overseeing elections was now out of their hands. We estimate the following model to test our prediction that following democratization the old-regime parties will suffer greater losses in districts where they were more dependent on state manipulation:

$$V_{pdt} = \alpha * Democratization_t * Manipulation\ History_{pd} + \nu_p + \eta_d + \gamma_t + \epsilon_{pdt}$$

Our main outcome is V_{pdt}, the vote share of political party p in district d in election t. The main coefficient of interest, α, is on the interaction between the total count of imperial elections manipulated in favor of party p in district d ($Manipulation_{pd}$) and a democratization dummy ($Democratization_t$). This term measures the change in pro-regime party vote shares following democratization (from 1912 to 1920) in districts with higher incidence of electoral manipulation. We account for unobserved heterogeneity by including fixed effects at the party (ν_p), electoral district (η_d) and election (γ_t) levels. In some models we also incorporate socio-economic predictors of manipulation X_d, interacted with the democratization dummy. This specification addresses concerns about unobserved time-invariant characteristics of parties and districts and about election-year-specific variables that affect vote shares for all party-districts in the same way. The only relevant confounders in this setup would vary with the treatment, *Electoral Manipulation*, *over time* and *within* party-districts.

All elections between 1919 and 1932 were free and fair. However, the political system faced another exogenous shock: the Great Depression. The crisis reshuffled existing alliances and prompted voter defection from the liberal and conservative parties toward the NSDAP. Our hypothesis is that the NSDAP would gain more support during the Great Depression in districts with greater history of electoral manipulation in the imperial period. To test this

hypothesis, we conduct analysis at the district level using data from seven Weimar elections, starting in May 1924, when the NSDAP first participated. We also use this alternative district-year specification to examine whether predemocratic history of manipulation predicts losses by the DNVP and DVP during the Great Depression. We estimate the following model:

$$V_{dt} = \eta_d + \lambda_t + \delta * Depression_t * Manipulation\ History_d + \mu X_{dt} + \epsilon_{dt}$$

The main quantity of interest is the coefficient on the interaction between the onset of the Great Depression ($Depression_t$, coded one for elections starting in 1930) and Manipulation in favor of conservatives and right-wing liberals in the imperial period at the district level ($ManipulationHistory_d$). We include election (λ_t) and district (η_d) fixed effects as well as covariates in the specification that includes continuous specification of manipulation.

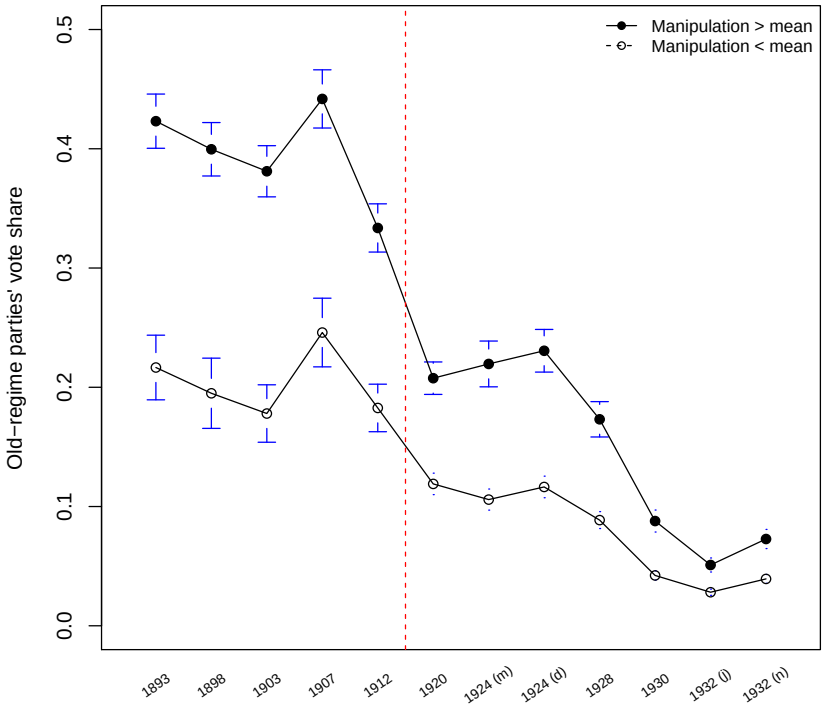
We operationalize treatment in two ways. We use a dichotomous indicator that codes districts as having had a total count of manipulated elections above the mean. In this way, only districts with actually historically high fraud are assigned to the treatment group. This measure is blunt, but it allows us to estimate the Average Treatment Effect (ATT) through the difference-in-differences with the parallel trends assumption, i.e. that voting shares in treated (with above-average manipulation) and control (below-average manipulation) party-districts were running parallel to one another in the pre-democratization period. In addition, we use the total count of manipulation in the period before democratization, which adds the linearity assumption. Though this second design cannot estimate the ATT, it allows to recover a quantity of interest that is consistent with the results of the two-period DID specification. The coefficient on the interaction between the post-democratization dummy and pre-democratization manipulation in this case can be interpreted as an impact of each additional manipulated election on the vote shares of a specific party.

Results

The Consequences of Democratization for the Old-regime Parties

How does the old-regime parties' performance in democratic elections vary with past access to electoral manipulation? Figure 5 presents trends in the average vote shares of the conservative and right-wing liberal parties before and after democratization in districts with electoral manipulation above and below the mean. The plot indicates that higher levels of electoral support for the pro-regime parties in "manipulated" districts and a greater drop in vote shares during the Weimar period. The figure also supports the parallel trends assumption: the parties' support followed similar patterns prior to democratization.

Figure 5: Performance of conservative and liberal parties in 1893-1932 in districts with different histories of electoral manipulation. The red line signifies the onset of democratization.



In Table 1, we examine the consequences of electoral manipulation for the pro-regime parties using panel data at the level of imperial districts for entire Germany and Prussia only. Panel A presents results of a two-period difference-in-differences estimation with a binary indicator of treatment – total, state, and private manipulation. In all models, the coefficient on the interaction between democratization and manipulation dummies is negative and significant at 1% level. Party support dropped by approximately 7%, plus or minus 2%, in districts with above average manipulation. The results are similar for state and private manipulation treatments, with the decrease in post-democratization vote shares by 5-7%, depending on the model. The effect of electoral manipulation is thus equivalent to at least half of a standard deviation in the vote share of the successor parties in the 1920 election (μ=16%, sd=11%). We plot these estimates with 95% confidence intervals in Figure 6. The figure also presents results from placebo tests (see Appendix Table A.6) that support the parallel trends assumption and show null results for the interaction between manipulation and the lagged democratisation dummy.

We obtain similar estimates for the continuous measure of manipulation in Panel B. We estimate a 3% decrease in the old-regime party vote share with each additional manipulated election for all forms of manipulation and for state manipulation (Models 7-10) and a 4% decrease for private manipulation (Models 11-12). Thus, it seems that state and private manipulation had similar implications for parties' electoral performance after democratization. Subsetting to Prussia does not change the coefficients on the interaction terms.

Defection to the NSDAP during the Great Depression

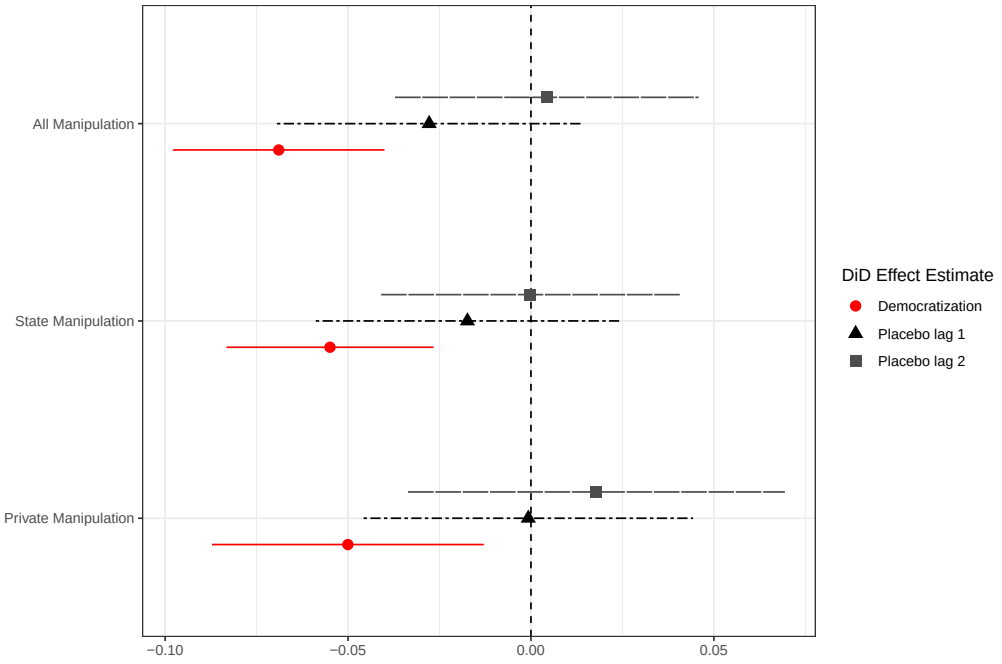
We now consider the implications of past manipulation for the rise of the NSDAP. Figure 7 plots NSDAP vote shares in districts with above and below-average incidence of manipulation in the imperial period. We see that trends in average support for the NSDAP diverge after the onset of the Great Depression, with the NSDAP winning more votes in districts that experienced more manipulation, in line with our argument.

