

Accountability Beyond Outcomes: Experimental Evidence on Voters and Executive Performance

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Abstract

While executives in many democracies have constitutional powers to circumvent the majoritarian legislative process to make policy, political scientists know little about whether and when ordinary people hold executives accountable for the process they use. Process-based accountability is crucial for executives' incentives to practice institutional forbearance. We empirically assess the importance of process in three large representative survey experiments conducted in France, where the government has strong powers relative to parliament. We find that leadership evaluations reflect trade-offs between competing considerations. In contrast to purely outcome-based theories that dominate research on accountability and elections, our evidence demonstrates the relevance of process beyond policy, party, or economic conditions based on whether the leader uses constitutional force to make laws. Executives that fail to pass legislation also suffer from public recrimination. Hence, leaders face a trade-off. This helps explain the puzzling restraint in the use of procedural force.

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According to much of political science, government leaders have reasons to expect that they may be held accountable by voters for the outcomes they produce (or fail to produce). However, scoring major legislative accomplishments is hard because it requires confronting competing interests and ideas. In the face of political conflict in the legislature or within the governing coalition, executives in many contemporary democracies have the constitutional power to use restrictive procedures that circumvent the majoritarian legislative process to make policy. Prominent examples of such powers are executive orders, common in presidential systems, and confidence vote procedures, common in parliamentary and semi-presidential systems. Political opponents are usually quick to criticize the use of “procedural force” by executives as unfair or anti-democratic in spirit, or portray it as a signal of political weakness and incompetence. But these procedural critiques often go together with self-interested disagreements about policy or political posturing. At the same time, executives are sometimes reluctant to use their constitutional powers despite anticipated policy gains.

How ordinary people assess the legislative performance of the executive is crucial for executives’ incentives to practice institutional forbearance rather than constitutional hard-ball politics. In the longer-run, the interplay between citizens and executives’ actions shapes democratic legitimacy and stability. While institutional theories demonstrate how the formal powers of executives can influence policy (Howell, 2003; Huber, 1996*b*) and there is a voluminous literature on how voters respond to political and economic outcomes¹, we know much less about the microfoundations of how voters assess executives facing tough choices over policy and legislative process. Do voters focus on outcomes and ignore the process through which they have been achieved? Or do considerations about process matter independently

¹Many studies of retrospective voting have focused on the link between economic performance and voter responses at the micro level or the macro level (Duch and Stevenson, 2008; Kramer, 1971; Kayser, 2012; Lewis-Beck, 1997), without examining the policy decisions or political process through which they are achieved. For an overview, see Achen and Bartels (2016); Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier (2007). There is a large literature on (prospective) voting based on policy positions (Iversen, 1994; Tomz and Houweling, 2008). Voters may also draw on free information about policy decisions taken by incumbents. On the latter, see, for instance Ferraz and Finan (2008); Healy and Malhorta (2009); Wlezien (2017).

of policy preferences and partisan attachments? While most of the literature focuses on outcome-based accountability, in recent years political scientists have started to pay more attention to process. However, several empirical challenges related to the strategic use of constitutional force make it difficult to adjudicate between divergent theoretical perspectives, and existing research is almost exclusively focused on the United States (Christenson and Kriner, 2017*a,b*; Reeves and Rogowski, 2016, 2018).

Theoretically, one can make a broad distinction between outcome-oriented and process-based perspectives on accountability. Outcome-oriented perspectives dominate research on voting and executive popularity. Standard theories in this literature imply that instrumental concerns linked to policy ends or the political identity of the government overwhelm considerations about process. From the perspective of spatial models of voting or the large literature on the economic vote, for instance, one should not expect that the public provides meaningful incentives for executives to practice forbearance in the use of their constitutional power. Rather, they use them whenever they need them to get things done, as accountability is purely outcome-based.

In contrast, a process-based perspective maintains that people value democratic process in lawmaking beyond the policy outcome it generates and regardless of the identity of the executive. Informational theories suggest that voters may rely on highly visible actions of executives as a heuristic to attribute responsibility or make inferences about the quality of their leadership. Moreover, deviations from an approximatively majoritarian decision-making process in the assembly may violate norms of political equality and fairness. The latter view is rooted in procedural theories of democracy and related to scholarship on procedural fairness norms in psychology and behavioral economics. One central implication of the process-view is that people penalize use of procedural force by executives even if they like the policy outcome or share the political identity of the executive. If true, the public may constrain executives' use of their prerogatives, fostering institutional forbearance that

is fundamental to democratic politics.

Analytically, outcome-oriented and process-oriented perspectives are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they should be fruitfully combined to explain real-world behavior and inform constitutional design. This requires more evidence on the weight of process and the conditions under which it matters.

In this paper, we argue that citizens hold executives accountable for outputs and the process they use. Importantly, we show that these dimensions are linked. Because the choice of the legislative process affects the likelihood that the executive delivers a desired outcome, this can lead to a stark trade-off between outcome and process, with important implications for political incentives and democratic governance. Empirically, we analyze three large conjoint survey experiments conducted in France to shed new light on the issue and address the questions raised above. France is a very interesting case because its 1958 constitution, which influenced constitutional design around the world, provides the executive with strong powers to circumvent the normal parliamentary process to make laws (Duverger, 1980; Huber, 1996*a*). The strongest constitutional weapon is the confidence procedure. It enables the government to automatically pass a law without a vote in the national assembly unless a majority of deputies dares to bring down the government.²

Our experimental design overcomes several vexing empirical problems, including one that has received no attention before. Strategic selection, endogeneity, and multiple attributes of executives and their performance as lawmakers make it difficult to establish whether democratic process matters for accountability using observational data. The few existing survey-experimental studies addressing these issues focus on whether presidents in the U.S.

²Confidence procedures as a tool for policymaking exists in many democracies. For instance, prime ministers have this power in 17 countries in Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand (Huber, 1996*b*, 271). In nine of those cases, there is no prerequisite for invoking the procedure. After 1990, many democracies in central and Eastern Europe also adopted the procedure (e.g., Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia). It is also featured in several constitutions in Africa. See <https://www.constituteproject.org>.

are punished for pursuing a particular policy by procedural force rather than working through the legislature (Christenson and Kriner, 2017*a,b*; Reeves and Rogowski, 2018). This is clearly important. However, the executive's incentives are also shaped by how voters respond to the alternative of failing to pass policy. Not considering this counterfactual leads to an incomplete understanding of the role of process considerations and their political implications. In particular, it can understate the trade-off voters and executives face between policy and process. Hence, our experiments include multiple counterfactual policy outcomes.

Our first experiment randomizes different vignettes concerning the attributes and performance of the prime ministers that may come to power after the upcoming election: their party, which policy is proposed, whether the policy is enacted by majority vote or constitutional force or is not passed. Because of the unusually large sample size of the representative survey ($>N=19,000$) we can afford to expose each subject to only a single vignette. This makes respondents' rating task more realistic and avoids carry-over effects (Hainmueller, Hopkins and Yamamoto, 2014). It also secures statistical power for the analysis of treatment effect heterogeneity, which enables us to distinguish different explanations of the effects.

We find that party, policy and process jointly matter for how voters assess the performance of the prime minister. Rather than being overwhelmed by either partisan or policy considerations, evaluations reflect trade-offs between competing motivations. Process matters more than is accounted for by standard theories of electoral behavior and representation. A prime minister who enacts a policy using constitutional force is evaluated significantly more harshly than a prime minister who passes the same policy through majority voting in the assembly. Importantly, people who like the policy or share the prime minister's partisan identity also hold the prime minister accountable for using procedural force. The magnitude of this process effect is electorally relevant. At the same time, prime ministers who do not use procedural force but fail to get their policy proposal through the legislative process suffer from a large drop in public satisfaction.

A second experiment reveals that executives are punished for constitutional force when there is dissent within the government but not when a minority obstructs lawmaking. This is consistent with non-instrumental theories emphasizing the intrinsic value of process. A third experiment shows that the results are robust to including information about the economy and that the penalty for using constitutional force varies little with economic conditions.

Altogether, our rich set of results underscores the importance of process evaluations for political accountability. While surprising given the emphasis on outcomes in most of the literature, they are consistent with procedural theories and recent evidence from the U.S. (Christenson and Kriner, 2017*b*; Reeves and Rogowski, 2018). Going further, this is the first study to indicate how large the process effect is compared to the effect of failing to deliver the outcome. Our findings thus highlight a key trade-off faced by executives and they explain the restrained and highly selective use constitutional force in countries like France.

Our findings also relate to research on voter reactions to opportunistic election timing (Smith, 2003). Recent experimental research finds that while voters dislike the opportunistic calling of early elections, which is perceived as unfair and a negative signal about the incumbent's competence, these qualms are overwhelmed by the positive responsiveness to economic outcomes (Schleiter and Tavits, 2018). In contrast, our evidence is less pessimistic about public constraints on executive power and opportunism.

Theoretical perspectives

Outcome-oriented theories

Policy. Building on the seminal work of Duncan Black and Anthony Downs, spatial theories of voting and policymaking have long become an indispensable tool to study democratic

politics and representation.³ They assume that citizens care about policy and their political actions are instrumental given their beliefs. This class of theories implies that citizens' qualms about an executive using constitutional force to bypass the legislative assembly are endogenous to their policy preferences. Put simply, for outcome-oriented voters the policy ends justify the procedural means. This need not mean that people do not care about process at all, but that they are normally not willing to sacrifice very much in terms policy for it. Taken to their logical conclusion, pure spatial theories of institutions predict that people favor legislative checks on executive power only when they expect them to generate more beneficial policy outcomes compared to a stronger executive (e.g., Acemoglu, Robinson and Torvik, 2013). As a result, the mass public does not provide meaningful incentives for executives to practice forbearance rather than play constitutional hardball. In line with this, a recent study based on 27 experiments in Sweden finds that the effect of policy preferences on the acceptance of a policy decision is about twice as strong as the effect of decision procedures, such as whether the decision was taken by bureaucrats or elected representatives (Esaiasson et al., 2016).

