

Pre-analysis plan for “Elite Commitments to Democracy: Experimental Evidence from Norway”

Kaja Sparre Bakke¹, Sirianne Dahlum¹, Daniel A. N. Goldstein¹, and Tore Wig¹

¹Department of Political Science, University of Oslo

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Abstract

How committed are elites in democracies to democratic principles and practises, and to what degree are these commitments conditional on the preferences and behavior of their peers, as well as voter preferences? While a considerable literature investigates voters’ attitudes towards democratic violations (by elites) in various forms and contexts, we know much less about the strength and nature of political elites’ dedication to democracy. We explore this in the context of Norway, a persistently stable democracy where both elites and citizens are commonly assumed to be highly committed to democratic norms. We focus on politicians, surveying all Norwegian national, regional and local representatives, a selection of non-elected candidates, as well as party officials. We survey elites using a standard questionnaire and two different experiments to adjudicate their commitment to democracy. We assess whether commitments to democracy are conditional on party leaders, peers and voters, and to what extent the Norwegian

political elite is willing to serve as “gate-keepers” by hindering non-democratic party colleagues from advancing within their respective parties.

1 Introduction

For democracy to be functional and stable, it must be “self-enforcing” in that both citizens and politicians are committed to adhering to democratic principles (Przeworski, 2006; Fearon, 2011). Hence, a popular explanation for the absence of democratic backsliding in many countries is that ordinary citizens are highly committed to democratic solutions to divisive political issues and that violations of the “rules of the game” are condemned at the elite level (Weingast, 1997). Yet, while a considerable literature investigates the orientations of ordinary citizens, we know much less about political elites’ commitments to democratic principles.

Politicians are not only the direct agents of electoral democracy, they are also among the potential beneficiaries of shifts toward more authoritarian governance, as it can enhance their unilateral authority and keep them in office despite declining electoral popularity. Moreover, politicians serve to set and shift the tone of debate and the attitudes of citizens. There is growing evidence that elite behavior and rhetoric can play an important role in encouraging, legitimizing, and sustaining citizens’ attitudes toward undemocratic behavior (Clayton et al., 2021). Evidence also suggests that those who enter politics are in some ways fundamentally different from ordinary citizens (Gulzar, 2021). It is therefore instructive to survey this population directly.

We examine the commitment to democratic principles among elites in Norway, a consolidated, low-conflict democracy. Descriptive surveys of Norwegian citizens indicate that they care a great deal about democracy. Likewise, it is widely assumed that elites in established, peaceful democracies like Norway are loyal democrats, but we lack systematic evidence on

the strength and nature of elite commitments to democracy. There is also reason to assume that openly expressed preferences for democracy may not reflect fully internalized views. First, elites’ public statements may not accurately capture their genuine preferences, as electoral incentives and social desirability bias may shape public statements. Second, political behavior is ultimately an outcome of different political trade-offs, between various concerns such as personal ambitions, electoral incentives, partisan identity, and different policy agendas (Graham and Svobik, 2020). In short, stated commitments to democracy may reflect political incentives, social pressure, or internalized normative principles. Research has yet to gauge the relative contribution of these mechanisms and how they operate in a consolidated high-performing democracy.

Our study addresses several research questions. First, do politicians endorse democratic principles, and if so, which ones? Second, what are politicians’ *revealed preferences* for democratic principles? Third, what are politicians’ revealed willingness to endorse or tolerate other politicians who violate democratic principles? And, finally, how does social pressure, e.g. due to social norms, modify this behavior?

To gauge this, we study political elites in Norway. Our category of “political elites” comprises elected politicians in Norway at both the national- and the local-level and non-elected party elites. Moreover, we include a selection of unsuccessful candidates (who ran for election but lost by a close margin) to more systematically gauge the effect of being in office. The resulting sample consists of approximately 10,000 elected representatives and a matching number of non-elected candidates based on the Norwegian 2023 local elections and 2021 national election. Individual invitations to participate in the survey are sent out by e-mail. Response rates of elites and political candidates vary widely, with one study citing a range of 16% – 69% from various surveys (Sajuria et al., 2023). We conservatively estimate a response rate of 10 – 20%.

In order to clearly outline the competing pressures that shape politicians’ responses, we

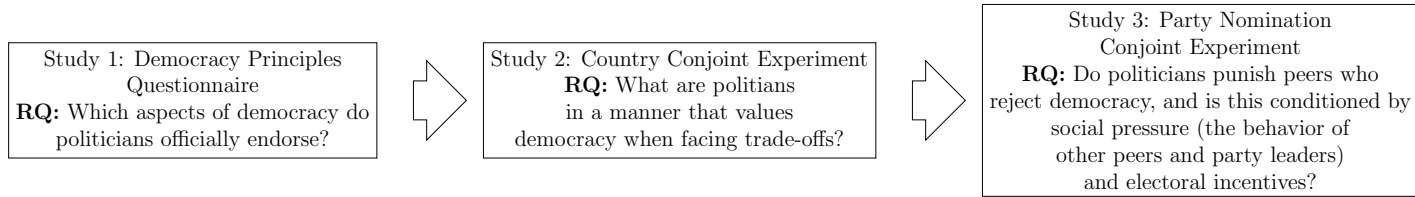
introduce a simple formalized framework. This motivates a series of empirical hypotheses that encompass both descriptive evidence, more experimentally valid measures of elite adherence to democratic principles, and the complexity of social norms in shaping such attitudes.