Table 1: Vote for the old-regime and successor parties. Only districts where the party competed both before and after 1919 are included. Standard errors clustered at the district level in parentheses. Constant is omitted.

Panel A	Two-period DID, manipulation above the mean as treatment					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Democratization*Manip	−0.07***	−0.07***				
	(0.01)	(0.02)				
Democratization*State Manip			−0.05***	−0.06***		
			(0.01)	(0.02)		
Democratization*Private Manip					−0.05***	−0.07***
					(0.02)	(0.02)
Democratization	−0.06***	−0.05***	−0.07***	−0.06***	−0.09***	−0.08***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Manipulation	0.14***	0.17***				
	(0.02)	(0.02)				
State Manipulation			0.13***	0.16***		
			(0.02)	(0.02)		
Private Manipulation					0.12***	0.16***
					(0.02)	(0.03)
Party:RLib	−0.03***	−0.02*	−0.03***	−0.02**	−0.03***	−0.05***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Prussia only	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
N	1,117	685	1,117	685	1,117	685
Adjusted R2	0.44	0.52	0.43	0.52	0.39	0.47
Panel B	Elections in 1893-1932, continuous measure of manipulation					
	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Democratization*Manip	−0.03***	−0.03***				
	(0.004)	(0.004)				
Democratization*State Manip			−0.03***	−0.03***		
			(0.005)	(0.01)		
Democratization*Private Manip					−0.04***	−0.04***
					(0.01)	(0.01)
Democratization	−0.21***	−0.22***	−0.23***	−0.23***	−0.25***	−0.25***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Manipulation	0.06***	0.06***				
	(0.003)	(0.004)				
State Manipulation			0.06***	0.06***		
			(0.005)	(0.01)		
Private Manipulation					0.08***	0.09***
					(0.01)	(0.01)
Party:RLib	−0.06***	−0.08***	−0.06***	−0.08***	−0.07***	−0.10***
	(0.004)	(0.01)	(0.004)	(0.01)	(0.004)	(0.01)
Prussia only	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
N	6,717	4,032	6,717	4,032	6,717	4,032
Adjusted R2	0.68	0.71	0.66	0.69	0.64	0.68

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Figure 6: Change in support for the old-regime parties and successors after democratization in districts with above-average manipulation. The estimates and 95% confidence intervals are based on the difference-in-difference analysis in Panel A of Table 1 and placebo tests in Table A.6 the Appendix.

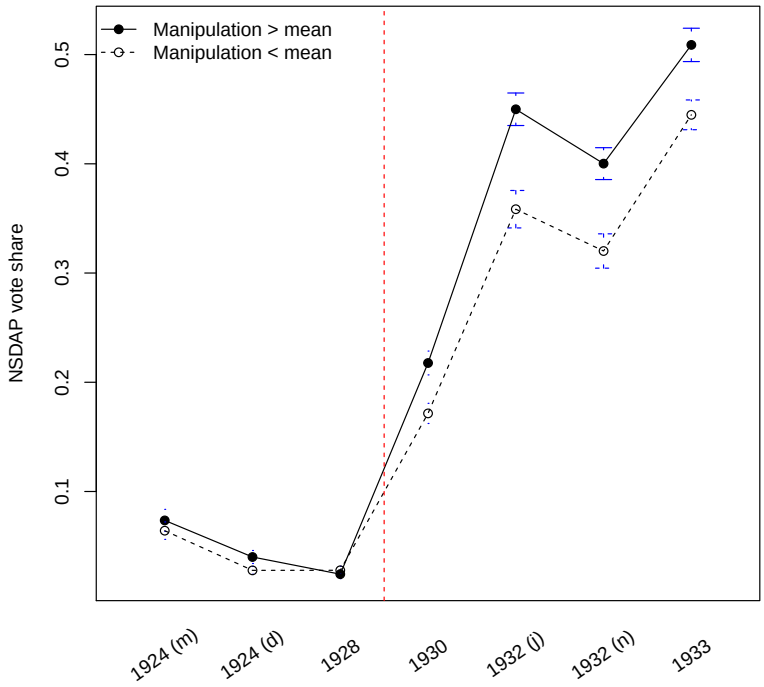


Analysis in this section focuses on the interaction between *Electoral Manipulation*, measured at the end of the imperial period for all districts, with the Great Depression dummy, coded as one starting in 1930.[81] We expect greater gains for the NSDAP and greater losses by the DNVP and DVP in districts with higher prevalence of electoral manipulation in the imperial period.

Results from the two-period difference-in-difference models and OLS with district and election-fixed effects are presented in Table 2. The coefficient on the interaction term is positive and statistically significant in all models except for the model with private manipulation within Prussia. Two-period models in Panel A suggest that the Nazi party secured an additional 5% of the vote in districts with above-average state manipulation and above-average manipulation more broadly. This is a sizable effect, equivalent to over two thirds of

[81] We implicitly assume that the economic shock was uniform across space.

Figure 7: Electoral manipulation in favor of the Conservatives and National Liberals in imperial period and electoral performance of the NSDAP in the Weimar elections.



a standard deviation in the NSDAP vote in 1930 (μ=19%, sd=7%). As a placebo test for parallel trends, we also lag the onset of the Great Depression by 1-2 elections (see Appendix Table A.7). The placebo analysis suggests that trends in NSDAP vote between districts with above-average and below-average manipulation levels began to diverge slightly earlier, in 1928, though the coefficient is small and negative. We present the main estimates and 95% confidence intervals for different types of manipulation for the onset of the Depression and placebo tests for pre-Depression periods in Figure 8.

In Panel B, we include models with a continuous indicator of electoral manipulation. This analysis suggests electoral gains of additional 2% for each manipulated election (Models 1-2) and an additional 3% for each election where state officials intervened. The coefficient on private manipulation is smaller and only marginally significant within Prussia. We find that the NSDAP gained 2-3% of the vote in districts with above-average private manipulation, at 2% of the vote per manipulated election. These results are less robust to including time-invariant covariates interacted with democratization; only the coefficient on state manipulation retains statistical significance (see Appendix Table A.10).

In Appendix Table A.8, we also evaluate the old-regime successor parties' cross-district vulnerability to the economic shock that stems from to their past reliance on electoral manipulation and consequent under-institutionalization and weak ties to voters. The difference-in-difference estimates from this analysis are plotted in Figure 9. The effect for both the DNVP and DVP is negative and statistically significant for state manipulation, but not for private manipulation. The results indicate that the DNVP vote drops by 6% and the DVP vote drops by 2% with the onset of Depression in districts with a history of state manipulation.

Overall, the results are consistent with the analysis in the previous section: the old-regime successor parties were more vulnerable to voter defections in the districts where they had relied on state influence to win elections rather than invested in party organization and built linkages with voters. However, whereas both state and private manipulation contributed to the old-regime parties' loss of support in the aftermath of democratization, state

Figure 8: Change in support for the NSDAP during the Great Depression in districts with above-average manipulation in imperial elections. The estimates and 95% confidence intervals are based on the difference-in-difference analysis in Panel A of Table 2 and placebo tests in Table A.7.