Political identity. A large strand of behavioral research emphasizes the importance of partisanship or, more broadly, political identity. While it differs in many ways from the spatial tradition, it also implies that political outcomes trump process considerations. Following seminal theories of voter behavior, the partisan identity of citizens directly and indirectly shapes how they evaluate executives and hold them accountable at the ballot box: Directly, as one party may be preferred over others for policy and non-policy reasons; indirectly, as partisanship shapes perceptions about politics and outcomes (Bartels, 2002; Campbell et al., 1960). From this perspective, it would be surprising if individual assessments of executive performance were sensitive to process beyond party and policy. Elites may well use proce-

³For a review and test of spatial theories of voting, see Iversen (1994) and Tomz and Houweling (2008). On spatial models of lawmaking, see Cameron and McCarty (2004).

dural arguments to criticize their partisan opponents and voters may respond, but this is largely driven by political identity rather than intrinsic preferences about process. Consistent with this, recent survey experiments on the use of unilateral actions by American presidents have found that public opinion about the process is shaped by partisanship as well as policy motivations (Christenson and Kriner 2017a).⁴

Process-based perspectives

Process as a signal. Informational accounts of policymaking and accountability suggest that rational voters may rely on highly visible actions of executives —such as confidence votes or executive decrees —as a heuristic to attribute responsibility or as a signal about the quality of their leadership. Hence, process may factor into citizens’ calculus of accountability according to these theories. While this mechanism remains driven by expectations about (future) outcomes, the informational logic can provide a foundation for public limits on the use of executive power.

Holding executives accountable requires attributing for which outcomes they are responsible. Evidently, this is a difficult task in large-scale polities where policymaking involves multiple players, governments face a large number of policy issues and citizens have little incentives to be attentive to politics (Duch and Stevenson, 2008; Powell and Whitten, 1993). Experimental research has started to examine what attribution heuristics people may use to address this problem. For instance, there is evidence from the lab that individuals punish unfair allocations in a modified dictator game by concentrating on the proposer and the decision-maker with the largest voting weight (Duch, Przepiokra and Stevenson, 2015).

The visible use of executive power can also provide a signal about unobserved qualities of the executive. In particular, it may signal low competence or political weakness. Following Neustadt (1960), the use of executive power in lawmaking may be seen as a signal that the

⁴For similar evidence on the filibuster in the U.S. Senate, see Smith and Park (2013).

executive lacks crucial skills to govern, such as the ability to select and manage a competent staff, formulate compelling policy and forge legislative alliances (also see Huber, 1996*a*, 119). Similarly, it may also signal extreme policy preferences that are out of step with the popular majority (Groseclose and McCarty, 2001). Of course, procedural force may also signal resolve and, if voters do not like compromise (Fortunato, 2017), this implies very different incentives for executives. Theories of endogenous election timing also suggest that voters may adversely respond to a surprise election because it signals lower than expected competence or foreknowledge of an economic downturn (Smith, 2003). Experimental research has found evidence that electoral opportunism indeed reduces voter support (Schleiter and Tavits, 2018). However, it also shows that incumbents are still more likely to win re-election if economic times are good. This is consistent with observational evidence of the electoral benefits, for governments, of controlling election timing (Schleiter and Tavits, 2016).

Process as an intrinsic value. Executives' use of constitutional procedural force to circumvent collective decision-making in the legislative assembly stands in conflict with the notion that democratic decision making, in the legislative stage, requires voting. Simple majority voting in particular "is widely seen as *the* democratic method and departures from it are usually seen as requiring some special justification." (Ward and Weale, 2010, p. 40) In normative political theory, this view has been justified based on the principle of political equality. When there are fundamental disagreements about policy, the ideal of democracy "supports a roughly majoritarian way of making final decisions" (Christiano, 2008, 103). Relatedly, social choice theory has shown that the method of majority rule applied to pairwise alternatives best embodies basic notions of fairness and equality (May, 1953). It is well-known that majority rule may not lead to a decisive winner in some situations. Following Arrow's Impossibility Theorem, however, it is clear that the pathologies of majority rule apply to any non-dictatorial decision method, and some theorists have argued that majority

rule is the most robust voting rule as it works well for the largest domain of preferences (Dasgupta and Maskin, 2008).

Of course, actual legislative procedures almost never resemble pure majority voting, as there are inequalities in agenda setting and amendment rights, and citizens are not political theorists. What matters is that, comparatively, majoritarian decision making processes in real-world assemblies tend to be closer to the democratic norm than executive unilateralism. This is not to say that the latter has no place in democratic constitutions. For instance, constitutional designers in countries like France have argued that government stability and effectiveness merit the price of “rationalizing” parliament (Huber, 1996*a*, ch. 2).

Should we thus expect ordinary people to hold executives accountable for how they achieve policy ends? Some public opinion scholars argue that people’s intrinsic views about the democratic decision-making process matter independently of their policy preferences or partisan leanings, and have the potential to shape the behavior of executives and influence democratic governance in ways that are not accounted for by outcome-based theories (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2001; Reeves and Rogowski, 2016, 2018). This perspective also draws on research on procedural fairness in psychology and behavioral economics. More specifically, procedural justice theory argues that people’s evaluations of allocation decisions or leaders responsible for them are not only responsive to outcomes but also to perceptions about the fairness of the allocation process, such as whether a leader considered views from multiple sides or took enough time to make a careful decision (Tyler, Rasinski and McGraw, 1985; Doherty and Wolak, 2012). As has been noted recently by Esaiasson et al. (2016), most studies in this large body of research have focused on implementation decisions rather than policymaking and they often focus on process perceptions rather than variation in actual decision-making procedures. As a result, we know little about the relevance of intrinsic process preferences for the evaluation of chief executives in contemporary democracies.

The main exception concerns research of public responses to presidential unilateralism in

the U.S., which has produced mixed findings (Christenson and Kriner, 2017*a,b*; Reeves and Rogowski, 2016, 2018). We are only aware of one previous study of the effect of procedural force in lawmaking on accountability in Europe (Becher, Brouard and Guinaudeau, 2017). Their time-series study finds that French prime ministers experience a significant decline in popularity after using the confidence vote. However, the study's research design makes it impossible to distinguish whether this effect is driven by the contentious nature of the policies or the use of the procedure as such, whether the implicit counterfactual to using the confidence vote is not passing the bill or passing it using majority voting, and who is holding the prime minister accountable. Moreover, existing research does not explore the trade-off between policy and process. Addressing these issues requires an experimental approach.

Empirical implications

A procedural perspective, based on informational or intrinsic mechanisms, suggests several key empirical implications that are distinct from purely outcome-based theories that have not been tested experimentally outside the U.S. or not at all.

First, process matters for the accountability of executives independently of policy and partisanship. Moreover, people penalize the use of procedural force by the executive over a roughly majoritarian decision-making process even if they like the policy outcome or share the executive's political identity. The latter hypothesis constitutes a harder test of the process-based perspective and it has implications for the incentives of executives to practice forbearance. Incentives are stronger when some citizen who like a policy nonetheless hold the executive accountable if it is achieved using procedural force. Our first experiment examines these implications.

Second, political context matters. If process is valued in part for normative reasons, procedural force should be viewed negatively when used to coerce legislators in an internally divided majority government but less so in the face of minority obstructionism. This reflects

the egalitarian logic underlying the process norm. In line with this, our second experiment varies political context.

Third, process shapes individuals evaluations of the executive’s performance even when people are provided with information about economic performance. While the economy should matter for evaluations, the process-based perspective suggests that responses to the use of constitutional force are relatively invariant to economic conditions.

The empirical implication is not that process is more important than policy or party for political accountability. Rather, our theoretical prior is that they jointly matter. For instance, the model of Huber (1996*b*) illustrates that outcome-based and process-based views can be fruitfully combined. It suggests that there may be a trade-off that crucially shapes the incentives of government leaders deciding what policy to pursue and how.

Experimental design

To test these empirical implications, we implemented a series of three conjoint survey experiments. They were embedded in the French National Election Survey conducted before the parliamentary and presidential elections held in May and June of 2017 (for a timeline, see Online Appendix Figure A1).⁵ Using a sample that is representative of the French electorate is important as survey experiments from convenience samples may not recover real-world political behavior (Hainmueller, Hangartner and Yamamoto, 2015). In the experiments, we randomly vary multiple dimensions of prime ministers and their performance as lawmakers: party, policy issue, democratic process, policy outcome, economic conditions and political context. The survey experimental approach enables us to take advantages of the strengths

⁵This is a panel survey conducted online by IPSOS. As nearly all surveys in France, sampling is done with a quota method based on age, gender, occupation, region and type of residential area (Gschwend, 2005). The sample closely approximates the subsequent voting behavior in the first round of the presidential election: the mean absolute error of the vote intentions in last wave of the panel before the elections was very low (.6) and the (close) ranking of the four leading candidates was accurate. See <https://www.enef.fr/>.

generally attributed to experiments (higher internal validity) and those of representative public opinion polls (external validity) (Hainmueller, Hangartner and Yamamoto, 2015; Mutz, 2011). While such designs have their own limitations, the experiments overcome problems of strategic selection, endogeneity, multi-dimensionality and omitted counterfactuals that have hampered empirical research on this topic.