Our empirical study proceeds in three steps, which are summarized in Figure 1. In Study 1, we present elites with a standard democracy-questionnaire where we gauge agreement with a range of different democratic principles (negative and positive), building on Claassen et al. (2023). This is intended to capture stated commitments to different aspects of democracy. In Study 2, we present respondents with a “country-choice” conjoint where they are asked to rate fictive countries that vary on a number of dimensions – economic, cultural, climatic, governance – including democracy dimensions. We ask respondents which society is best, which they would want to live in, which is most fair, and other normative evaluations. We ask this to gauge respondents valuation of democracy as integral to good societies when compared to other societal features. This experiment has the advantage of circumventing the tendency of survey respondents to rate their own country favorably on democratic measures.

Finally, in Study 3, we zoom in the role elected party politicians, to assess their role as “gate-keepers” towards hypothetical party colleagues that have expressed a lack of commitment to certain democratic principles. We ask party members to assess different candidates seeking central positions within the party, to estimate the extent to which political elites are willing to punish undemocratic party colleagues. Hence, we vary whether these members have expressed a willingness to violate democratic principles (contrasted with normal and different types of “inappropriate” statements or behavior) and several traits that are relevant to evaluating members within a party, such as political experience. We also vary electoral incentives (by randomizing information about the popularity of the candidate among voters) and peer-effects/internal norms, by varying whether the candidate is supported by the party leadership.

Next, we detail relevant literature and then present our theory and hypotheses.

Figure 1: Overview of Studies



2 Related literature

We address several active strands of research. First, we speak to and build on existing experimental work on commitments to democratic norm among voters, pioneered by Graham and Svulik (2020) in a study of the US and increasingly investigated in other countries (e.g. Frederiksen, 2022; Saikkonen and Christensen, 2021; Krishnarajan, 2022). Interestingly, this literature finds that while most citizens state that they commit to democracy when asked directly, many of those same citizens are liable to accept violations of democratic norms when those are traded off against other political issues and leader traits (such as competence). While much light has now been shed on the democratic norms of citizens and voters, current research has not traversed this topic among political elites.

We also speak to a literature on democratic norms among party elites (Helmke, Kroeger and Paine, 2022). Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018) and Ziblatt (2017) make the case that normative commitments to democratic procedures and the "rules of the game" among elites, especially in conservative parties, was a key factor in the emergence and survival of democracy in Europe. Conversely, when democratic norms among elites erode, democracy is threatened with breakdown. Many contemporary instances of democratic backsliding are driven by elected leaders, who gradually undermine democratic institutions once they are in power. Political elites lacking commitments to non-violence also play central roles in instigating or triggering political violence. Finally, elites may challenge the rules of the game in modern democracies by undermining citizens support for democracy and nonviolence through

polarizing rhetoric (Clayton et al., 2021). Yet, there are few systematic mappings of the strength and nature of elites commitments nonviolence and democratic norms to in modern democracies.

Empirical studies of elites, especially using surveys and survey-experiments, have grown rapidly in the past few years, on topics such as foreign policy, public administration, discrimination, racism and bias, and decision making (Kertzer and Renshon, 2022; Saunders, 2022). However, ours is the first study we know of that directly measures support for types of democratic principles and willingness to enforce democratic norms.

3 Theory

In Study 3, we examine an experiment in which politicians are asked to choose among potential candidates for central party positions who may hold an anti-democratic policy position. This scenario provides a realistic case in which politicians can act directly to support democratic principles by withdrawing support of undemocratic party colleagues. However, elites face a number of salient trade-offs in such scenarios. To separate these competing concerns, we consider a formalized decision choice among politicians.

Consider a binary choice in which a politician can act to affirm their support for democratic principles, as in the party experiment. There are a number of salient pressures that shape the politician’s decision. There are electoral concerns among citizens that may favor one outcome in the choice, such as a particular candidate for party leadership. There are also intra-party pressures. Either democratic or undemocratic action may be consistent with the prevailing elite cues within the party. Hence, aligning with the goals of existing party elites may benefit a politician by demonstrating loyalty, which may lead to future benefits with the party. In addition, there are horizontal pressures among party members, particularly in terms of social pressure to conform to expected behavior. This is likely to be the case espe-

cially if the action is relatively public as it is likely to be known by other party members and perhaps in wider groups who may socially condemn norm violators (Bicchieri, 2005). Finally, politicians face internal pressures insofar as they may have private preferences regarding the degree to which they inherently value democratic principles.

To differentiate these competing pressures (which we treat as exogenous), we adapt the framework of Bursztyn and Jensen (2017) using a discrete choice random utility formulation. This approach allows us to explicitly define the motivations that shape politicians' choices, while making the simplifying assumption that these factors are separately additive.