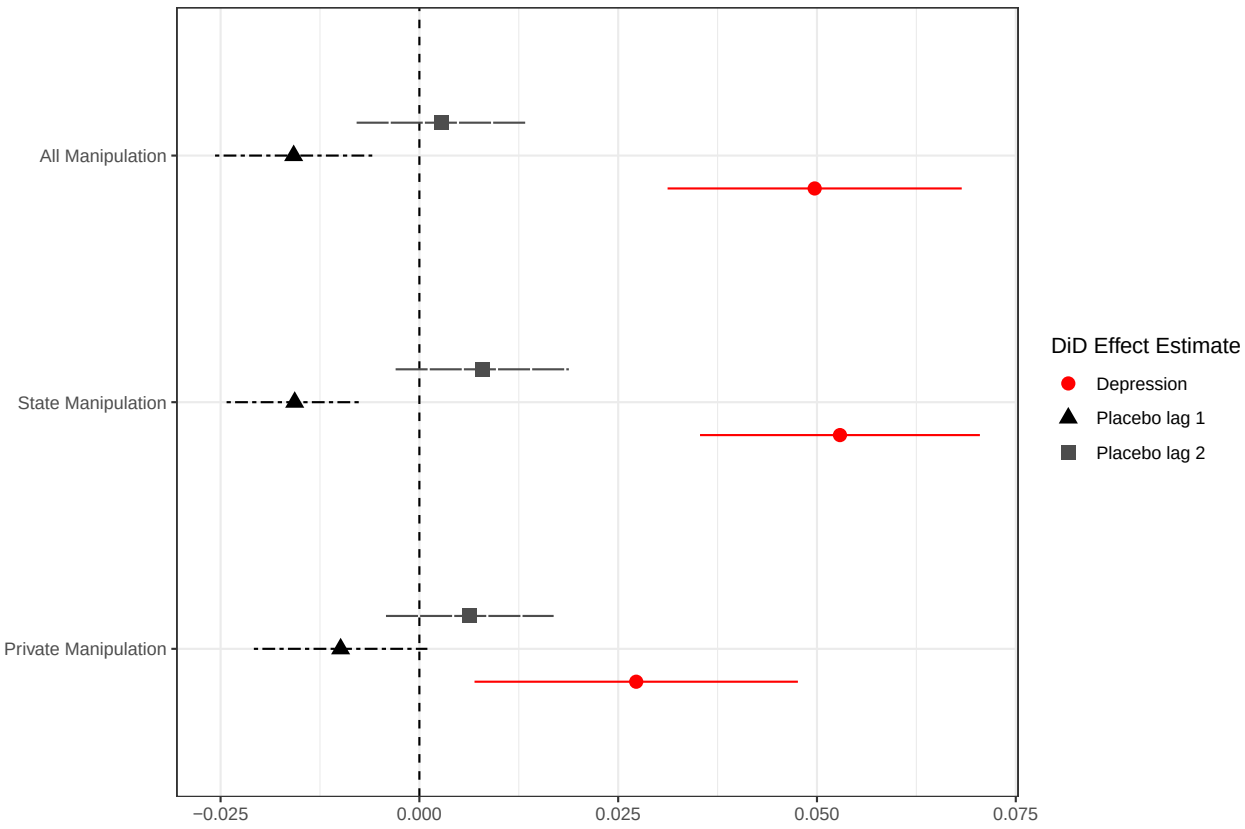
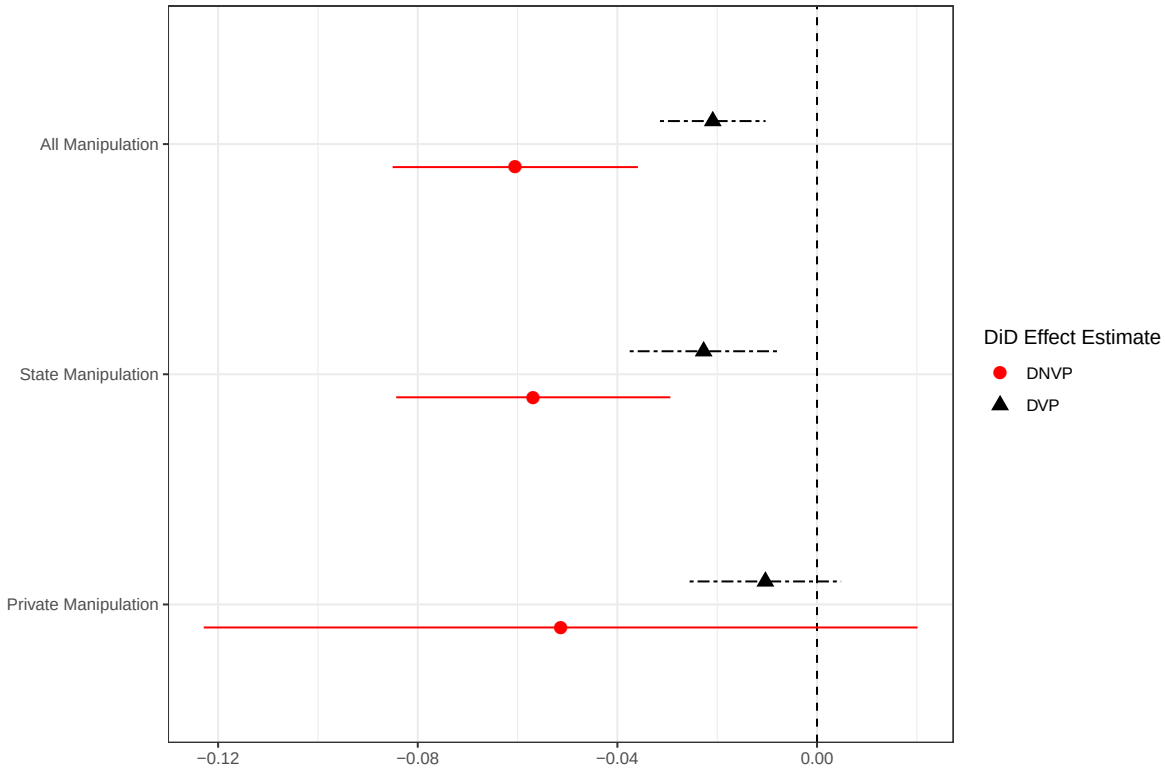


Table 2: Support for the NSDAP and electoral manipulation in favor of the old-regime parties. Standard errors clustered at the district level in parentheses. Constant is omitted.

Panel A	Two-period DID, manipulation above the mean as treatment					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Depression*Manipulation	0.05***	0.05***				
	(0.01)	(0.01)				
Depression*State Manip			0.05***	0.05***		
			(0.01)	(0.01)		
Depression*Private Manip					0.03***	0.02
					(0.01)	(0.01)
Depression	0.14***	0.16***	0.14***	0.15***	0.16***	0.17***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Manipulation	0.01***	0.01**				
	(0.005)	(0.01)				
State Manipulation			−0.04***	0.01*		
			(0.004)	(0.01)		
Private Manipulation					−0.01**	−0.09***
					(0.01)	(0.01)
Prussia only	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
N	710	422	710	422	710	422
Adjusted R2	0.81	0.82	0.81	0.82	0.78	0.79
Panel B	Elections in 1920-1932, continuous measure of manipulation					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Depression*Manipulation	0.02***	0.02***				
	(0.003)	(0.004)				
Depression*State Manip			0.03***	0.03***		
			(0.004)	(0.01)		
Depression*Private Manip					0.02***	0.02*
					(0.01)	(0.01)
Depression	0.37***	0.39***	0.37***	0.40***	0.39***	0.42***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Manipulation	0.04***	0.04***				
	(0.002)	(0.002)				
State Manipulation			0.06***	0.06***		
			(0.003)	(0.003)		
Private Manipulation					0.01	−0.03***
					(0.005)	(0.01)
Prussia only	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
N	2485	1477	2485	1477	2485	1477
Adjusted R2	0.91	0.92	0.91	0.92	0.91	0.92
Note:					*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

manipulation proved more pernicious during the Great Depression.

Figure 9: Change in support for the old-regime successor parties during the Great Depression in districts with above-average manipulation in their favor in imperial elections. The estimates and 95% confidence intervals are based on the two-period difference-in-difference analysis in Table A.8.



Understanding the Mechanisms: Formal Party Building

We argue that reliance on electoral manipulation produced negative consequences for Germany's conservative and liberal parties in the long run. Having failed to build strong organizations and develop stable electorates, these parties remained weak and lost members and voters after democratization and during the Great Depression. Party weakness had particularly pernicious consequences for postwar Germany, contributing to the rise of the NSDAP, because of the availability of anti-democratic "spoilers," or groups dubbed by Linz and Stephan as either "disloyal" or only "semi-loyal" to democracy because of their alle-

giance to the former regime.[82] With weak organization, conservative and liberal parties did not have the resources to contain their core constituencies.[83] This section spells out how this process played out in the German case.

First, what evidence is there of party weakness for liberals and conservatives in the imperial era and afterwards? Scholars typically base their assessments of party organization on the professionalization of staff, the extensiveness of its territorial organization, and the size and activism of its membership.[84] In the German case, such information is only available at the party level. Table 3 compares membership and organizational structure of the main political parties on the eve of WWI. It is clear that the SPD and the Center were organizationally stronger than the old-regime parties that had benefited from access to electoral manipulation. Despite state repression, the SPD build strong and centralized organizational structure supported by "a whole galaxy of affiliated organizations, from trade unions, to bicycling clubs, to free-thinkers' burial societies."[85] On the eve of WWI, the party had 1 million due-paying adherents – blue-collar workers, small businessmen, civil servants, and urban professionals.[86] The Center Party was not too far behind.[87]

Table 3: Organizational structures of key parties at the end of the imperial period.