Constitutional setting

France provides an ideal setting for the experiments. The constitution of the French Fifth Republic adopted in 1958 is a textbook case of semi-presidentialism and rationalized parliamentarism that puts an emphasis on government effectiveness and stability and has been widely emulated (Duverger, 1980; Huber, 1996*a*). The constitution endows the prime minister, as the head of government designated by the president but responsible to the lower house of parliament (*Assemblée nationale*), with strong powers to curtail or bypass legislative debate and majoritarian voting procedures. In this setting, it is natural and important to ask whether governments are held accountable for process beyond outcomes.

The strongest and most controversial legislative power is contained in Article 49.3 of the constitution. It provides the prime minister with a confidence vote procedure that is incorporated into our experiments. The procedure enables the government to enact policies with the force of law without a vote in the *Assemblée nationale* unless a majority of deputies votes to censure and thus break the government. The procedure turns disagreements over a policy issue to a question of government survival. Formal theory demonstrates that it significantly strengthens the bargaining position of prime ministers relative to dissenting members of their governing coalition (Diermeier and Feddersen, 1998; Huber, 1996*b*).

However, the procedural legitimacy of this institution has been contested since its inception. As is detailed by Huber (1996*a*, 54), it is “one of the most controversial aspects of the Constitution”. It is often described as unfair, heavy-handed or anti-democratic by politicians

and democratic theorists. Of course, such criticisms from politicians may be part of political mobilization against the government rather than sincere qualms about procedure. Michael Debré, one of the writers of the constitution, called it a “troublesome last resort” before it was adopted, and he voiced even stronger opposition against it in a private letter to general Charles de Gaulle, who had been installed by parliament as leader of the government in charge to draft the new constitution (Huber, 1996*a*, 55). This did not prevent Debré from making use of the procedure three times as the first prime minister under the new constitution. Similarly, François Hollande called the procedure a “denial of democracy” and later proposed to change the constitution to get rid of it. After being elected president, however, the prime minister selected by him, Manuel Valls, relied on the confidence vote procedure multiple times to pass unpopular economic reforms.⁶ Altogether, the confidence procedure has been invoked 88 times since 1958.⁷ A confidence-vote is material for front-page news (Becher, Brouard and Guinaudeau, 2017; Huber, 1996*a*) and the public has a fairly good knowledge of the process.⁸

Confidence vote procedures are common in parliamentary and semi-presidential systems.⁹ For instance, they have been used by the British government to ratify the Maastricht Treaty or by Greek governments to pass austerity packages in the midst of financial crisis. More broadly, they are a good example of a process that deviates significantly from the ideal of majoritarian decision based on the consideration of alternative policy options. A confidence procedure may still lead to a vote, though it also concerns the survival of the government.

⁶Jim Jarassé. “Hollande en 2006: ‘Le 49-3 est une brutalité, un déni de démocratie’.” *Le Figaro*, February 2, 2015.

⁷See <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/connaissance/engagements-49-3.asp>.

⁸Three Kantar-SOFRES surveys (1500 respondents each) from September 2016, December 2016 and April 2017 show that between 79% and 82% of the respondents correctly identify that according the constitution, the prime ministers can engage the responsibility of their government to adopt a bill without a vote in National Assembly. Results are available at <http://www.cevipof.com/fr/dynamiquespolitiques/resultats/>.

⁹See note 2. As in France, several constitutions also specify that a bill attached to a confidence vote is passed without a vote in parliamentary unless a majority of MPs votes to censure the government (e.g., Romania, Senegal, Mauritania).

The confidence procedure was a salient feature of French politics during the time of the surveys. The government of prime minister Manuel Valls relied on the procedure three times to pass economic reforms in the year before the first experiment. As was widely reported in the media, these episodes featured public controversy over the policy and the method of lawmaking. A month before the first experiment, the prime minister used his constitutional power to “ram through parliament” his jobs bill, which was opposed by leftwing unions and many MPs in his party.¹⁰ Over his tenure, the use of the confidence vote by Valls is close to the average for the Fifth Republic (2 compared to 1.5 per year).

Design principles

Our approach shares with existing survey experiments the ability to address the strategic selection problem. Theoretically, executives strategically choose the means to pursue a policy (Huber, 1996*b*). If the use of procedural force is constrained by voter evaluations, they will occur for some policies but not others, diminishing the ability of researchers to find comparable observations in non-experimental data (Reeves and Rogowski, 2018).

Moreover, all three experiments share several important design principles. They ask respondents to consider a hypothetical but plausible political situation that may emerge after the upcoming election (for a similar approach, see Tomz and Houweling 2008). Each experiment randomly assigns different vignettes about the legislative actions of a potential future prime minister and then asks respondents to evaluate the prime minister’s overall performance. We focus on the prime minister because the constitutional power to use procedural force, by means of the confidence vote, belongs to the prime minister, not the president. Consistent with this, the media reports the use of this procedure as a decision of the prime minister.¹¹ Moreover, under unified government popular evaluations of the prime minister

¹⁰Anne-Sylvaine Chassany. “French government bypasses parliament to force through jobs bill.” *The Financial Times*, May 10, 2016.

¹¹For example, see Anne de Guigné. “Valls précipite l’adoption définitive de la loi travail.” *Le Figaro*,

are highly predictive of evaluations of the president¹², also after accounting for ideology and partisanship (Online Appendix Table A3), and under divided government the prime minister is the main focus of accountability for domestic matters (Lewis-Beck, 1997).

Multiple attributes. The vignettes deliberately confront respondents with a rich set of information about the prime minister’s action with respect to policy and process as well as other attributes, such as party or economic conditions, all of which are varied experimentally. While the goal is to capture how respondents react to goal conflicts between policy outcomes and legislative process, there is information, as in the real-world, about multiple attributes. Respondents may only be responsive to some attributes, perhaps party or policy, or none at all. We also vary the policy issues to increase external validity. In comparison to single-attribute experiments, this conjoint design approximates a more realistic environment and thus enhances the theoretical and external validity of the results (Hainmueller, Hopkins and Yamamoto, 2014).

Multiple counterfactual policy outcomes. A policy may be adopted by majority vote in the national assembly or it may be adopted using the confidence vote procedure. This enables us to compare whether using procedural force matters compared to majority voting. In addition, a policy may not be adopted. While governments in many non-presidential systems are rarely defeated in a parliamentary vote, this does not mean that they always manage to pass their agenda. A government’s policy proposals may die in committee, expire with the end of the parliamentary session or are withdrawn for lack of support. Our experiments capture this. Theoretically, it would be incomplete to only focus on the comparison of how a policy is passed. This neglects the relevant counterfactual that the government may fail to get things done, which is key to the incentives of governments considering the use of pro-

July 20, 2016 or *Le Monde* “Projet de loi travail : Manuel Valls recourt au 49-3.” May 10, 2016.

¹²Aggregate presidential and prime ministerial popularity over the 1981-2018 period are highly correlated ($r=0.69$) according to Kantar SOFRES surveys.

cedural force. Our design thus improves upon existing survey experiments, which focus on the comparison of executives that use unilateral action or try to work with the legislature, without varying the policy outcome (Christenson and Kriner, 2017*a,b*; Reeves and Rogowski, 2018).

Outcome variable. After being shown a particular vignette, respondents are asked to evaluate the prime minister on a 11-point scale that asks about the satisfaction with the prime minister’s action, ranging from absolutely not satisfied (0) to absolutely satisfied (10). The dependent variable does not specifically ask whether respondents approve of the use of the confidence vote because the goal of the experiments is to assess how voters assess executive performance more broadly, which is what ultimately matters for accountability. Respondents have to weight potentially competing considerations to come to a summary judgement (as in Reeves and Rogowski, 2018). In all analyses reported below, the dependent variable is rescaled to vary between 0 and 1.

Respondents are only asked to rate a single prime minister rather than explicitly comparing two different prime ministers. In the real-world, voters only get to observe a single prime minister at any particular time and so asking about multiple hypothetical prime ministers is more artificial. This is different, for instance, from the evaluation of immigrants for admission into a host country (Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2015). For this reason, we opt for simpler design with a single vignette (or profile) rather than a paired design.¹³

Sample size. Each respondent is shown only one vignette per experiment. This is made possible by our unusually large sample size ($N > 19,000$ in experiment 1, $N > 6,000$ in experiment 2 and $N > 15,000$ in experiment 3), which ensures that we have several hundred respon-

¹³In a validation study using experimental and real-world referendum data on immigrant admissions in Switzerland, Hainmueller, Hangartner and Yamamoto (2015, p. 2397) find that survey experiments “match the behavioral benchmark rather well, with the important exception of the student sample.” They also find that paired designs perform better than simpler designs. However, the nature of the rating task was different from ours. As we explain later, our results on the confidence vote match a non-experimental benchmark.

dents for a particular vignette (we are more precise below). This avoids carryover effects from exposing respondents to repeated rating tasks (Hainmueller, Hopkins and Yamamoto, 2014), which is frequently done in existing studies to preserve statistical power. Moreover, limiting the experiment to one question discourages respondent disengagement, which may lead to questionnaire satisficing (Hainmueller, Hangartner and Yamamoto, 2015).¹⁴ The sample size also facilitates the theoretically-driven analysis of heterogeneity in the treatment effects.