We consider the choice of a politician i who is a member of a group j . This group identity could be the political party of i in which the actions of the politician i are observed. The politician takes a binary action, such as endorsing a particular colleague for a central position among a competing set of candidates. We let $e_i = 1$ denote not taking the anti-democratic action and $e_i = 0$ indicate taking the anti-democratic action. Therefore, a positive value of e indicates one acts in a manner consistent with democratic principles. The equation 1 is the politician's utility function and captures their competing motives for their choice e_i :

$$\begin{aligned}
 \hat{e}_i = & \underbrace{v_i}_{\text{Democratic Principles}} \\
 & + \underbrace{p_i}_{\text{Leadership Incentives}} + \underbrace{\lambda_{i,j} \cdot E_i(\omega_j) \cdot Pr_{-i}(\tau_i = p|e_i)}_{\text{Party Social Pressures}} \\
 & + \underbrace{c_i}_{\text{Citizen Incentives}} + \epsilon_i
 \end{aligned} \tag{1}$$

We separate these considerations according to the size of the social group that exerts pressure on the politician i . Hence, we move from the narrowest and most personal, i.e., internal motives, to party-wide incentives, and finally to those that encompass the largest group of relevant political actors: citizens. If the sum of these terms is weakly positive, we

assume that an elite i abstains from the anti-democratic action:

$$e_i = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } \hat{e}_i \geq 0 \\ 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases} \quad (2)$$

Starting with the first line on the right-hand side of Equation 1, this captures a politician's commitment to democratic principles, $v_i \in \mathbb{R}$. If this term is positive, the politician prefers not to take the undemocratic action. For example, personal preferences for democratic principles should lead politicians to be less likely to support an anti-democratic nominee for party leadership. There are, however, additional conditions that may augment this choice. This parameter is related to our measure of democratic principles from Study 1.

The second line of Equation 1 has two components that focus on intra-party pressures. The first term can also be positive or negative and captures the direct effect of the politician's choice on the politician's i standing in the party, $p_i \in \mathbb{R}$. For example, if a certain candidate wins, a politician who supported that candidate may gain prestige within the party that can help their career, especially if they appear to be loyal to the party's goals. However, supporting an extreme candidate for a key position could undermine career advancement within the party. This parameter is related to Study 3, where we examine the impact of elite cues within the party on support for nominees.

Also on the second line, we consider horizontal accountability among politicians through social pressure, which consists of three elements. For this, we need to introduce two types of politicians: those who are relatively committed to democratic principles ($\tau_i = p$) and those who are not committed ($\tau_i = n$). We focus only on social pressure to appear democratically principled. However, this pressure can be positive or negative, depending on which position within a political party j is stigmatized. Thus, within this term there is first $\lambda_{i,j}$, which captures the idiosyncratic returns to being perceived as a principled type, $\tau_i = p$. The term $\lambda_{i,j}$ can be negative or positive, depending on whether the politician i prefers to conform

to group expectations (positive) or deviate from them (negative).¹ Next, the term ω_j gives politicians i the payoff ω_j within the group for being perceived as principled within the group j . If ω_j is positive, it is beneficial to be perceived as principled within the group.² The idiosyncratic component can be inferred from individual responses to democratic principles in Study 1, while the second parameter can be inferred from party-level behavior in Study 1.

At the end of the second line, the term $Pr_{-i}(\sigma_i = p|e_i)$ is the probability that other members of group j who are not i assign to the probability that i is principled, given the action e_i taken by politician i . The signal of being perceived as principled depends on the actions of all politicians, which serves to establish expectations about what actions a democratically principled politician would take.³ We abstract from this collective behavior to directly manipulate this component in Study 3. Specifically, we shift expectations about support for anti-democratic politicians among other politicians within the party.⁴

The third line in the Equation 1 captures the support of the citizens for the action, c_i . This can again take positive or negative values. This parameter can capture electoral benefits if, for example, a political nominee is popular and supporting them would be electorally beneficial for politician i . Conversely, supporting a nominee who is a relative outsider may be unpopular with citizens. This parameter is related to Study 3, which includes an attribute for the relative popularity of a nominee among citizens. Finally, the last term is an idiosyncratic noise term that accounts for considerations other than those explicitly modeled, such as

¹While we primarily consider conformist motivations, this latter specification could capture contrarian politicians who seek to differentiate themselves from the party majority.

²We normalize the payoff of being perceived as unprincipled to zero.

³In a more complete formal model, politicians may update their beliefs according to Bayes' rule. However, the updating of beliefs would depend on the timing of interactions among politicians and when their actions are revealed to others.

⁴A limitation of this approach is that we most directly manipulate descriptive norms, i.e., expected behavior, rather than injunctive norms, i.e., expectations about appropriate behavior, which may be more immediately consistent with our modeling approach to social pressure. However, we plan to consider further experiments to more directly address the effects of injunctive norms on politicians.

preferences for individual leaders, their policies, and other considerations. This may capture the other attributes we consider in Study 3 that may influence leaders' choices but that we do not explicitly model (or have hypotheses about).

In addition, note that both “leadership incentives” and “citizen incentives” are pressures that may represent individualistic or party-centered interests. That is, nominees who are expected to be successful may capture an individual politician i 's desire to gain personal career benefits from supporting such a candidate, or they may expect that a successful candidate will benefit their party as a whole. Then the politician may simply derive utility from the success of the organization to which they belong (e.g., partisan cheer-leading) or from the increased likelihood of passage of their party's policy goals that members are likely to support. Either way, these two motives should lead an individual politician to be more supportive of an anti-democratic nominee whom they expect to be successful.