Imperial Party	**Organizational Strength**	**Weimar Successors**
SPD	1 million dues-paying members party press, full-time staff	SPD, KPD
The Center Party	800,000 dues-paying members of the People's Association for Catholic Germany	The Center Party minus the Bavarian Peasant Party
National Liberal Party	2,200 clubs with 200,000 members paid staff of 17 in Berlin office	DVP (main successor), as well as DDP & DNVP
DKP and RP	Dependent on ancillary organizations, such as the BdL with 330,000 members & 700 employees	DNVP
Left-liberals	1,500-1,600 local clubs with 120,000 members	DDP

Sources: Nipperdey (1961), Sperber (1997).

[82]Linz and Stepan 1978.
[83]Grzymala-Busse 2020; Loxton and Mainwaring 2018.
[84]Tavits 2012.
[85]Sperber 1997, 54.
[86]Sperber 1997, 71.
[87]Anderson 2000, 216.

By contrast, the old-regime conservative and liberal parties – the DKP, RP, and the NLP – remained organizationally weak.[88] The conservatives' national organization was so ineffective that the party failed to arrange safe by-elections for party leaders who lost their regular seats.[89] Similarly, the NLP's first party congress was convened only in 1892, and its statute was not adopted until 1905.[90] In addition to their reliance on the government, these parties grew increasingly dependent on economic interest groups, such as the League of Farmers (*Bund der Landwirte, BdL*) and the Central Association of German Industrialists (*Centralverband Deutscher Industrieller*), to secure votes.[91] For example, in 1898-1912, one third of the DKP MPs were high-level BdL functionaries, while the DKP General Secretary Josef Kaufhold, appointed in 1905, was paid by the BdL and worked from his BdL office. The BdL influenced the selection of DKP candidates and controlled the behavior of its MPs.[92] The party's Weimar successor would continue relying on the "contracting-out model" of party building, which reduced its autonomy vis-a-vis various associations and interest groups.[93]

The organizational implications of the old-regime parties' reliance on official electoral manipulation are easy to trace during the times when state support wavered or in areas where the authorities favored the NLP over the DKP and vice versa. In 1874, the Conservatives were briefly out of Bismarck's favor. As can be seen in the bottom graph in Figure 1 presented earlier, state officials were more likely to intervene for the benefit of the NLP during this period. This change of fortunes produced chaos, but had positive organizational implications. In many districts Conservative candidates faced other conservatives, which convinced disparate groups of nobles, landowners and others to coalescence into the German Conservative Party in 1876, in order to coordinate in the next election.[94] With the

[88]The Left-Liberals, who benefited from fraud to a somewhat lesser extent, were also organizationally weak. Although the various left-liberal groups began expanding party organization much earlier (in the 1880s) than the pro-regime conservative and liberal parties, they remained divided until the creation of the Progressive People's Party (FVP) in 1910. Nipperdey 1961, 176–80.

[89]Nipperdey 1961, 262–64.

[90]Nipperdey 1961, 99.

[91]Albertin 1972; Nipperdey 1961.

[92]Ziblatt 2017, 200–203.

[93]Kreutzer 2001.

[94]Nipperdey 1961, 352–54.

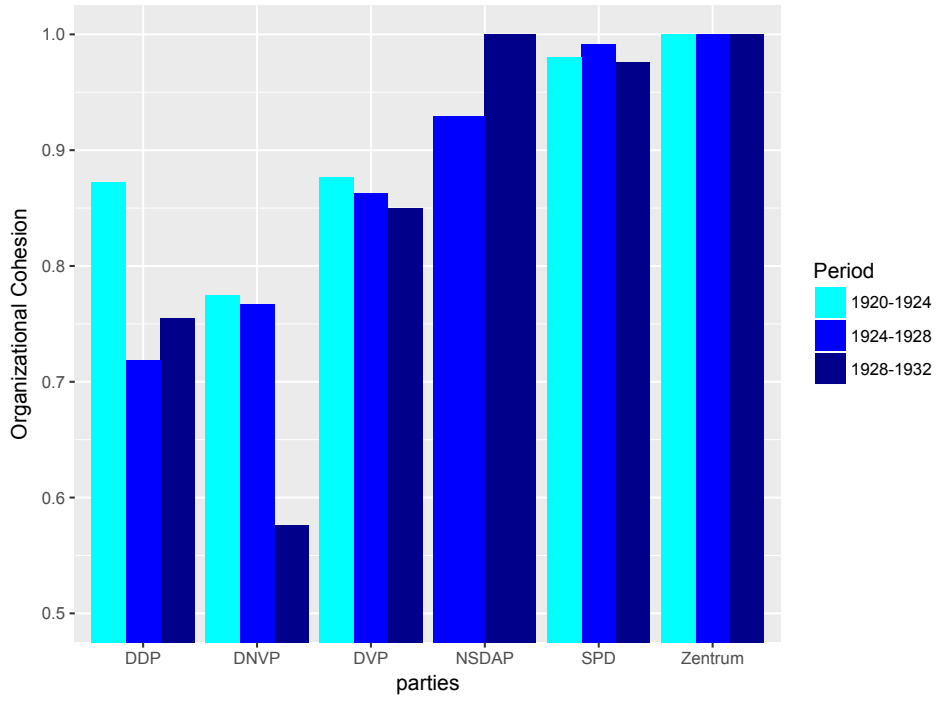
government favor returned by 1878, organizational efforts subsided. Organizational efforts of conservative and liberal parties also varied by region with state preferences. For example, the conservatives were "forced to organize themselves more efficiently" in western Germany, where the NLP was the officials' favorite.[95]

We argue that organizational weakness continued to haunt the old-regime parties' Weimar successors, the DNVP and the DVP. This becomes clear when we compare levels of "organizational cohesion," defined as the proportion of each party's MPs defecting to another party, using the dataset on Reichstag MPs.[96] We calculate the share of each party's MPs who switched party affiliation in a legislative session. To facilitate interpretation, we subtract the share of switching MPs from 1 and examine MPs behavior in three periods: (1) 1920-24, when the old regime parties were reconstituting their organizations and competing in first fully democratic elections; (2) 1924-28, the economically stable years; and (3) 1928-32, the period of worsening economic crisis. Figure 10 shows that the Center and the SPD had higher levels of organizational cohesion than the DNVP, DVP, and DDP, both before and during the Great Depression. The DNVP was the weakest party in the Reichstag: 24% of its MPs switched allegiances in 1920-28 and 42% of its MPs defected following the onset of the Great Depression. The left-liberal DDP, which included some of the more left-wing NLP members, was also organizationally weak, with an average of 22% of its MPs switching allegiances between 1920 and 1932. The right-wing liberal DVP was not far behind, abandoned by 14% of its MPs during this period.

To be sure, democratization and the introduction of PR incentivized party building even among the most reluctant notables. Between 1919 and 1920, the DVP increased the number of local chapters from 1063 to 2181, its full-time employees from 91 to 161, and its membership from 258,000 to 395,000.[97] However, the party was also forced to rely on industrial interest groups as it lacked independent sources of funding. In 1919 six out of 35 regional

[95]Sperber 1997, 131.
[96]The data was collected by Ejnar and Debus 2012.
[97]Jones 1988, 75–76.

Figure 10: Organizational cohesion of main parties in Weimar Reichstag.