Experiment 1: Party, policy and process

The first experiment is designed to answer the following questions that adjudicate between different theoretical perspectives on the relevance of process in accountability: First, holding policy outcomes and party fixed, are prime ministers punished by the public for the use of procedural force—in the form of the confidence procedure—compared to making policy by majority rule? Second, are process effects mainly driven by those who disagree with the policy content or do not share the prime minister’s partisanship? Third, how large is the procedural punishment compared to the punishment for not getting things done?

The experiment was included in the wave of the French National Election Survey administered on the internet between June 17 and 27, 2016 (with a sample size of 19,383 respondents). The topic was introduced by a short paragraph on the confidence vote procedure as well as the main advantages and drawbacks usually associated with it in public debate¹⁵, directly followed by a factual question about the use of confidence vote in the last 12 months. Only 10% of the respondents did not report any knowledge of at least one of the

¹⁴The variation in responses is not consistent with satisficing (Online Appendix Figure A3).

¹⁵The wording of the prompt is as follows: “The French constitution (article 49.3) allows the Prime minister, with the approval of the ministers’ council, to use the confidence vote to adopt a bill. In this case the bill is adopted without a vote in the National Assembly provided no censure resolution is adopted. Some people feel that the 49.3 is a legitimate tool to enable the Prime minister to govern efficiently and to hasten the adoption of bills. Others feel that it is undemocratic and allows the adoption of governments’ proposal that are not supported by a parliamentary majority.”

three uses of the confidence vote between mid-June 2015 and mid-June 2016. The prompt and information question were not repeated in experiments 2 and 3 conducted several months later. The fact that we find similar process effects in these experiments indicates that the initial priming was not crucial. Furthermore, Online Appendix Figure A4 reports additional evidence that respondents that were never primed (because they did not participate in the initial experiment) react very similarly to the use of constitutional force compared to those primed once months before.

In the subsequent experiment, each respondent was presented with a relatively short and straightforward vignette where the party of the prime minister, the issue of the policy proposal, and the legislative process and outcome were randomly allocated. Table 1 provides the full wording for each profile of experimental conditions (translated into English, French versions are available upon request). The wording resembles factual newspaper reports. Altogether, there are 24 different vignettes (or attribute profiles) and there are around 800 respondents for each of them. A randomization check shows that the vignettes are balanced across pre-treatment co-variates (Online Appendix Table A2).

As the use of procedural force is only meaningful when there is political conflict, the policy proposal is always presented as being associated with “heated debates both with the opposition and within the majority”. In the vignette, the prime minister belongs to one of the four parties that were at the time of the survey the four most important parties in France (from left to right): the Left Party, the Socialist party (PS), the Republicans, or the National Front.¹⁶ The survey was conducted 10 months before the elections and there was considerable political uncertainty. In this context, considering that different parties

¹⁶The Socialist and the Republicans (under various names) were the two main parties for most of the the Fifth Republic and the four included parties received 82% of the vote in the last election that occurred before the experiment (regional elections in December 2015). The party of the president elected in June 2017 (*En Marche*) was created only two months before the survey and E. Macron was neither candidate for the 2017 presidential election nor a front runner in the polls at the time. Note that the party condition in the third experiment differs.

may win the government is plausible. Furthermore, as detailed in Table 1, each vignette was randomly assigned to one of two concrete policy issues and to one of three legislative conditions. In terms of policy, the prime minister proposes either “to increase the wealth tax” or “to limit the number of refugees and asylum seeker welcome in France”. Survey experiments on public evaluations of unilateral actions by American presidents emphasize the importance of studying concrete policy issues that may conflict with attitudes about process (Christenson and Kriner, 2017*b*; Reeves and Rogowski, 2018). We selected these two policies because both issues are salient in France (and many other countries) and they have opposite ideological direction: the wealth tax increase is a left-leaning proposal whereas the limitation of refugees is a right-leaning one. The dramatic increase in the number of refugees and migrants arriving in continental Europe in 2015 led to proposals aimed at limiting the inflow refugees. Rising economic inequality over the last decades has also increased calls on the left to increase redistribution, and the evolution of the existing wealth tax has been a prominent policy issue in France in this election. Prior surveys suggested that a little more than half of the public favored each proposal (Online Appendix, p. 3).

There are three possible legislative outcomes. In the *Majority vote* condition, the prime minister’s proposal is adopted by “a majority in the National Assembly”. In the *Confidence vote* condition, the prime minister’s proposal is adopted “without a parliamentary vote on the bill as the Prime minister invoked a confidence vote (article 49.3).” In the *Withdrawal* condition, the prime minister’s proposal “is not adopted as the Prime Minister withdrew the bill”. Withdrawing a bill from further consideration is the main form of legislative defeat for the government in France. Consistent with the theory of Huber (1996*b*), there has been no case where a prime minister was defeated in a confidence vote. In each scenario, the prime minister proposes the policy. This controls, by design, information about who is responsible for the policy action (Duch, Przepiokra and Stevenson, 2015).

Table 1: Vignette question wording for experiment 1

	Majority vote condition	Confidence vote condition	Withdrawal condition
Wealth tax	Suppose that the next Prime minister belongs to [Party]*. The prime minister proposes to <i>increase the wealth tax</i> . Then the reform is adopted <i>by a majority in the National Assembly</i> after heated debates both with the opposition and within the majority.	Suppose that the next Prime minister belongs to [Party]*. The prime minister proposes to <i>increase the wealth tax</i> . Then the reform is adopted <i>without a parliamentary vote on the bill as the Prime minister invoked a confidence vote (article 49.3)</i> after heated debates both with the opposition and within the majority.	Suppose that the next Prime minister belongs to [Party]*. The prime minister proposes to <i>increase the wealth tax</i> . Then the reform is <i>not adopted as the Prime Minister withdrew the bill</i> after heated debates both with the opposition and within the majority.
Refugees	Suppose that the next Prime minister belongs to [Party]*. The prime minister proposes to <i>to limit the number of refugees and asylum seeker welcome in France</i> . Then the reform is adopted <i>by a majority in the National Assembly</i> after heated debates both with the opposition and within the majority.	Suppose that the next Prime minister belongs to [Party]*. The prime minister proposes to <i>to limit the number of refugees and asylum seeker welcome in France</i> . Then the reform is adopted <i>without a parliamentary vote on the bill as the Prime minister invoked a confidence vote (article 49.3)</i> after heated debates both with the opposition and within the majority.	Suppose that the next Prime minister belongs to [Party]*. The prime minister proposes to <i>to limit the number of refugees and asylum seeker welcome in France</i> . Then the reform is <i>not adopted as the Prime Minister withdrew the bill</i> after heated debates both with the opposition and within the majority.

Notes: *Party is a random allocation of one of the following: Left Party, the Socialist party, the Republicans, the National Front. In total, there are 24 different experimental conditions. Original survey wording is in French.

Main results

We are interested in the marginal effect of a particular experimental condition rather than differences between individual vignettes.¹⁷ For instance, we like to know how much satisfaction with the prime minister changes, on average, when the policy is adopted using the confidence vote procedure rather than by majority vote. This is what Hainmueller, Hopkins and Yamamoto (2014) call the average marginal component effect (AMCE). Intuitively, it is the effect of changing one feature in a profile, say the confidence vote, averaged across all other conditions, in this case party and policy proposals. Given the completely independent randomization of conditions in the first experiment, the AMCE is non-parametrically identified and can be estimated using an ordinary least squares regression that includes dummy variables for each component of each experimental condition (Hainmueller, Hopkins and Yamamoto, 2014). Thus, the statistical model we employ includes a dummy for the confidence vote condition, another for the withdrawal condition and uses the majority vote condition as the baseline. By the same logic, it also includes three party dummies (PS is the baseline) and one policy dummy (wealth tax is the baseline), plus an intercept.

Figure 1 reports the main results from the first experiment. Recall that, throughout, the dependent variable was rescaled to range between 0 and 1. Panel (a) shows the estimated AMCEs with 95% confidence intervals. Clearly, respondents evaluate prime ministers more favorably when they manage to pass a policy by majority vote rather than by procedural force using the confidence vote. Using procedural force leads to a drop in satisfaction of 0.084. This effect is precisely estimated (p-value < 0.001) and substantively relevant. It corresponds to a 16% reduction compared to average satisfaction with prime ministers in the majority vote condition. In contrast to dominant outcome-based perspectives in the literature on elections and accountability, this finding is consistent with the theory that people care about process beyond policy outcomes and partisanship, for intrinsic or instrumental reasons, and

¹⁷Online Appendix Figure A3 displays results for each vignette.

may hold executives accountable accordingly. At the same time, policy outcomes are clearly important. The experiment reveals that failing to adopt the policy leads to significantly lower evaluations of the prime minister compared to the majoritarian policy. The negative effect of 0.13 corresponds to a 25% reduction of satisfaction in the majoritarian baseline. The difference between the confidence vote and the withdrawal effect is itself significant ($p < 0.001$). Taken together, these two results indicate that respondents neither like executives who use procedural force to ram through policies nor those who are not effective policymakers. This suggests a hard choice for prime ministers.

The magnitude of the process effect is electorally important. Previous research shows that satisfaction with the executive is strongly predictive of vote choice in France (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2000, 201). In the Online Appendix (Table A2), we replicate this finding for the period under study using non-experimental data from the French election study. Controlling for ideology, partisan attachment and socio-demographic characteristics, satisfaction with the incumbent prime minister Valls is a strong predictor for supporting Valls as a potential candidate in the presidential election. Satisfaction with the incumbent prime minister Valls is also a strong predictor for supporting a potential bid of incumbent president Hollande for re-election. A back-of-the-envelope calculation combining the AMCE of the confidence vote on satisfaction with the prime minister from our experiment with the estimates from the vote choice regressions reported in Table A2 suggests that the confidence vote reduces the vote intention for the prime minister by about 23%. For the president, the corresponding reduction in electoral support is 16%. As the effect of the confidence vote on retrospective satisfaction is likely to decay over time (Healy and Lenz, 2014), we interpret these estimates as an upper bound for the effect that may materialize in an election.¹⁸

¹⁸Subsequently, Hollande became the first French president not to seek re-election and Valls was defeated in the primary. This illustrates that anticipation of electoral losses is one mechanism of accountability because unpopular incumbents may decide to not run for re-election or may be prevented from running.