4 Empirical Expectations

The model serves to highlight the relevant pressures that shape politicians' stated and revealed preferences for democratic principles. Next, we list a series of hypotheses that are informed by the model. These hypotheses address the three research questions posed above. Table 1 summarizes these hypotheses, how they relate to the three research questions, and which study addresses the hypotheses.

4.1 Descriptive Expectations

A key assumption in our framework is that political actors have some degree of commitment to democratic principles. One way to measure this commitment is to register their stated affirmations of democratic principles. Since we have no prior knowledge about which elements of democratic principles they are most likely to support, we do not register any

predictions about the particular magnitudes of any component of the battery of questions on democratic support. Nonetheless, based on the existing literature, we expect elites to support a set of democratic principles consistent with strong support for democracy. In the direct questionnaire, this amounts to expecting a positive mean on the democracy support questions. In addition, we have no strong priors on how these might differ from the citizen sample.

Nevertheless, this descriptive analysis is useful for two reasons. First, it addresses our first research question by detailing what types of democratic principles politicians support and how strongly they support these elements. Second, Study 1 provides a measure of support for democracy that we use in Studies 2 and 3 to examine heterogeneous effects.

4.2 Hypotheses

We now turn to our empirical hypotheses. Note that we assume only a direction, but are uncertain about the magnitude of the effect.

Democracy commitments. An empirical obstacle to Study 1 is the social desirability bias associated with direct measures of support for democratic principles. An advantage of Studies 2 and 3 is that they force trade-offs with other salient considerations that allow for causal testing of anti-democratic attributes. This allows us to examine politicians' commitment to democratic principles in a more causally valid and indirect manner, thereby partially attenuating social desirability concerns that may color the responses to our first research question. Moreover, by examining a degree of "behavior" through conjoint choice, these studies allow us to investigate our second research question, which determines whether elite commitment to democratic principles is strong enough to translate into changed behavior. This allows us to formulate hypotheses about specific covariates in the analysis.

The Country Choice and Party Nomination conjoints estimate the Average Marginal Component Effect of democratic features (in the Country Conjoint) and candidate democracy

violations (in the Candidate Choice). The expectation that elites value democracy amounts to the following hypotheses in these two conjoint experiments.

Hypothesis 1. *We expect a positive AMCE of “democracy” on country-choice*

Hypothesis 2. *We expect a negative AMCE of “democracy violation” on party nomination*

Electoral incentives. We expect electoral incentives (how popular the candidate is with voters) to “moderate” the effect of democracy violations when party members are evaluated as candidates for nomination to key party positions. Elites will want to support popular candidates to please citizens.

Hypothesis 3. *We expect electoral popularity to weaken the negative AMCE of “democracy violations” on nomination*

Returning to the formalization, this reinforces the term c_i , which may override the other considerations and lead them to act in an anti-democratic manner ($e_i = 0$), especially politicians who have relatively weak democratic commitments and intra-party incentives. This hypothesis is related to our third research question, which aims to unravel the complex set of pressures and incentives that shape politicians’ revealed preferences for democratic principles.

Party Pressures: Peer Social Norms and Elite Cues. As the theory highlights, we expect two sets of pressures to operate within the party. First, we expect that cues from party elites will “moderate” the effect of democracy violations when party members are evaluated as candidates for nomination to key party positions. This is because following elite cues may, for example, demonstrate party loyalty to effective candidates. This leads to a negative parameter p_i in the model. Our expectation regarding the moderating effect of elite cues can be formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 4. *We expect elite support for candidate to weaken the negative AMCE of “democracy violations” on nomination*

Second, we expect social pressure among fellow party members to mitigate the negative effects of violating democratic principles. This is because we expect that there is social desirability among politicians within the party to conform to the actions of other politicians. Our expectation regarding the moderating effect of peer norms is as follows:

Hypothesis 5. *We expect peer support for candidate to weaken the negative AMCE of “democracy violations” on nomination*

By focusing on the social incentives in Equation 1, we can examine the effect of peer norms on endorsement decisions. Information about what other members think enters the equation through the term $Pr_{-i}(\sigma_i = p|e_i)$. If $\lambda_{i,j}$ is positive, then the politician i will be less inclined to support the politician because they expect that supporting an anti-democratic candidate would signal to other politicians ($-i$) that the politician i is not democratically principled. Since we are examining increasing levels of the attribute, we are essentially experimentally manipulating the expression $Pr_{-i}(\sigma_i = p|e_i)$. Thus, as we increase the proportion of peers who support the anti-democratic politician, this will weaken the signal that taking the action of supporting the anti-democratic nominee means that i doing so also indicates that they are not democratically principled. This will make it less socially costly to support the anti-democratic nominee.

These two hypotheses are related to our third research question.