DVP associations based in Rheinland and Westfalia were in such dire financial straits that they were taken over by industrialist Alfred Vögler.[98] Interest groups made financial support contingent on the selection of their candidates and intervened in candidates' selection at the subnational level by directly funding pliable regional organizations.[99] Dependence on big business for funding constrained the liberals' policy-making autonomy and alienated their middle-class voters.[100] During the Great Depression, the DVP endorsed the deflationary policies of the Brüning government, which included cuts in wages and public assistance and impoverished the middle class. Such unpopular policies exacerbated voter defections to the NSDAP.[101]

The DNVP started investing in party organization in the 1920s from an even more modest position. It decided to forego the mass party model entirely and instead contracted out its

[98] Jones 1988, 52.
[99] Kreutzer 2001, 103–104.
[100] Kreutzer 2001, 99–103.
[101] Jones 1988, 23–27.

electioneering activities to various local associations and paramilitary movements, giving them disproportionate influence on financial and organizational decisions.[102] The party's lack of financial independence —a key hallmark of organizational autonomy— contributed to its takeover by the reactionary right-wing faction headed by Alfred Hugenberg. In 1928, Hugenberg threatened to withdraw his material support unless the members of his faction were nominated as deputies. As explained by Hans Zehrer in a 1929 publication, Hugenberg "had the money, and he had the great apparatus. Which party today would not bow to these forces?"[103] Even before the takeover by Hugenberg, the DNVP was riven by internal disagreements. One example of the party leaders' failure to impose discipline is the split vote on the Dawes plan in 1924. The DNVP leadership condemned the Dawes plan in the press but permitted the deputies to vote for the plan in the parliament[104]. During the Great Depression disagreements within the party only worsened, and the DNVP endured several splits. The first to leave, in 1929, were the anti-Hugenberg groups, including the "young conservatives" and the Christian trade-unionist left wing of the party. In 1930 they were followed by the much more numerous withdrawals of the members allied with Kuno von Westarp and those representing agricultural and rural interests. The splits within the party resulted in the desertion of millions of voters and impeded cooperation necessary to compete with the NSDAP.[105] The various small parties founded by the DNVP defectors – including the Conservative Peoples' Party (*Konservative Volkspartei*), the Christian National Farmers' Party, and the Christian Peoples' Service – folded almost immediately, and their voters and leaders turned to the NSDAP. The DNVP itself increasingly allied with the NSDAP, which only expedited its collapse.[106]

In sum, the old-regime parties that relied on electoral manipulation in the imperial period were less likely to invest in party structures than the parties that had no access to

[102]Kreutzer 2001.
[103]Cited in Chanady 1967, 82.
[104]Chanady 1967, 73.
[105]Jones 1988; Kreutzer 2001.
[106]Chanady 1967, 91.

electoral manipulation. The resulting organizational disparities persisted after the democratic transition. Organizational weakness reduced the old-regime parties' autonomy from interest groups, undermined their responsiveness to voters, and prevented them from containing internal factionalism.

Alternative Explanations

Preexisting party organization

We argue that easy access to electoral manipulation disincentivizes formal party building. Could the weakness of party organization prior to the introduction of universal male suffrage explain both the prevalence of manipulation in some areas and subsequent organizational weakness? We believe this is unlikely because early parties consisted largely of "appointed committees of local notables," with rudimentary formal structures.[107] Indeed, historians typically view the unification of Germany in 1867 and the expansion of franchise in 1871 as the key turning points for the development of the party system.

To provide additional evidence that electoral manipulation resulted in weaker party organizations and not the reverse, we use the data on the number of all conservative associations (*Preussenvereine and Patriotenvereine*) in Prussia, collected by the Ministry of Interior in 1848.[108] Regressions in Table A.13 demonstrate that lower organizational density in 1848 is not associated with higher incidence of manipulation in the imperial period.

The Great Depression

Our interpretation that the old-regime parties' past reliance on manipulation affects their successors' losses to the NSDAP during the Great Depression is valid only if the severity of the economic crisis at the subnational level is uncorrelated with the history of electoral manipulation. Cross-sectional regressions with unemployment rates, changes in per capita income, and the share of welfare recipients as dependent variables suggest that if anything, districts with higher levels of manipulation were more fortunate during the Great Depression.

[107] Sperber 1997, 130.

[108] Schwentker 1988. No comparable measures exist for the NLP, founded in 1867.

We also find no association between past manipulation and the share of the self-employed, the occupational group more likely to support the NSDAP (see Table A.11).

Civil Society

The rise of the NSDAP was facilitated by a dense network of clubs and associations in Weimar Germany.[109] The party exploited preexisting associations to promote its message and to recruit new members. It is possible that districts with more vibrant associational life were more likely to protest electoral violations, confounding the relationship between electoral misconduct and the NSDAP vote. A related possibility, in line with our argument, is that the weakness of conservative and liberal parties spurred their constituencies to seek alternative forms of political expression and participation, including voluntary associations.[110] We consider these alternative explanations in Table A.12, demonstrating a null relationship between levels of electoral manipulation and associational density in 229 towns and cities in the 1920s.[111]

Discussion

Our analysis of Germany from the nineteenth into the twentieth century shows that access to state resources under autocracy can undermine the organizational development of pro-regime political parties, hurting their performance after a democratic transition and contributing to the success of the anti-system political parties. Electoral violations by private actors also undermine parties' post-democratization performance, though their consequences seem to be less durable. This insight contributes to the debates on how the institutional inheritance of authoritarian successor parties affects their electoral prospects and democratic competition more broadly.[112] Our findings suggest that institutional advantages enjoyed by pro-regime parties in autocratic elections do not automatically translate into strong party organization and can instead undermine these parties' performance in free and fair elections.

[109]Berman 1997; Satyanath, Voigtländer, and Voth 2017.
[110]Berman 1997, 410–411.
[111]The data on associations comes from Satyanath, Voigtländer, and Voth 2017.
[112]Loxton and Mainwaring 2018.

In many early democracies, political liberalization and parliamentary sovereignty preceded the expansion of suffrage. Scholars have argued that this enabled political parties to build encompassing organizations and gradually incorporate new voters into political systems.[113] In Germany, the order was reversed, resulting in weaker party institutionalization and eventually a democratic breakdown.[114] The paper supplements these macro-level accounts by theorizing how the reliance on electoral manipulation affects party development and democratic stability *within* states, holding the sequencing of democratic reforms and other regime characteristics constant.

To the extent that the order of democratic reforms matters for party development, the lessons from the German case may be especially relevant for contemporary autocracies that already hold multiparty elections with full suffrage.[115] Our findings suggest that reducing the use of electoral manipulation by the pro-regime parties may improve the prospects of democratic stability after the transition, thus vindicating international efforts to publicize and punish electoral misconduct.[116]

In addition to its general implications, the paper advances a novel, historical perspective on the determinants of democratic stability in Germany by emphasizing the continuities between strategies of electoral manipulation in the pre-democratic period, enduring weakness of the old-regime parties, and the NSDAP gains during the Great Depression. There has been a long historiographical debate on the "deep" roots of National Socialism.[117] Our contribution is to highlight how political practices during the more proximate pre-democratic period generated legacies shaping political outcomes in the Weimar era.

Our analysis is not without limitations. We are unable to measure directly the subnational variation in organizational strength of political parties and instead examine organi-

[113]E.g., Dahl 1971; Mainwaring and Zoco 2007.
[114]Ziblatt 2017.
[115]Imperial Germany still differs from these states in a number of ways. The possibility of mobilizing voters via television and the Internet and the presence of international election observers, in particular, may limit the generalizability of our findings.
[116]Hyde 2001.
[117]E.g., Wehler 1985.

zational cohesion at the party level. We evaluate only the symptoms of party weakness, such as the defection of voters. Our measure of electoral manipulation does not capture the variation in the quality of state elections, yet electoral rules for *state elections* differed across German states; the three-class franchise system in Prussia, with indirect voting and no secret ballot, was especially repressive. Examining the undemocratic legacies of specific electoral rules at the state and local level is a promising direction for future studies.[118]

These findings open an important avenue for research – identifying the consequences of different types of electoral misconduct for subsequent democratization. Our exploration has been limited to whether the state or private actors engage in manipulation. Yet electoral violations also vary in other respects. It is reasonable to expect, for example, that procedural violations have different long-term effects than bribery or violence.[119] Another important distinction that warrants scholarly attention is between pre-election misconduct and ballot fraud.[120] The consequences of repression against the SPD across electoral districts in the Kaiserreich should also be explored further.[121] In sum, the systematic micro-level study of Imperial Germany and its legacies contains rich and promising lessons for scholars of democratization more generally.

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[118] Mickey 2015.
[119] Bratton 2008.
[120] Donno and Roussias 2012.
[121] Thomson 2019.

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Online Appendix

Table of Contents

A Coding electoral manipulation by type

We build on Robert Arsenschek's research to classify violations into procedural violations and undue electoral influence in favor of specific candidates by state, private, and other actors.[122] Of key interest to us is not only what type of violation occurred, but who was responsible: when parties win through efforts of external actors, they fail to develop organizational capacity. These data are available from the parliamentary discussion of problematic mandates and the accompanying reports of the Electoral Commission.

A.1 State manipulation

Our main criterion for coding a violation as perpetrated by the state is the involvement of public servants or state officials. State actors with greatest influence were (a) municipal and district-level officials and (b) the police and the military. However, public servants also included foresters, railway officials, employees of state enterprises, and postal workers.

Typical "state" violations included restricting the right of assembly by prohibiting or dissolving campaign meetings organized by the opposition parties; interfering with campaign events of the opposition parties by seizing pamphlets and ballots and/or arresting their distributors; the distribution of ballots of the pro-regime parties and election propaganda for these parties by state officials; and officials threatening individual voters or entire communities with material disadvantages for supporting the wrong candidate. Using these criteria we identified state manipulation in 57% of disputed mandates, often occurring side-by-side with other violations.