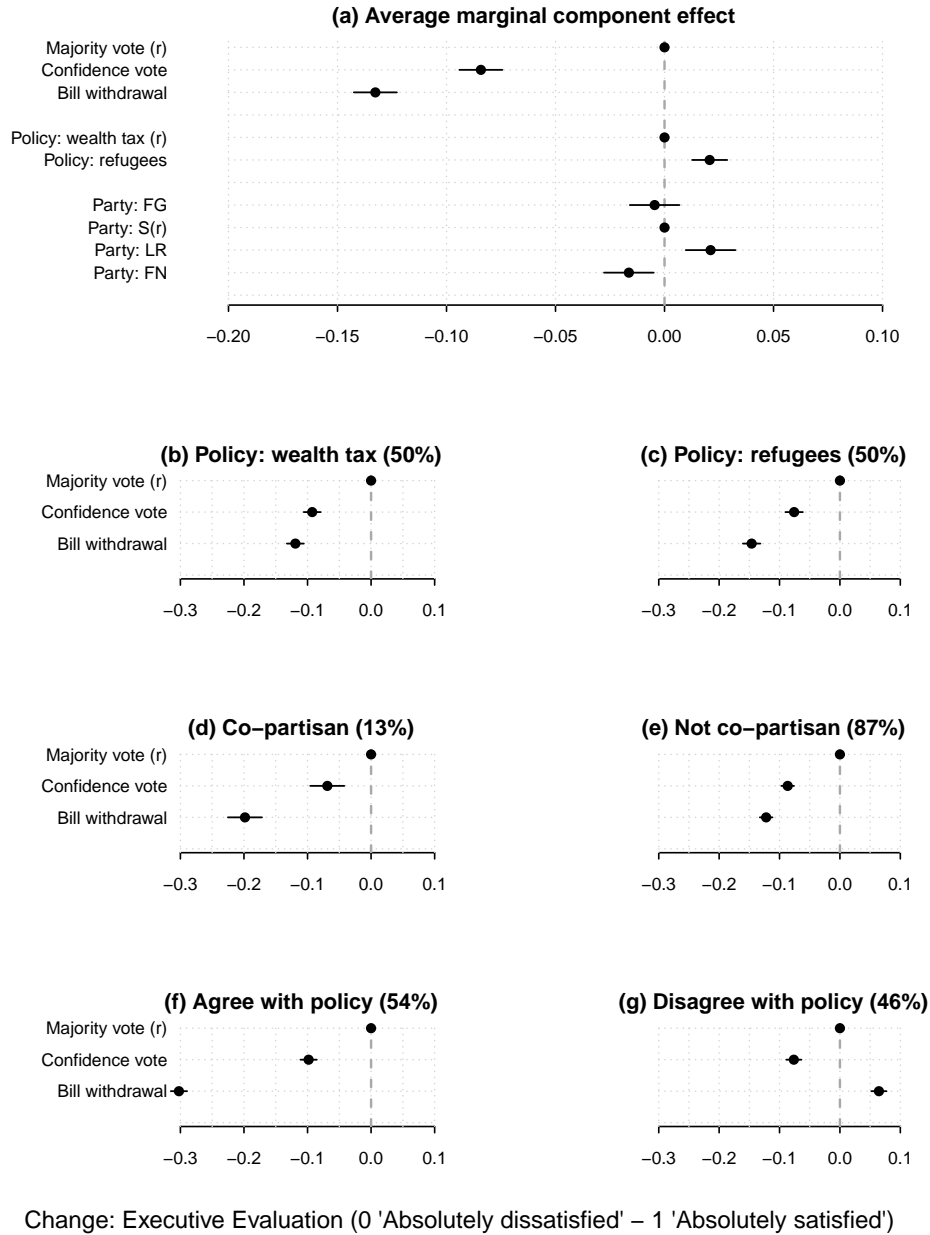


Figure 1: Effects of the executive’s legislative performance and party affiliation on public evaluations. Based on experiment 1 (N=19,283) embedded in French election study (June 2016), these plots show the effects of randomly assigned attributes on the satisfaction with the prime minister, rescaled to vary from 0 (“Absolutely dissatisfied”) to 1 (“Absolutely satisfied”). Plot (a) shows the Average Marginal Component Effects for all attributes. The remaining plots show conditional effects of confidence vote and bill withdrawal across experimental/background conditions (policy/party attributes are included but not displayed). Estimates are from nonparametric estimator implemented via linear regression; horizontal bars represent 95% confidence intervals; points without bars denote reference category.

Unsurprisingly, party also matters for evaluations. But partisan considerations do not override considerations based on process or outcomes. There are also some differences between policy issues, with a policy aimed at reducing the inflow of immigrants leading to marginally higher satisfaction compared to wealth taxation. Panels (b) and (c) of Figure 1 demonstrate that the results on the confidence vote and bill withdrawal are not driven by one of the policy issues. The confidence vote as well as the withdrawal effect are substantively similar across both policy issues, wealth taxation and refugees. For each policy, using procedural force or failing to pass the policy causes a significant decline in popular satisfaction. The effects are slightly larger for wealth taxation.¹⁹

Examining the heterogeneity of the AMCEs by partisanship and policy preferences is of substantial theoretical interest. Following purely outcome-based views, the procedural effect may be mainly driven by those who disagree with the policy content or do not share the prime minister’s partisanship. If so, this would weaken prime minister’s incentives to refrain from using constitutional force. However, the additional results reported in Figure 1 show that this is not the case. Strikingly, prime ministers are punished for the use of the confidence vote regardless of policy preferences and partisan identities.

Panels (d) and (e) plot the AMCEs conditional on whether the respondent is a co-partisan of the prime minister. The partisanship of respondents was measured in a separate survey wave one month before the experiment. Co-partisan evaluate “their” prime minister significantly less favorably after the use of procedural force. The effect is of similar magnitude than that of people who do not share the prime minister’s partisanship.²⁰ These results also rule out that dynamic instrumental motivations explain the confidence vote effect. After a confidence vote, voters generally in favor of the prime ministerial agenda may anticipate a

¹⁹For the confidence vote effect, the difference between plot (b) and (c) is marginally significant ($p=0.09$), for withdrawal the gap is more precisely estimated ($p = 0.01$).

²⁰The small difference in confidence vote effects between plots (d) and (e) is not statistically significant ($p=0.22$).

weakening of the majority and therefore a lower ability to pass policies in the future. Hence they the punish prime minister for the use of constitutional force. While this logic suggest that co-partisans should respond more negatively to the confidence vote than others, this is not consistent with the evidence.

Panels (f) and (g) plot the AMCEs conditional on whether respondents agree or disagree with the policy. Earlier in the survey, respondents were asked questions about both policy issues, which allows us to identify who agrees and who disagrees with the proposal.²¹ Again, the confidence vote effect is similar across policy preferences. Even people who like the policy hold the prime minister accountable or the use of procedural force.²² Intuitively, the results for policy withdrawal strongly vary with respondents' policy preferences. Those that agree with the prime ministers policy proposal harshly punish legislative defeat, those who disagree with the proposal modestly improve their assessment. Bill withdrawal is also punished more harshly by co-partisans.

In summary, the first experiment shows that public evaluations of executive performance reflect trade-offs between competing goals. Rather than being overwhelmed by partisan considerations, policy and—most surprisingly given much of the political science literature but in line with some recent experimental evidence from the U.S. (Christenson and Kriner, 2017*b*; Reeves and Rogowski, 2018)—process play a substantively important role. The magnitude of the confidence vote effect uncovered in the experiment implies that prime ministers face a public constraint on the use of their most powerful legislative prerogative. Reassuringly, the experimental evidence is consistent with a time-series study of the use of the confidence vote and prime ministerial popularity in France 1979-2008 (Becher, Brouard and Guinaudeau, 2017). In contrast to the observational study, our research design rules out concerns about

²¹Binary coding at the mid-point on a 11-point scale between “decrease a lot” (0) and “increase a lot” (10) (see Online Appendix, p. 7).