Political experience Finally, while our theory does not directly address socialization, we expect that prior political experience should affect affect commitment to democratic principles. First, if there are strong pro-democratic norms among politicians, we might expect that political experience strengthens commitments to democracy, as politicians become socialized into a pro-democratic culture. Experience in politics could also strengthen support

Research Question	Hypotheses	Study
Do politicians have a stated preference for democratic principles and, if so, which?	<i>Descriptive Analysis, H₁, H₂,</i>	1
Do politicians behave in a manner that supports democratic principles?	<i>H₁, H₂,</i>	2, 3
Do politicians punish undemocratic party colleagues, and is this conditioned by relevant pressures? These include social norms from party peers and leaders and support among voters.	<i>H₃, H₄, H₅, H₆,</i>	3

Table 1: Research Questions, Hypotheses, and Studies

for democratic institutions and practices, as politicians become more familiar with these same institutions and practices through their political work. On the other hand, it could also be that political experience makes politicians more concerned with strategic goals (related to, e.g., personal career trajectory or signalling party loyalty), and that they become more willing to trade off certain democratic principles to realize these goals. As expectations go in different directions, we have no prior specification on the direction of the relationship between length of political experience and support for democracy. That is, longer tenure could lead politicians to become more jaded and less supportive of democracy. Conversely, they may become more supportive as a result of frequent interaction with the democratic process. Similarly, social pressure may reinforce either of these attitudes. Thus, we specify a nonzero hypothesis, i.e., there is some effect of socialization, but we do not specify a direction:

Hypothesis 6. *We expect prior political experience to have a non-zero effect on the AMCE of “democracy violations” in the Nomination conjoint of Study 3 and the AMCE of “democracy” in the Country Choice conjoint of Study 2*

This last hypothesis is also related to our third research question.

4.3 Identifying Assumptions

We would find support for our hypotheses if the AMCE for peer or elite cues were positive and also moderated the negative effects of democratic violations. This could result from individuals seeking to conform to social norms/pressures, all other attributes being equal between two candidates, as the model posits. A challenge arises in that the rationale for this support is unspecified. Thus, there is a norm, i.e., an empirical expectation, that peers or leaders will support a particular candidate. We cannot specify that this norm shift is due to their approval of a candidate's democratic policies. Therefore, we study these pressures most directly. However, we argue that it is reasonable to assume that the norms are related to the democratic policies that we highlighted earlier in the study.

In addition, depending on the specific draw of candidate attributes, issues of information equivalence may arise. That is, peers may believe that a candidate with certain demographic characteristics or experiences is more likely to be successful as a leader (or respondents may simply approve of such individuals for other reasons that are independent of leadership success). Randomization should address this concern in the aggregate.

5 Sample

For the survey experiments, we rely on a sample of Norwegian political elites, which we recruit ourselves. The sampling frame comprises all Norwegian elected politicians at the local (the municipal and county governments) and national (the parliament) level. Additionally, to maximize our sample size and enable interesting heterogeneity analyses, we sample candidates for office on both the local and national level. These are candidates running for office that just did not receive enough votes to be elected. We include the same number of candidates as the number of elected representatives for each party in each electoral district. This means that if the Labor Party (Arbeiderpartiet) in a given municipality got three representatives

elected, we include the three next candidates on the party list in our sample. If a party failed to get any representatives elected, we include the first candidate on the list. In some cases the same individual is running for office in multiple municipalities. In such cases we exclude the individual from the second list (in alphabetical order), and if relevant choose the next candidate on the list. We do this for all municipal and regional governments based on the local election results from 2023, as well as for the parliament election in 2021. The inclusion of both elected politicians and candidates allows us to distinguish between those running for office (and were not elected), those who are elected at the local level, and those who are elected at the national level.

We base our sample on the official candidate lists and election results published by the electoral management body (Valgdirektoratet). These lists contain candidates approved by the municipal and country election boards (valgstyrrer). Minor changes might have occurred between the approval of these lists and the elections. Moreover municipal elections in Norway allow cumulative voting and panachage ("slengere"). As a result the pre-election candidate lists might differ from the election results. When this is the case, we rely on the election results from each municipality.

Our frame also includes government ministers, junior ministers (state secretaries), but we do not expect a high response rate in these categories. We also include non-elected party elites holding key positions within the party (i.e., party secretary, regional leaders, members of the parties' boards) and senior political advisors within the government ministries.

In total, our sampling frame encompasses around 20 000 respondents. This includes around 9400 municipal representatives, 575 members of county governments ("fylkesting"), 169 members of parliament, and roughly 10 000 candidates for office. We manually collect publicly available contact information and send out personal emails with invitations to participate in the online survey to all individuals on this list. While this is a demanding undertaking, the method enable us to reach not only members of parliament or other high

profile politicians, but also local political elites. To protect the respondents personal data and privacy the survey is completely anonymous. Additionally, respondents are able to request that their name and e-mail address are deleted from our register. If they do not request this, their name and contact information will be stored in line with the University of Oslo’s guidelines for data protection. Our expected response rate is difficult to estimate.

5.1 Citizen sample

To check whether elites differ from “ordinary” citizens, we run a nationally representative survey-experiment on citizens as well. This has an N of 2000, and is performed using existing infrastructure via YouGov.

6 Research Design

6.1 Study 1: Democracy Principles Questionnaire

Purpose: Which democracy principles do respondents gravitate towards? This can be used to study heterogeneity (individual democracy principles, country-preference, sanctioning of candidates). The democracy principles are borrowed from Claassen et al. (2023), and we include one statement per group (freedom of speech, judicial constraints on the executive etc.). Additionally, we include one statement regarding violence and one concerning democracy at large. There are 8 statements in total.