We do not automatically count members of the election board as public servants. According to the law, direct state officials (*unmittelbaren Staastbeamten*) could not serve on the committee. In some cases this rule was violated, which we coded as procedural violation because it did not automatically imply influence for the benefit of specific candidates (see below). State influence is coded as present only when a direct state official who sat on the election committee was also accused of using his official position to influence the vote.

Here are several typical examples of electoral manipulation by government officials. In district Breslau 11 (Reichenbach-Neuenrode) in the 1878 election, the police and administrative officers not only confiscated Social Democratic ballots, but also briefly detained their distributors; they also harassed workers into supporting the RP (conservative) candidate.[123] The 1881 election in Trier 6 (Ottweiler-St.Wendel-Meisenheim) involved multiple incidents of state manipulation, including threats by state administrators of the mine to fire miners who did not support the NLP candidate and monitoring of the miners' ballots at the polling station (795-95); the threat by a mayor to withdraw funds for a school building from a community for supporting the wrong candidate (793); and the distribution and confiscation of the ballots by a police officer, among other incidents.[124] In the 1884 election in Danzig 1 (District Marienburg-Elbing), the prefect recommended the Conservative candidate Bernhard von Puttkamer-Plauth, the brother of the Prussian interior minister, and used his official

[122] Arsenschek 2003.

[123] See Bericht der Wahlprüfungskommission Nr. 152 (Wahl Friedenthal in 11 Wahlkreise des Regierungsbezirks Breslau) in Verhandlungen des Reichstages, Bd. 61, 1880, pp 825-831.

[124] See Zweite Bericht der Wahlprüfungskommission Nr. 103 (Wahl Täglichsheck in 6 Wahlkreise des Regierungsbezirks Trier) in Verhandlungen des Reichstages, Bd. 78, 1884, pp 793-799.

position to influence voters in his favor.[125] In the 1907 election, in Hannover 7 district, the royal prefect instructed his subordinates to support the campaign of the "regime-loyal (*reichstreue*)" NLP. He was quoted as telling them "to do everything to ensure that the NLP candidate is elected, as this is the order from above, and that the Guelphs [*Deutsche Hannoverische Partei*] disappear from the Reichstag" (4468). In the same election, post and railway officials were threatened with sanctions for not electing the NLP candidate (4470). A different official warned the individual who planned to host an electoral meeting of the opposition party, DHP, with financial repercussions (4474).[126]

Our coding does not capture important *state-level* restrictions on the SD and the Center in the first decades of the Kaiserreich. The Anti-Socialist Laws (*Sozialistengesetze*) in effect between 1878 and 1890 crippled the SD's ability to campaign and compete. Violations that fit under the Anti-Socialist Laws are recorded at the district level, however, in cases where the authorities of a given district prevented SD candidates from campaigning or confiscated the SD ballots.

A.2 Private manipulation

Private manipulation involved private actors threatening their subordinates (employees, tenants, or other dependents) with various economic or social sanctions for supporting the wrong candidate. Perpetrators included factory owners, merchants, innkeepers, landowners, and other private persons. Such incidents were reported for 20% of disputed mandates (N=183).

Private manipulation took different forms in urban and rural areas. In the countryside, elites not only relied on neofeudal loyalties, but also exploited the economic dependency of the local population. Typical measures of economic nature were (threats of) dismissal from employment and the expulsion of workers and their families from the houses they occupied. The boundary between private and state influence was ambiguous in the countryside because the local elites often derived their social and political power not only from their status as employers and landlords, but also from their participation in local administration. Private influence is likely underreported in the dataset for rural districts.

In the urban-industrial milieu, employer pressure generated more protests and was therefore easier to identify. The heavy industrial enterprises and the mining authorities in the industrial districts of the Saarland, Silesia, Hanover and the Rhine-Westphalia regularly intervened for the benefit of the liberal or free-conservative candidates and against the Social Democrats. At election time, corporate administrations threatened employees with lower wages and dismissal for supporting the wrong candidate and sought to bypass electoral secrecy and oversee workers' votes.[127]

For example, in Arnsberg 5 in the 1878 election the officials, foremen, and overseers of the local smelter herded workers to the polling station and distributed the ballots of the liberal party right before the workers entered the polling station, threatening dismissal to those who did not vote for their candidate.[128] In Magdeburg 6 (Wanzleben) in the 1907 election, the

[125]Die Bericht der Wahlprüfungskommission Nr. 180 (Wahl Puttkamer-Plauth in 1 Wahlkreise des Regierungsbezirks Danzig) in Verhandlungen des Reichstages, Bd. 90, 1885/86, pp 892-96.

[126]See Bericht der Wahlprüfungskommission Nr. 702 (Wahl Arning in 5 Wahlkreise der Provinz Hannover) in Verhandlungen des Reichstages, Bd. 246, 1908, pp. 4466-4484.

[127]Arsenschek 2003, 254–256.

[128]See "Bericht über die Wahl des Abgeordneten Berger." 7 Sitzung (7.10.1878) in Verhandlungen des

estate inspector and the owner of the local sugar factory confiscated SD ballots and leaflets from workers' houses before the election, distributed WVgg ballot papers instead, and on election day marched workers to the polling station, with the inspector at the front and the manager at the end of the column.[129] Sometimes private employees also engaged in vote buying, albeit on a minor scale. For example, in Sachsen 8 (Pirna) in 1874, the owner of the local quarry promised to dispense two pots of lager to his workers if they voted for the German Progress Party (DFP) candidate.[130]

The state owned railways, mines, metallurgical plants, fisheries, and forests and sometimes relied on similar tactics toward employees.[131] We coded these instances as state manipulation rather than private manipulation, as explained above.

A.3 Manipulation by the clergy and other actors

In 5% of the disputed mandates (N=43), clergymen sought to influence election outcomes. This is almost certainly an underestimate; many incidents went unreported because it was difficult to find witnesses willing to speak out against their pastor in order to substantiate allegations of religious influence. Typical violations included endorsing specific candidates from the pulpit, distributing ballot papers to congregation members, defaming opposition candidates as "bad" Christians; and leading voters to the polls or organizing the so-called tug service. Most violations were reported against the Catholic clergy.

For example, in the 1871 election in Düsseldorf 11 (Krefeld), chaplains participated in electoral meetings of the Center candidate, claimed that members of the electoral committee for the NLP candidate were "non-believers and pagans," marched voters from church to the polling stations, and chastised Catholics who considered voting for the NLP as "bad or lukewarm" Catholics in public meetings.[132] In the 1881 election in Arnsberg 5 (Bochum-Gelsenkirchen), the Catholic pastor agitated for the Center candidate from the pulpit and said he would not administer absolution to voters supporting the opposition. Other violations in this election included the distribution of Center ballots by church officials after mass; distributing ballots to children during religious class (so that they bring these home to parents), and the spread of damaging and inaccurate information about the liberal candidate by the clergy.[133]

Reports of the electoral commission and parliamentary debates also mention undue influence by other nonstate actors, such as military clubs (*Kriegervereine*) and political parties themselves. These are extremely rare, however, affecting just 3.5% (N=33) of the disputed mandates.

Reichstages, Bd. 51, 1879, p. 103.

[129]See Bericht der Wahlprüfungskommission Nr. 1205 (Wahl Rieseberg), Bd. 253, 1909, pp. 7419-7437.

[130]Wahl Eysoldt in 15. Sitzung 11.03.1874, Verhandlungen des Reichstages, Bd. 31, 1874, pp. 282-283.

[131]Arsenschek 2003, 212.

[132]See Wahl Reichensperger, 17. Sitzung 18.04.1871, in Verhandlungen des Reichstages, Bd. 19, 1871, pp. 269-271.

[133]See Bericht der Wahlprüfungskommission Nr. 292 (Wahl Schorlemer-Alst), in Verhandlungen des Reichstages, Bd. 73, 1882/83, pp. 1075-82.

Procedural and other types of violations

Procedural issues big and small were very common. Frequently mentioned are voting by ineligible persons, including individuals under 25 years of age, migrants, welfare recipients, foreigners, and people with disabilities, as well as voting by proxy (e.g., a father may vote for his son, a wife may vote for her husband). These violations typically concerned just a handful of ballots and occurred alongside other irregularities. In the dataset, no mandate is coded as manipulated due to such small-scale incidents alone.

The law mandated that voter lists be displayed publicly at least four weeks before the election for the duration of at least eight days. This rule was often violated, sometimes due to insufficient bureaucratic capacity and other times due to the authorities' ploy to exclude undesirable voters, such as workers and ethnic minorities.[134] Other common procedural issues included the violation of the statutory election time, the delay in announcing the election date; and the inaccessibility or inappropriateness of the polling station.[135] While the local authorities were often responsible, such violations did not constitute state influence for the benefit of a particular candidate and were coded as procedural issues.