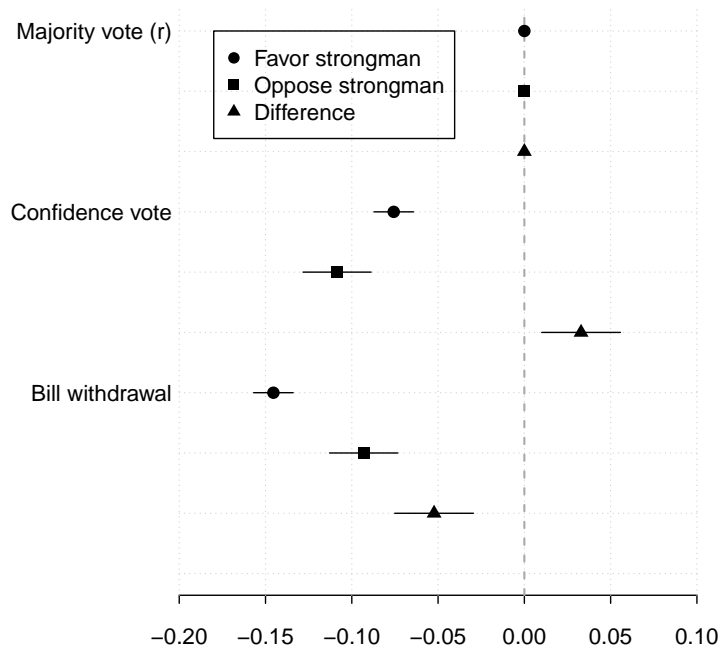
²²The difference in the confidence vote effect between plot (f) and (g) is statistically significant ($p=0.02$) but substantively small.

strategic selection bias and that process effects are an artifact of policy or partisan motivations. The experimental evidence also corroborates the views of selected French politicians revealed in qualitative interviews (Huber, 1996*a*, 119). For instance, one deputy associated with the government states that the confidence vote “embarrasses the government because it gives the impression that there is not a majority in the country – that there is no direction and the Prime Minister has become authoritarian.” Similarly, an assistant to the prime minister explains that using the confidence vote “is not a sign of force, but an admission of failure.” While the government may be forced to use the confidence vote on some issues, the assistant goes on, “It’s important to show that you can do your job without it.”

Democratic norms

So far, the evidence does not address whether the results reflect normative concerns about process or other instrumental considerations about prime ministerial competence or the quality or desirability of the law. For the incentives of the prime minister and spatial theories of lawmaking that incorporate an audience cost for the use of procedural force, this distinction is not essential. However, it speaks to the relevance of normative considerations for political accountability. In a first step, we make use of the rich question battery of the election panel into which our experiment was embedded to explore this issue.

We analyze whether process effects vary by support for broad democratic norms. In a first wave of the French election study conducted 7 months before the experiment (November 2015) respondents were asked whether France should be led by a strongman that has not concerned himself with parliament and elections. People that care less about parliament and elections should also be less concerned about executives’ use of procedural force in lawmaking. They may punish the executive for appearing weak or less competent, but not for anti-majoritarianism per se. To the extent that the confidence vote penalty varies by support for a strongman, this indicates that a process norm is contributing to accountability.



Change: Executive Evaluation (0 'Absolutely dissatisfied' - 1 'Absolutely satisfied')

Figure 2: Heterogeneity of process effect by respondents' prior support for strongman. Based on experiment 1 (N=19,283) embedded in French election study (June 2016), this plot shows the effects of confidence vote and bill withdrawal varying by respondents' support, in a previous wave of the survey (November 2015), for a non-democratic strongman as a leader for France. Estimates are from nonparametric estimator implemented via linear regression; horizontal bars represent 95% confidence intervals; points without bars denote reference category.

The results from an analysis interacting the experimental treatments with a dummy for previous support for a strongman are displayed in Figure 2.²³ They show that those who favor a strongman are significantly less inclined to punish the executive for the confidence vote than those who oppose a strongman. The confidence vote effect is 30 percent smaller. This clearly indicates that intrinsic process concerns matter. Pro-strongman respondents react more negatively to bill withdrawal. This is consistent with them taking a more purely instrumental view. The next experiment is designed to examine this issue from a different angle.

Experiment 2: Political context

If the confidence vote effect reflects (in part) an implicit majoritarian norm, it should be weaker when it is used against obstructionism by a minority rather than disagreement among the governing coalition or broader societal dissent. Our second experiment is designed to test this hypothesis.

The general structure of the design is as in the first experiment.²⁴ In addition, we randomly vary the political context. We consider three scenarios. First, there is substantial internal dissent about the proposed policy and the government majority is split. More specifically, respondents in this condition are told that the policy is passed or withdrawn “after many MPs from the government majority announced that they did not support the prime minister’s proposal.” In this context, using the confidence vote may be the only means to pass the policy because it forces legislators into a trade-off between bringing down their government or conceding on policy, enabling it to change policy when it would be stable otherwise (Diermeier and Feddersen, 1998; Huber, 1996*b*). This clearly departs from the

²³Support for strongman is coded as 1 for all respondents who agree with the statement or do not oppose it and 0 for respondents who oppose it.

²⁴With the exception that the second experiment focuses on immigration/refugees as the policy issue did not matter much in the first experiment.

majoritarian notion of policymaking, and here we would expect the same effect of procedural force compared to majority voting as in the first experiment.

Second, there are mass demonstrations against the policy proposed by the prime minister. This is an indication of significant societal opposition to the reform. Mass demonstrations against government bill proposal are common in France. Specifically, in this condition the vignette mentions “the multiplication of mass demonstrations against the prime minister’s proposal since the beginning of the parliamentary debate.” Again, in this context the use of constitutional force rather than majoritarian voting undermines the procedural legitimacy of the government’s action. Considering process as an intrinsic value, this should translate into worse evaluations of executive performance.

Third, a minority in the assembly obstructs the government’s policy. One possibility of delaying the passage of a law by the opposition is to introduce and debate a very large number of amendments. In France, the parliamentary opposition in the national assembly regularly uses amendments as a filibustering strategy.²⁵ An astounding number of 137,537 amendments was introduced for a law project concerning the privatization of the public gas company in 2006. While this is an extreme example, the strategy of flooding the debate with amendments is not exceptional. It also includes the contested labor-market reform passed by the Vall’s government using the confidence procedure a few months before the survey was conducted. During the parliamentary process, almost 5,000 amendments were introduced. In line with this real-world strategy, respondents assigned to the obstructionism condition are informed that “the opposition introduced thousands of amendments to delay the adoption of the prime minister’s proposal.” In this context, the confidence procedure is a defensive move to pursue a policy that is backed by the parliamentary majority. Hence its use is less clearly a violation of a democratic norm and the process effect should be smaller.

The second experiment was included in the wave of the French National Election Survey

²⁵Sylvain Mouillard. “L’obstruction parlementaire, une vieille pratique.” *Libération*. January 29, 2013.

fielded between November 8, 2016 and November 14, 2016 (with a sample size of 25,028 respondents from which 6,438 respondents were randomly allocated to the experiment). Table A4 in the Online Appendix provides the full wording for each profile of experimental conditions. Altogether, there are 18 different experimental conditions.

Results

Figure 3 reports the main results from the second experiment. It plots the AMCEs for the confidence vote effect and the withdrawal effect (each relative to the baseline of passing the same policy by majority vote in the assembly) by political context. For each context, we also report AMCEs conditional on policy agreement. The main result is that there is a significant negative effect of using constitutional force unless it is used to counter opposition obstructionism. This context-variation in the process effect strengthens the interpretation that it taps into intrinsic concerns about democratic decision making. In the context of internal dissent within the government (panel (a)) or massive street protests (panel (b)), we get the same qualitative effect as in the first experiment: Prime ministers suffer a significant decline in satisfaction. Again, this holds both for respondents that agree and those that disagree with the policy. However, the effect is close to zero in the context of obstructionism (panel (c)).²⁶ In this context, the effect for all respondents masks heterogeneity by preferences. People who do not like the policy are inclined to punish the prime minister while those that like the policy are inclined to reward the prime minister, though the latter effect is less precisely estimated. Furthermore, the results reveal that bill withdrawal leads to a dramatic decline in popular satisfaction with the prime minister across all three contexts. As in the first experiment, this negative effect is polarized by policy preferences.

²⁶The confidence vote effect in the internal dissent context is 4.8 times larger than in the obstructionism context ($p=0.12$).