- To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree)
 - People should be free to criticize the government even in times of great crisis.
(freedom of speech)

- All adult Norwegians should have the right to vote, even individuals holding extreme views. (voting rights)
- Non-political authorities, such as the armed forces, should never be able to overrule the will of elected politicians. (elected decision makers) The government should be able to ignore court rulings that are regarded as politically biased
- We should respect the results of elections, no matter which party wins. (free and fair elections)
- The supreme court (Høyesterett) should be able to overrule the government if policies are judged to be illegal (judicial constraints on the executive)
- Legislators should be able to question and oversee political decisions taken by the government, even when this slows down progress. (legislative constraints on the executive)
- All adult Norwegians should enjoy the same legal rights, regardless of their political beliefs (equality before the law)
- Democracy is always the best style of government. (general democracy)

6.2 Study 2: Country-evaluation conjoint

Purpose: This study measures political elites' revealed preferences for democracy, through asking respondents to evaluate pairs of hypothetical countries with different randomized characteristics. We include country characteristics such as the presence of democratic institutions, along with economic performance, quality of governance, cultural attributes as well as weather. This set-up allows us to move beyond stated preferences for democracy which likely are affected by social desirability bias. Moreover, we are able to elicit the relative importance respondents place on different democratic institutions and norms compared

to other desired societal characteristics such as economic performance and quality of governance. By asking respondents which society they would prefer to live in, we encourage them to engage in a comprehensive evaluation of the alternatives considering a multitude of their own personal preferences over a range of characteristics. We include information on the country's climate to establish a point of reference for estimating the relative importance of democracy in the eyes of the respondents. In many ways, the rationale is similar to that of including an attribute on background valence in study 3. While climate and weather is universally relevant, we expect it to take a backseat to democracy in the respondent's evaluations. Nonetheless, should respondents prioritize climate over democracy, it would yield a highly interesting - and concerning - insight.

- **Outcome:**

- Which society would you prefer to live in?

Variable	Value 1	Value 2	Value 3
Economics	People generally live comfortably on their income	Most people struggle to live on their income	
Democracy (elections)	Citizens elect their leaders in free and fair elections	Citizens go to the polls, but elections are neither free nor fair	
Democracy (Liberal)	Few limits on the right to free speech	Many limits on the right to free speech	
Democracy (Constraints)	Political leaders are constrained by the parliament and the courts	Political leaders are somewhat constrained by the parliament and the courts, but can overrule in important cases	Political leaders can rule without constraints by the parliament and the courts
Good governance	The country delivers public services of high quality	The country partly manages to deliver public services	The quality of the public services is low
Gender equality	Both men and women have equal opportunities in the work force	Women have limited opportunities in the work force	
Climate	The country has a comfortable and nice climate	The country has a comfortable and nice climate for roughly half the year	The country has a harsh and uncomfortable climate

Table 2: Country-conjoint

6.3 Study 3: Party nomination conjoint

Purpose: How committed are elites to sanctioning those who break with democracy in statements, when weighed against other traits? This is presented in a setting similar to “real life”, i.e. the nomination of a party colleague to a position of power.

The violations of democratic norms are mirroring the democracy principles first presented to the respondent, borrowed from Claassen. The aim is to discover how well the support for the abstract/far-away notion of democracy (seen in the country conjoint) travels to the practical/real-life setting of supporting a candidate with different democratic views.

We don’t ask about specific policies in order to avoid positions that may be inconsistent across parties.

Opening: “Imagine that there are two party members that are both seeking an important position [viktig verv] in your party. Choose the candidate you would be most likely to support.”

- **Main outcomes:**

- Which of these candidates would you support?
- Do you think most other party members would support this candidate?

- **Other post-treatment questions:**

- How committed do you think each of the two candidates are to democracy? (from 1-10, where 1 is “not committed at all” and 10 “highly committed”)

Variable	Value 1	Value 2	Value 3	Value 4	Value 5	Value 6	Value 7
Demographics							
Age	25	35	45	55	65		
Gender	Male	Female					
Party Experience	Recently joined, no leadership experience	Long-term member without leadership experience	Long-term member with leadership experience				
Party Role	National representative	Local representative					
Background (valence)	Charged with a minor offence for driving under influence	Rumoured to make inappropriate sexual remarks at party events	Repeatedly supplied inaccurate information when filing for travel compensation	Commented on revisions to the Procurement Act in a recent radio interview			
Elite Cues and External Pressures							
Party Leadership Support	Widespread endorsements by party leadership	One endorsement by party leadership	No endorsements				
Support Among Party Members	High support	Average support	Low support				
Polling Among Voters	High popularity	Average popularity	Low popularity				

Table continues on next page

Table 3: Nominee Candidate Conjoint

Variable	Value 1	Value 2	Value 3	Value 4	Value 5	Value 6	Value 7
Policies							
Candidate's Aims for the Party	Building organizational capacity	Building social media communication	Developing new policies	Expanding outreach to young voters			
Recent Statement	The government should be able to censor media sources that are too critical	The universal right to vote must be questioned when so many voters are poorly informed and easily misled	Governments are justified in bending electoral rules in their favour when their opponents have also done so in the past	The government should be able to bend the law in order to solve pressing social and political problems	If the parliament hinders the work of the government, it should be ignored	It is important to ensure a high level of coordination between different public authorities [offentlige styringsinstanser]	

Table 4: Nominee Candidate Conjoint

7 Planned Analysis

7.1 Background variables

We collect information on a number of background characteristics:

- Age
- Gender
- Geographical area where you are living
 - village, small town, urban center etc

Which

- Geographical area you are representing
 - village, small town, urban center etc
- Party affiliation
 - What party do you belong to? List the main parties and an "other" option
 - If you chose "other", what party do you feel the closest to? List the main parties
- Experience with politics
 - In the last election, were you a candidate for office?
 - Currently, what role do you hold? Options: local, regional, national, none of the above
 - Is this your first term?
 - When were you first elected as a political representative?
 - How long have you been a party member?