We also consider the following issues with the constitution of the electoral board (*Wahlvorstand*) as procedural: (1) the presence of *fewer* than three members of the board in the polling station during the election process; (2) the failure of the board members to take oath; (3) the failure of the electoral board to maintain duplicate voter lists; and (4) the presence of immediate state officials (*unmittelbarer Staatsbeamte*) on the electoral board. Electoral boards were also accused of violating the public nature of the electoral process; violating the secret ballot;[136] agitating for specific candidates, or tampering with vote count. Outright fraud (*Wahlfälschung*) occurred rarely and affected a very small number of ballots. We did not code such violations as "state manipulation" because individuals directly employed by the state were barred from serving on the board, though this rule was sometimes violated, as noted earlier.[137]

Many of the procedural violations could be attributed to state actors, since officials were in charge of the electoral process at all stages. We decided to code the violations described in this section as procedural (where the rules were violated but no outright fraud occurred) or as "other" (for incidents of fraud) to distinguish them from state manipulation for the benefit of specific parties. We thus adopt a more conservative interpretation of state manipulation, which is consistent with the Reichstag's classification of official influence (*amtliche Wahlbeeinflussung*) at the time. At the same time, we also present additional results that use the aggregate measures of electoral manipulation and are consistent with a more liberal interpretation of electoral influence.

[134] Arsenschek 2003, 274–75.

[135] Sometimes elections were held in the shop, factory or home of a local notable.

[136] Even after the introduction of ballot envelopes and voting booths in 1903, the secrecy of the vote was far from assured. Electoral commission members observed the voting process, used ballot boxes that were just large enough to ensure that the ballots fell in order in which they were cast, opened envelopes and ballots, etc.

[137] To be sure, the chair of the electoral board (*Wahlvorsteher*) and his deputy (*Stellvertreter*) were appointed by the local authorities and were sometimes members of the city council.

B Descriptive Statistics

Table A.4: Descriptive statistics for the main variables used in the analysis. All variables are measured at district level.

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
State Manipulation	293	1.67	1.44	0	6
Private Manipulation	355	0.46	0.80	0	5
Religious Manipulation	355	0.11	0.35	0	2
Manipulation (Cons+R-Lib)	355	1.43	1.56	0	7
State Manipulation (Cons+R-Lib)	355	0.99	1.23	0	6
Private Manipulation (Cons+R-Lib)	355	0.36	0.65	0	3
NSDAP vote share (1930)	355	0.19	0.07	0.040	0.43
NSDAP vote share (July 1932)	355	0.40	0.12	0.12	0.76
NSDAP vote share (Nov 1932)	355	0.35	0.11	0.10	0.73
DNVP vote share (1920)	355	0.17	0.13	0.00	0.60
DVP vote share (1920)	355	0.13	0.07	0.00	0.39
NLP vote share (1912)	355	0.14	0.15	0.00	0.58
DKP vote share (1912)	355	0.12	0.19	0.00	0.88
RP vote share (1912)	355	0.03	0.11	0.00	0.85
Share in Agriculture (1890)	355	0.48	0.21	0.01	0.81
Landholding Gini (1895)	355	0.72	0.12	0.46	0.95
Share Catholic (1871)	354	0.34	0.37	0.00	1.00
Skilled Ratio (1895)	355	1.80	0.46	0.84	3.24
Occupational Heterogeneity (1895)	355	0.06	0.04	0.03	0.27
Industrial Concentration (1895)	355	0.06	0.10	0.00	0.65

C Determinants of Manipulation

Table A.5: Determinants of electoral manipulation at the district level. OLS Regression. Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors in parentheses.

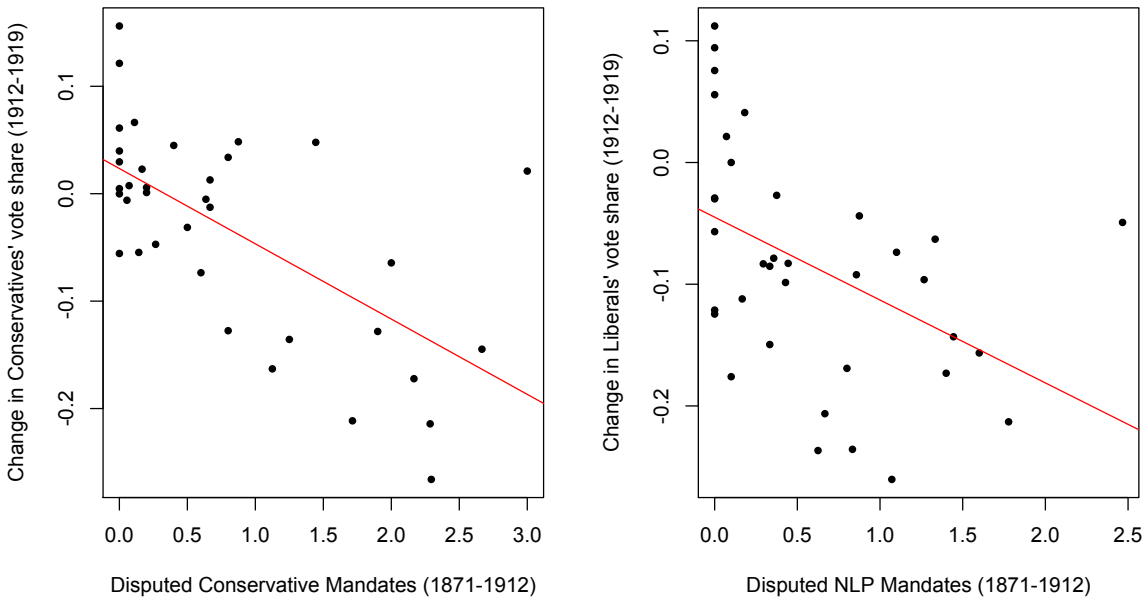
	Dependent variable: Electoral Manipulation (total,1871-1912)				
	All Types	State	Private	State: pro-regime parties	State: pro-regime parties
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Share Catholic	-1.65^{***}	-1.43^{***}	-0.39^{***}	-1.52^{***}	-0.44^{***}
	(0.36)	(0.33)	(0.13)	(0.23)	(0.12)
Share in Agriculture	1.46^{*}	0.53	0.58^{*}	1.07^{**}	0.64^{**}
	(0.79)	(0.69)	(0.32)	(0.48)	(0.27)
Landholding Gini	2.59^{*}	0.30	1.08^{*}	0.54	0.78
	(1.40)	(1.22)	(0.58)	(0.90)	(0.49)
Occupational Heterogeneity	8.81^{**}	2.95	5.20^{**}	3.14^{*}	4.31^{***}
	(4.21)	(2.97)	(2.03)	(1.85)	(1.49)
Skilled Ratio	-0.44^{*}	-0.45^{**}	-0.31^{***}	-0.37^{**}	-0.30^{***}
	(0.24)	(0.22)	(0.10)	(0.15)	(0.09)
Ln(Population)	1.44^{***}	0.51	0.43^{**}	0.30	0.19
	(0.37)	(0.31)	(0.19)	(0.27)	(0.15)
Intercept	-16.61^{***}	-3.79	-5.19^{**}	-2.37	-2.31
	(4.65)	(3.90)	(2.36)	(3.30)	(1.88)
State dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	355	293	355	355	355
Adjusted R^2	0.30	0.20	0.19	0.25	0.18

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

D Party performance in 1919 for 35 electoral districts

We compare vote shares of the DKP, RP, and NLP in the last imperial election (1912) with vote shares of their successors, the DNVP and the DVP, in the first democratic election in 1919, when the technology of electoral manipulation was no longer available. As noted in the paper, the 1919 results exist only at the level of 35 Weimar electoral districts (*Wahlkreise*), so we do not include them in our main difference-in-difference analysis. Figure A.11 demonstrates that while both conservative and liberal successor parties lost votes during this time, their performance varied with the prevalence of electoral manipulation. Small N and the expansion of suffrage notwithstanding, the history of manipulation in 1871-1912 is a good predictor of the 1919 losses by the DNVP and the DVP, respectively.

Figure A.11: Past manipulation and electoral losses between 1912 and 1919 with a linear trendline.



E Evaluating the parallel trends assumption

Table A.6: Difference-in-differences regression with treatment as manipulation above the mean interacted with democratization dummy lagged by one (Models 1-3) and two (Models 4-6) elections. Sample size varies because we code districts in which parties did not compete in a specific election as NA. Standard errors clustered at the district level in parentheses.