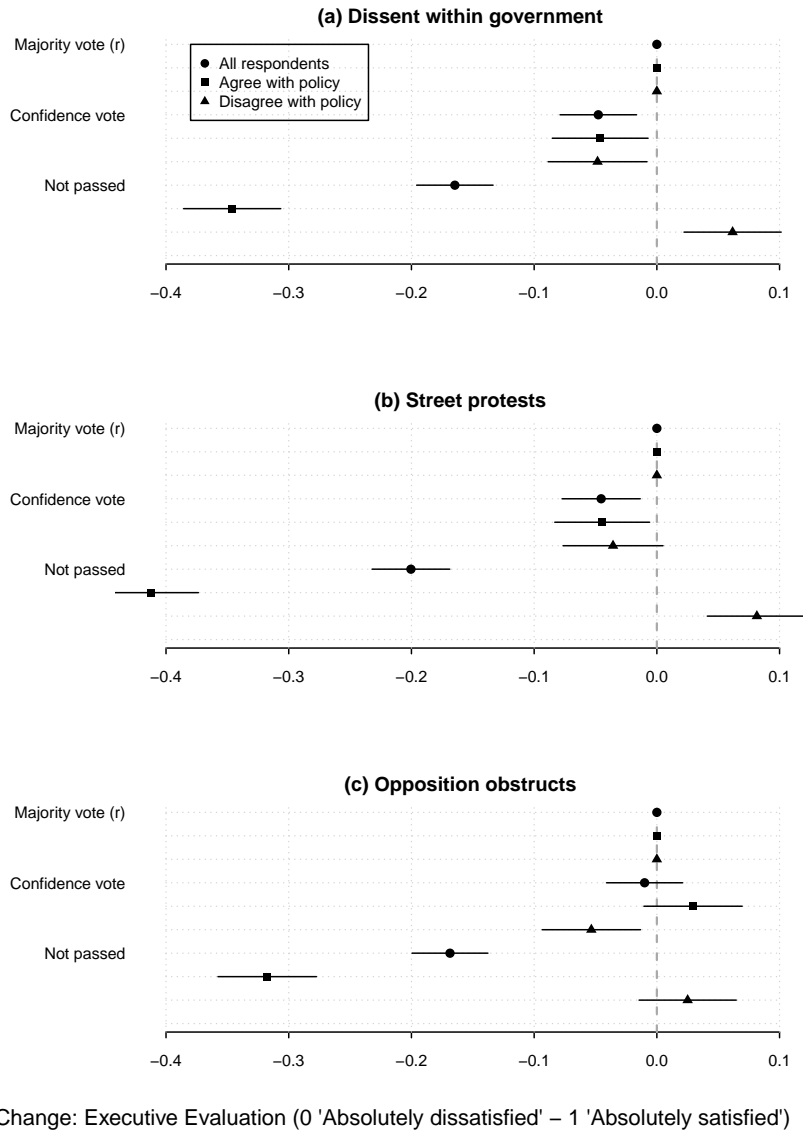


Figure 3: Effects of the executive’s legislative performance on public evaluations across different contexts of political opposition and varying by respondents’ policy preference. Based on an experiment (N=6,438) embedded in the French election study (November 2016), these plots show the effects of randomly assigned attributes on the satisfaction with the prime minister, rescaled to vary from 0 (“Absolutely dissatisfied”) to 1 (“Absolutely satisfied”). Plot (a) shows the Average Marginal Component Effects when there is internal dissent among government; plot (b) when there are massive street protests; plot (c) when the opposition obstructs the proposal with a large number of amendments. Estimates are from nonparametric estimator implemented via linear regression; horizontal bars represent 95% confidence intervals; points without bars denote reference category; party effects are not shown to save space.

Experiment 3: Adding the economy

The third experiment adds information about the state of the economy to the vignettes. This serves two purposes. First, a large body of scholarship has found evidence that changes in macroeconomic condition shape voting and government approval (Duch and Stevenson, 2008; Kramer, 1971; Kayser, 2012; Lewis-Beck, 1997; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2007). Hence, the economy provides a natural benchmark as well as a robustness check for process effects. Recent experiments on voter reactions to the opportunistic calling of early elections find that economic conditions are much more important than procedural concerns (Schleiter and Tavits, 2018).

Including information on the economy also allows us to further examine the mechanism underlying the process effect uncovered in the first two experiments. Following theories of the economic vote, competent leaders are more likely to foster good economic performance, whether by selecting good economic policies, bureaucrats or mainly by refraining by implementing bad economic policies favored by special interests. In large economies like France, changes in macro-economic conditions have been conceptualized as a noisy but informative signal of leadership competence (Duch and Stevenson, 2008). According to informational theories of executive-legislative bargaining, more competent leaders may also be less likely to use procedural force than less competent ones, as they are better at producing high-quality legislation and organizing majorities. From an informational perspective, having two pieces of information about the leaders' quality, economic performance and democratic process, can be useful to learn about the executive's type. Intuitively, the signal value of procedural force varies with the information about the economy. If the economy is not improving, a confidence vote reinforces the negative economic signal. If the economy is improving, a confidence vote is a countervailing signal. In contrast, intrinsic concerns about process are not contingent on how the economy is doing.

The third experiment was included in the wave of the French National Election Survey fielded between March 31, 2017 and April 4, 2017 (with a sample size of 15,623 respondents). Again, the basic design is as in the first experiment. The experiment omits information about the party of the prime minister. This keeps the design tractable and is justified because the first experiment found that the effects of policy and process are robust across co-partisans and other respondents.²⁷

As unemployment has been for years the main issue in France, the vignette now starts with describing the state of the economy “at the end of the first year in power of the next Prime Minister”: “there are 350,000 people less unemployed”, “there is the same number of unemployed people” or “there are 350,000 people more unemployed”. This amounts to a change of 1 percentage point in the unemployment rate. The focus on changes (rather than levels) is consistent with the large literature on economic voting. We keep exactly the same three conditions regarding the legislative process (*Majority vote*, *Confidence vote*, *Withdrawal*) but add a new default no-bill condition in which the prime minister does not propose any policy. When proposals are initiated, the experiment also varies the policy issue.

To take into account the potential effect of difference in issue salience, along with the high salience proposal regarding refugees used in the first and second experiment, we also introduce a low-salience policy proposal aimed “to increase subnational governments’ powers” and omit the wealth tax proposal.²⁸ Altogether, there are 21 different experimental vignettes (for full wording see Table A6).

It’s not just the economy

In this experiment, by design, we cannot observe different legislative outcomes when no bill is proposed. Following Hainmueller, Hopkins and Yamamoto (2014), our statistical analysis

²⁷As the third experiment was conducted much closer to the first-round of the national elections (Figure A2), there was less electoral uncertainty and we did not want to include implausible party labels.

²⁸See Online Appendix p. 17.

accounts for this conditionally independent randomization using a subclassification estimator implemented via linear regression interacting the different treatment conditions and then calculating the AMCEs.

Figure 4 summarizes the main results from the third experiment. Panel (a) plots the AMCEs. The effect of the economy works in the expected way: improving conditions (i.e., less unemployment) lead to higher satisfaction with the prime minister and deteriorating conditions (i.e. more unemployment) lead to less satisfaction compared to the baseline of no change in the economy. What matters is that the process effect plays out as in the previous experiments even when voters get information on the state of the economy. The use of the confidence vote leads to significantly more negative evaluation of the prime minister's performance compared to the majority voting condition. Also as before, bill withdrawal leads to a significant decline in satisfaction, about one-half larger than the process effect. Again, this confirms that executives facing opposition to their policy agenda confront a hard choice between using unpopular constitutional force or being punished for not delivering the outcome. The comparison with the effect of the economy highlight the substantive magnitude of the process effect. In the experiment, the confidence vote effect is of similar magnitude than a substantive decline in unemployment.

The relevance of the process effect after adding information about the economy differs from experimental results on opportunistic election timing (Schleiter and Tavits, 2018). While further research is needed to rigorously explain these differences, one explanation is that calling an early election is an inherently more democratic act compared to using procedural force in lawmaking because it gives voters an immediate choice on whether to retain the incumbent: The electorate gets to decide how to evaluate the trade-off between good economic news and apparent political opportunism. This is not the case under the confidence vote procedure or other executive policymaking instruments (e.g., decrees).

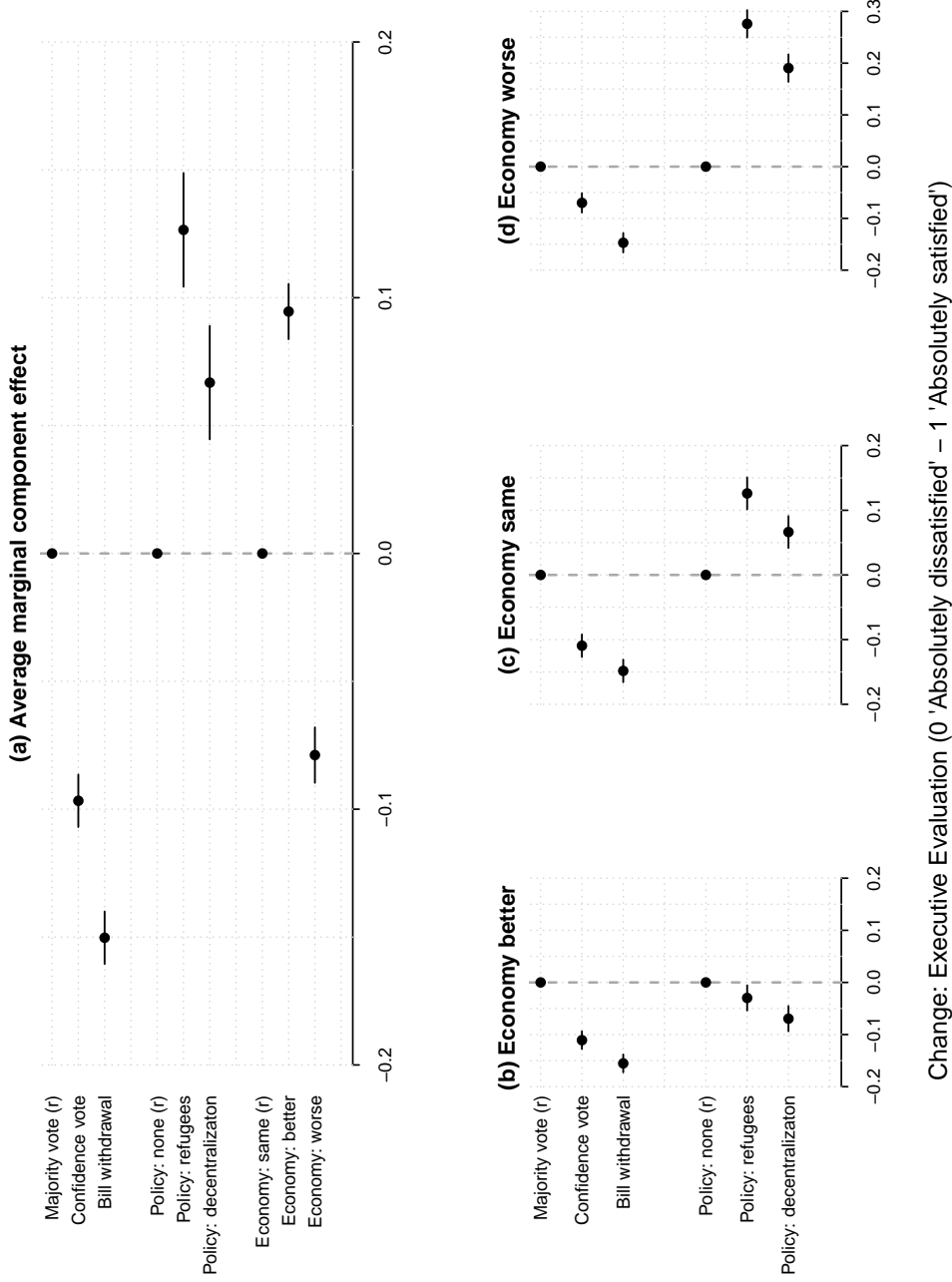


Figure 4: Effects of the executive's legislative performance and economic conditions on public evaluations. Based on experiment 3 (N=15,623) embedded in French election study (March/April 2017), these plots show the effects of randomly assigned attributes on the satisfaction with the prime minister, rescaled to vary from 0 ("Absolutely dissatisfied") to 1 ("Absolutely satisfied"). Plot (a) shows the Average Marginal Component Effects. Plots (b) - (d) show conditional effects of confidence vote, bill withdrawal, and policy issue across randomly varied economic conditions. Estimates are from nonparametric estimator implemented via linear regression; horizontal bars represent 95% confidence intervals; points without bars denote reference category.