- Occupation
 - Are you a full time politician?
 - Where do you have work experience?
- Education
 - What is your highest level of completed education?

These variables will be used to evaluate covariate balance and conduct covariate-adjusted analysis.

In addition, we will draw on the variables measuring political experience to analyse the relationship between prior political experience and commitments to democracy (H8). More specifically, We will capture political experience in two ways: First, we consider the number of years that the politician has been a party member. Second, we consider the number of years that the politician has been an elected representative. To further assess how experience with being an elected representative affects democratic commitments we also compare elected representative who were very close to not being elected in the last election, to those who were very close to being elected. Those that were elected (with a very close vote) ended up gaining more representative experience than those that just ended up not getting elected. As we expect these elected and non-elected politicians to be, on average, not very different in terms of background factors and political career trajectory (and, at the very least, less different than if we were to compare those that won by a very high margin to those that very far away from being elected) - this can allow us to more precisely consider the effect of more experience as a political representative on our outcome variables.

7.2 Estimation

For Study 1, we will simply examine descriptive statistics for the respondents. For Studies 2 and 3, we examine the AMCEs as well as heterogeneous treatment effects.

We estimate the following specification:

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta_1 \cdot D_i + \boldsymbol{\beta} \cdot \mathbf{T} + \epsilon_i \quad (3)$$

The dependent variable Y_i is either the support choice or the country choice. The covariate β_1 is the AMCE for the salient democratic attribute in each conjoint. Next, $\boldsymbol{\beta}$ are the AMCEs for the vector of other attributes in the conjoints, \mathbf{T} . We use this estimation to test hypotheses 1 and 2.

In addition, we have two types of heterogeneous treatment effects of interest. First, we examine pre-treatment covariate attributes to investigate how they shift the AMCEs of interest. This addresses hypotheses 3, 4, and 8. These are essentially just conditional AMCEs, so we estimate the following equation:

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta_1 \cdot D_i \cdot C + \boldsymbol{\beta} \cdot \mathbf{T} \cdot C + \boldsymbol{\beta} \cdot \mathbf{T} + \epsilon_i \quad (4)$$

Here, β_1 remains the covariate of interest to determine how the effect of the democracy attribute shifts in the pre-treatment covariate C . Note that this approach focuses on AMCEs rather than an individual-level estimator such as the Individual Marginal Component Effect (Robinson and Duch, 2023). Given a sufficient sample size, we will examine the IMCE as an additional robustness check.

Finally, we consider the interaction among conjoint attributes to examine heterogeneous treatment effects. This addresses hypotheses 5, 6, and 7. To do so, we estimate the Average Marginal Interaction Effect (AMIE) proposed by Egami and Imai (2018), which has the advantage of being invariant to baseline attribute levels.

7.3 Model assumptions

As AMCEs depend on the reference category, we also examine marginal means, which are invariant to this consideration. In addition, following the practices suggested by Bansak et al. (2021), we examine response stability for each conjoint as well as the distribution of observed attributes to ensure that we have full coverage and that attributes appear at the intended rate. This is particularly important as we anticipate that we may have a limited response rate due to our unique respondent pool.

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8 Survey Instrument

8.1 Example of Country Conjoint (Study 2)

(1/6) Which society is best?

	Country 1	Country 2	None
Economics	Most people struggle to live on their income	People generally live comfortably on their income	None of these options
Democracy (elections)	Citizens elect their leaders in free and fair elections	Citizens go to the polls but elections are neither free nor fair	
Democracy (liberal)	Few limits on the right to free speech	Many limits on the right to free speech	
Democracy (constraints)	Political leaders are constrained by the parliament and the courts	Political leaders are somewhat constrained by the parliament and the courts, but can overrule it in important cases	
Good governance	The country partly manages to deliver public services	The country delivers public services of high quality	
Gender Equality	Both men and women have equal opportunities in the work force	Women have limited opportunities in the work force	
Weather	The country has a comfortable and nice climate	The country has a comfortable and nice climate for roughly half the year	
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

8.2 Example of Nomination Conjoint (Study 3)

(1/11) Imagine that there are two party members that are both seeking an important position in your party. Choose the candidate you would be most likely to support

	Choice 1	Choice 2
Party Experience	Recently joined, no leadership experience	Long-term member without leadership experience
Polling Among Voters	Average popularity	Low popularity
Party Role	National representative	National representative
Party Leadership Support	No endorsements	One endorsement by party leadership
Candidate's Aims for the Party	Building organizational capacity	Building organizational capacity
Support Among Party Members	Low support	Average support
Recent Statement	The universal right to vote must be questioned when so many voters are poorly informed and easily misled	Governments are justified in bending electoral rules in their favour when their opponents have also done so in the past
Background	Commented on revisions to the Procurement Act in a recent radio interview	Commented on revisions to the Procurement Act in a recent radio interview
Age	25	65
Gender	Female	Male
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8.3 Demographics and Study 1 Questions

Introduction and information letter

Hello, we're researchers from the University of Oslo. We are conducting a research study to examine opinions and attitudes about elections and politics. Participation in this study will involve completing a survey. Your involvement will require about 15 minutes. There are no known or anticipated risks to you for participating.