	Vote for the old-regime parties					
	1907-1912			1903-1907		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
(Democratization-1)*Manip	−0.03					
	(0.02)					
(Democratization-1)*State Manip		−0.02				
		(0.02)				
(Democratization-1)*Private Manip			−0.001			
			(0.02)			
Democratization - 1	−0.08***	−0.09***	−0.11***			
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)			
(Democratization-2)*Manipulation	0.004					
	(0.02)					
(Democratization-2)*State Manipulation		−0.0001				
		(0.02)				
(Democratization-2)*Private Manipulation			0.02			
			(0.03)			
Democratization - 2	0.05***	0.05***	0.05***			
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)			
Manipulation	0.18***			0.14***		
	(0.04)			(0.04)		
State Manipulation		0.17***			0.14***	
		(0.03)			(0.05)	
Private Manipulation			0.17***			0.12**
			(0.04)			(0.05)
Party:RLib	−0.01	−0.01	−0.02	−0.03	−0.04	−0.05
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)
N	716	716	716	662	662	662
Adjusted R2	0.6	0.59	0.56	0.74	0.74	0.71

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A.7: Difference-in-differences regression with treatment as manipulation above the mean interacted with a placebo depression dummy, lagged by one (Models 1-3) or two (Models 4-6) elections. Standard errors clustered at the district level in parentheses.

	Vote for the NSDAP					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Depression-1	0.0001	0.002	−0.003			
	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)			
Depression-2				−0.04***	−0.04***	−0.04***
				(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.003)
Manipulation	0.01***			−0.01**		
	(0.003)			(0.003)		
State Manipulation		−0.06***			−0.14***	
		(0.002)			(0.003)	
Private Manipulation			0.01***			−0.01***
			(0.003)			(0.003)
(Depression-1)*Manip	−0.02***					
	(0.01)					
(Depression-1)*State Manip		−0.02***				
		(0.004)				
(Depression-1)*Private Manip			−0.01*			
			(0.01)			
(Depression-2)*Manip				0.003		
				(0.01)		
(Depression-2)*State Manip					0.01	
					(0.01)	
(Depression-2)*Private Manip						0.01
						(0.01)
N	710	710	710	710	710	710
Adjusted R2	0.48	0.48	0.46	0.74	0.75	0.74

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

F Additional specifications

Table A.8: Difference-in-differences estimation. Electoral manipulation in favor of the old-regime parties and support for their successors during the Great Depression. Standard errors are clustered at the level of imperial districts.

	Vote for the old-regime successor parties during the Great Depression					
	DNVP vote			DVP vote		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Depression*Manipulation (Kons)	−0.06***					
	(0.01)					
Depression*State Manip (Kons)		−0.06***				
		(0.01)				
Depression*Private Manip (Kons)			−0.05			
			(0.04)			
Depression*Manipulation (R-Lib)				−0.02***		
				(0.01)		
Depression*State Manip (R-Lib)					−0.02***	
					(0.01)	
Depression*Private Manip (R-Lib)						−0.01
						(0.01)
Depression	−0.07***	−0.07***	−0.08***	−0.04***	−0.04***	−0.04***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Manipulation (Kons)	0.27***					
	(0.01)					
State Manipulation (Kons)		0.27***				
		(0.01)				
Private Manipulation (Kons)			−0.08***			
			(0.02)			
Manipulation (R-Lib)				−0.02***		
				(0.003)		
State Manipulation (R-Lib)					0.06***	
					(0.004)	
Private Manipulation (R-Lib)						0.07***
						(0.004)
N	710	710	710	710	710	710
Adjusted R2	0.8	0.79	0.77	0.81	0.8	0.79

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A.9: OLS with time-invariant covariates interacted with democratization dummies and continuous measure of manipulation. The covariates are Landholding Gini, Share in agriculture, Share of the Catholic population, Occupational Heterogeneity, and Skilled Ratio. Only districts where the party competed both before and after 1919 are included. Standard errors clustered at the district level in parentheses. The constant and the covariates are omitted from the table.

	Vote for the old-regime parties, 1893-1932					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Democratization*Manipulation	-0.02^{***}	-0.01^{**}				
	(0.004)	(0.004)				
Democratization*State Manip			-0.01^{***}	-0.01		
			(0.005)	(0.01)		
Democratization*Private Manip					-0.02^{**}	-0.02^{*}
					(0.01)	(0.01)
Democratization	-0.29^{***}	-0.17^{**}	-0.27^{***}	-0.15^{**}	-0.28^{***}	-0.17^{**}
	(0.05)	(0.07)	(0.05)	(0.07)	(0.05)	(0.07)
Manipulation	0.05^{***}	0.04^{***}				
	(0.004)	(0.004)				
State Manipulation			0.05^{***}	0.05^{***}		
			(0.005)	(0.01)		
Private Manipulation					0.07^{***}	0.07^{***}
					(0.01)	(0.01)
Party:RLib	-0.06^{***}	-0.07^{***}	-0.06^{***}	-0.08^{***}	-0.07^{***}	-0.10^{***}
	(0.004)	(0.01)	(0.004)	(0.01)	(0.004)	(0.01)
Democratization* Covariates	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Prussia only	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
N	6717	4032	6717	4032	6717	4032
Adjusted R2	0.7	0.73	0.68	0.72	0.67	0.71

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A.10: OLS with time-invariant covariates interacted with Depression dummies and continuous measure of manipulation. The covariates are Landholding Gini, Share in agriculture, Share of the Catholic population, Occupational Heterogeneity, and Skilled Ratio. Only districts where the party competed both before and after 1919 are included. Standard errors clustered at the district level in parentheses. The constant and the covariates are not presented for reasons of space.

	Vote for the NSDAP, 1924-1932					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Depression*Manipulation	0.003	−0.001				
	(0.003)	(0.003)				
Depression*State Manip			0.01**	0.002		
			(0.004)	(0.004)		
Depression*Private Manip					−0.001	−0.005
					(0.01)	(0.01)
Depression	0.37***	0.46***	0.36***	0.46***	0.37***	0.46***
	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.05)
Manipulation	−0.31***	−0.06***				
	(0.001)	(0.002)				
State Manipulation			−0.31***	−0.05***		
			(0.002)	(0.002)		
Private Manipulation					−0.26***	−0.37***
					(0.003)	(0.004)
Depression*Covariates	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Prussia only	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
N	2485	1477	2485	1477	2485	1477
Adjusted R2	0.94	0.96	0.94	0.96	0.94	0.96

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

G Alternative Explanations

Table A.11: History of electoral manipulation and socio-economic indicators during the Great Depression. Cross-sectional analysis at the level of imperial districts. The covariates are Landholding Gini, Share in Agriculture, Share of the Catholic population, Occupational Heterogeneity, Skilled Ratio, and log(Population). Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors in parentheses.

	Unempl. (1931)	Unempl. (1932)	Income Change (1928-32)	On Welfare (1930)	Self-employed (1925)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Electoral Manipulation (RLib+Cons)	−0.0001	−0.0005	−0.01	−0.12	−0.001
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.01)	(0.59)	(0.001)
Covariates	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
State dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	355	355	355	355	355
Adjusted R^2	0.68	0.77	0.71	0.51	0.77

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A.12: History of electoral manipulation and the strength of the civil society in Weimar Germany. The covariates are Landholding Gini, Share in Agriculture, Share of the Catholic population, Occupational Heterogeneity, Skilled Ratio, and log(Population). Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors in parentheses.

	Associational density (1920)				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Manipulation (All forms and parties)	−0.0001	0.0001			
	(0.0001)	(0.0001)			
Manipulation (RLib+Cons)			−0.0001*		
			(0.0001)		
State manipulation (RLib+Cons)				−0.0000	
				(0.0001)	
Private manipulation (RLib+Cons)					0.0000
					(0.0001)
Covariates	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
District FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
State dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	157	157	157	157	157
Adjusted R^2	−0.001	0.37	0.38	0.37	0.37

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A.13: Conservative organization density in 1848 and electoral manipulation in imperial elections (1871-1912). Our main explanatory variable is the number of conservative associations per 10,000 people in 1848 in 25 Prussian *Regierungsbezirke*. The covariates are measured in 1848-1849. Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors in parentheses.

	Electoral Manipulation				
	All types & parties	Conservatives		State for Conservatives	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Organizational Density (1848)	3.15	5.86***	−0.55	4.62***	0.03
	(3.77)	(2.13)	(1.95)	(1.41)	(1.27)
Share Catholic			−2.36***		−1.68***
			(0.43)		(0.30)
Employed in Agriculture			2.16*		1.74**
			(1.25)		(0.88)
Share Urban			−0.81		−0.43
			(1.10)		(0.80)
Ln(Population)			−0.38*		−0.12
			(0.22)		(0.19)
Observations	25	25	25	25	25
Adjusted R^2	−0.03	0.14	0.69	0.17	0.66

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01