You must be 18 years of age or older to participate and located in the Norway to take this survey. We will not know your name, and no identifying information will be connected to your survey answers in any way. The survey is therefore anonymous.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to decline to participate, to end participation at any time for any reason, or to refuse to answer any individual question without penalty.

If you have any questions about this study, you may contact the

investigator at daniel.goldstein@stv.uio.no.

If you would like to talk with someone other than the researchers to discuss problems or concerns, to discuss situations in the event that a member of the research team is not available, or to discuss your rights as a research participant, you may contact the [] Additional information is available at [] Would you like to participate? Are you 18 years of age or older? Please click on the arrow to go to the survey.

[This is a placeholder for the final information letter developed in line with SIKT guidelines]

Attention check 1

For our research, careful attention to survey questions is critical! To show that you are paying attention, please select "I have a question."

- I understand
- I do not understand
- I have a question

Demographics - experience

In the last election, were you a candidate for political office?

- Yes, I was a candidate in the national election in 2021
- Yes I was a candidate in the local election in 2023
- Yes, I was a candidate in both the national election in 2021 and the local election in 2023
- No, I was not a candidate

Currently, what political role do you hold?

If you currently are on any sort of leave (sick leave, parental leave etc.) that lasts less than a year, please choose the role you had prior to going on leave.

- I am a national representative in the parliament
- I am a regional representative in the Fylkesting

- I am a local representative in a Kommunestyre or Bystyre
- I am not currently a political representative

Is this your first term as an elected political representative at the local, regional or national level?

- Yes
- No

When were you first elected as a political representative at the local, regional or national level?

Year

Since when have you been a party member of you current party?

Year

Study 1: Agreement with Claassen's democratic statements

To what extent do you disagree or agree with the following statements:

People should be free to criticize the government even in times of great crisis

Completely disagree Somewhat disagree Neither disagree nor agree Somewhat agree Completely agree

All adult Norwegians should have the right to vote, even individuals holding extreme views

Completely disagree Somewhat disagree Neither disagree nor agree Somewhat agree Completely agree

Non-political authorities, such as the armed forces, should never be able to overrule the will of elected politicians

Completely disagree Somewhat disagree Neither disagree nor agree Somewhat agree Completely agree

We should respect the results of elections, no matter which party wins

Completely disagree Somewhat disagree Neither disagree nor agree Somewhat agree Completely agree

The supreme court should be able to overrule the government if policies are judged to be illegal

Completely disagree Somewhat disagree Neither disagree nor agree Somewhat agree Completely agree

Legislators should be able to question and oversee political decisions taken by the government, even when this slows down progress

Completely disagree Somewhat disagree Neither disagree nor agree Somewhat agree Completely agree

All adult Norwegians should enjoy the same legal rights,
regardless of their political beliefs

Completely disagree Somewhat disagree Neither disagree nor agree Somewhat agree Completely agree

Democracy is always the best style of government

Completely disagree Somewhat disagree Neither disagree nor agree Somewhat agree Completely agree

Demographics - other

How old are you?

- 18-24 years
- 25-34 years
- 35-44 years
- 45-54 years
- 55-64 years
- 65+ years

Which gender do you identify with the most?

- Male
- Female

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Norwegian grade 1-10 ("grunnskole")
- High School ("generell studiekompetanse")
- Vocational school ("yrkesskole/fagbrev")
- Three year bachelor degree
- Five year masters degree
- Postgraduate degree, PhD etc

Which description best matches the area where you live?

- A big city (Norwegian: En storby)
- A suburb or on the outskirts of a city (Norwegian: En forstad eller utkanten av en storby)
- A small or a medium sized city (Norwegian: En liten eller mellomstor by)
- A village (Norwegian: Et bygdesentrum)
- A sparsely populated area (Norwegian: Et spredtbygd strøk)

Which description best matches the area you represent politically?

- A big city (Norwegian: En storby)
- A suburb or on the outskirts of a city (Norwegian: En forstad eller utkanten av en storby)
- A small or a medium sized city (Norwegian: En liten eller mellomstor by)
- A village (Norwegian: Et bygdesentrum)
- A sparsely populated area (Norwegian: Et spredtbygd strøk)

Which political party do you belong to?

- Fremskrittspartiet
- Høyre
- Venstre
- Kristelig Folkeparti
- Senterpartiet
- Miljøpartiet de Grønne
- Arbeiderpartiet
- Sosialistisk Venstreparti
- Rødt

My party is not on this list

If you had to choose, which political party do you feel the closest to?

- Fremskrittspartiet
- Høyre
- Venstre
- Kristelig Folkeparti
- Senterpartiet
- Miljøpartiet de Grønne
- Arbeiderpartiet
- Sosialistisk Venstreparti
- Rødt
- My party is not on this list