Panels (b) - (d) of Figure 4 plot the effects by economic conditions. They show that the negative effect of the confidence vote exists regardless of how the economy doing. It is virtually identical when the economy is doing better or the same and only slightly smaller when the economy is doing worse. Only the latter difference is statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). Further analysis also shows that the process effect is present for both the low-salience and high-salience policies (Online Appendix Figure A6).

The findings from our third experiment rule out the possibility that evaluations of the economy wash out concerns about process. This underscores the political relevance of process for accountability. They also further bolster the interpretation that the effect of constitutional force on accountability is not entirely explained by signaling theories.²⁹

Conclusion

While an immense body of scholarship emphasizes the importance of outcomes and political identity for the accountability of government leaders, we know much less about whether or when executives are held accountable by the public for the process they chose to make policy. Our experimental evidence demonstrates the relevance of accountability beyond policy, party, or economic conditions based on whether the leader uses constitutional force to make laws despite opposition in the elected assembly. At the same time, leaders that fail to pass legislation also suffer from public recrimination. Taken together, these results have important implications for political incentives of executives, policy outcomes, democratic legitimacy, and theories of accountability and lawmaking.

Scholars have identified institutional forbearance as being fundamental to a functioning democracy (Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018). Chief executives in many countries have potent

²⁹One may conjecture that in a signaling game between voters and the prime minister there is a perfectly separating equilibrium where only low-quality prime ministers use the confidence vote. If the confidence vote is perfect signal of the quality of the prime minister, the economy should have no additional effect on evaluations. However, as reported in Online Appendix Figure A5, empirically this is generally not the case.

constitutional powers that, if employed to the hilt, may enable them to marginalize the elected assembly. Institutional forbearance means that executives' unilateral powers – such as confidence votes, executive orders, assembly dissolution, or declaring a state of emergency – are deployed with restraint. Forbearance cannot be taken for granted. In its absence, constitutional hardball may undermine mutual toleration and procedural legitimacy. Ultimately, executives' incentives to practice forbearance depend on citizens. While much of the existing scholarship on accountability and elections implicitly takes a skeptical view, this has been rarely tested empirically (Christenson and Kriner, 2017*b*, p. 770). Our findings from France, an exemplary case of a constitutionally strong government, imply that the public can provide a meaningful constraint on executives' willingness to play constitutional hardball in the legislative arena. The effect of using procedural force through the confidence vote—a powerful prerogative of many democratic governments in Europe—on evaluations of the prime minister is similar in magnitude to a significant increase in unemployment. Moreover, the effect exists across people with different policy preferences or distinct partisan orientations as well across varying policy issues and economic conditions. Hence, prime ministers would be naive to ignore the possible cost of using procedural force as a means of lawmaking. Theoretically, a higher disapproval using constitutional force increases the set of policies the prime minister is willing to accept (Huber, 1996*b*). Thus, somewhat ironically, accountability beyond outcomes may have consequences for the choice of policy outcomes that lies at the core of outcome-based theories.

By including multiple process and outcome counterfactuals, our experiments highlight a key trade-off faced by executives between accountability based on outcomes and process that has not been identified by extant empirical research focused on the U.S. Facing veto players in the legislative process, executives will either have to accept failure in delivering a policy proposal or risk punishment for the use of procedural force that circumvents normal majoritarian decision making. This dilemma helps to explain why constitutional force is

often used restrictively. For instance, in France the confidence vote was used, on average, only 1.5 times per year between 1958 and 2018 – affecting a small number (51) of the more than 5000 laws passed in that period. However, laws passed using the procedure include landmark legislation concerning budgets, large-scale privatization, electoral rules or nuclear arms. This striking pattern is neither explained by a purely outcome-based nor by a purely procedural explanation, but it makes sense in the light of our empirical findings. More generally, our findings provide empirical microfoundations for theories of accountability and law-making that incorporate both outcome-based and procedural utility.

The process effect uncovered in the experiments is consistent with both informational and normative theories. While the use of constitutional force can provide a signal about the quality of executive or policy proposal, informational theories cannot explain that the causal effect of using procedural force varies depending on respondents' pre-existing democratic values or political context. This suggests that process evaluations reflect, in part, intrinsic concerns about democracy. A task for future research is to further unbundle these different mechanisms and to examine accountability beyond outcomes in other institutional settings.

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Online Appendix

Timeline

Figure A1 on the next page shows the timing of three survey experiments embedded in the French panel election study 2015-2017. Following a baseline survey in November 2015, the first experiment was conducted in June 2016 – 10 months ahead of the first round of the presidential election and about a year before the first round of the parliamentary election for the National Assembly. The follow-up experiments were conducted several months after the first experiment.

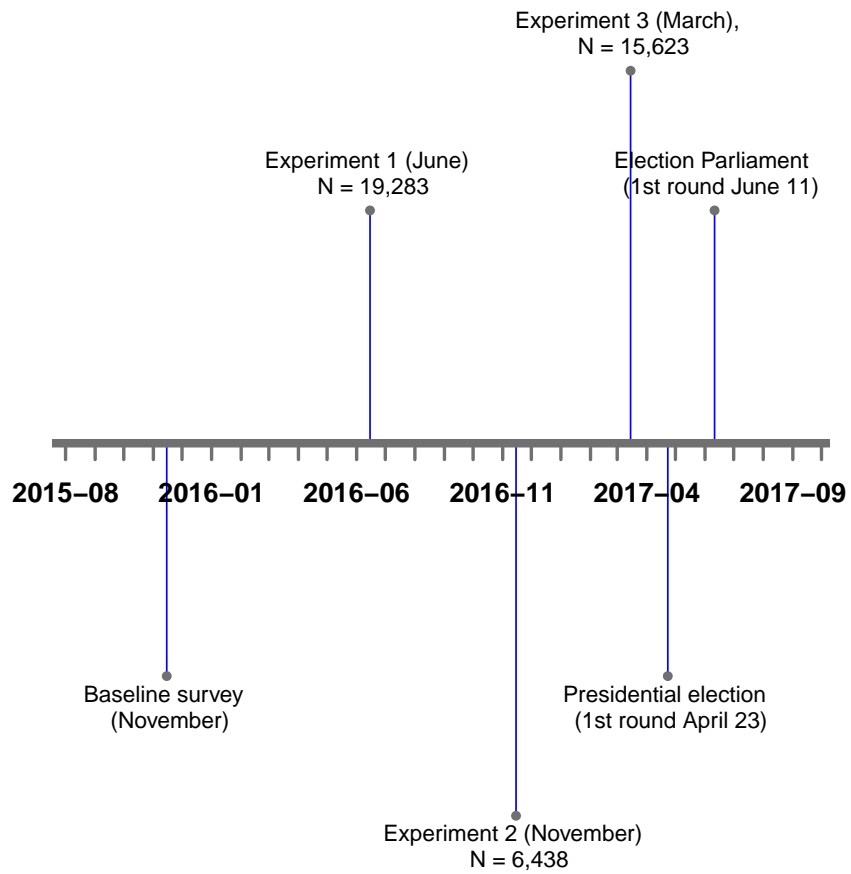


Figure A1: Timing of three survey experiments embedded in the French election study.

Experiment 1

Policy issues. In six Kantar-SOFRES surveys (1500 respondents each) conducted in May 2015 and April 2017, between 47% and 52% of the respondents are in favor of an increase of the wealth tax. Surveys from October 2015 and February 2016, show that respectively 55% and 57% favored decreasing the number of refugees. Results are available at <http://www.cevipof.com/fr/dynamiquespolitiques/resultats/>

Sample characteristics. See Table A1. (All tables and figures are included at the end of the section.)

Covariate balance. Figure A2 shows that pre-treatment covariates, measured in the baseline survey (November 2015), are balanced across the 24 different experimental conditions (vignettes).

Description of outcome by experimental vignette Figure A3 plots the outcome variable, satisfaction with the prime minister, for each experimental vignette. Each bar represents the average satisfaction (on the scale ranging from 0 to 1) for one of the 24 experimental vignettes defined by party of the prime minister, policy proposal, and whether the bill is passed by majority vote, confidence vote or is withdrawn. Given the randomization of the experimental features, differences between bars can be interpreted as average causal profile effects. While we are ultimately interested in the AMCEs reported in the main text, these profile effects are already informative. They yield the same conclusion as the main results reported in the paper and also make clear that the process effects vary little across party or policy.

Moreover, the large variation in responses across vignettes indicates that questionnaire satisficing (Hainmueller, Hangartner and Yamamoto, 2015) is not a problem in this experi-

ment. If responses mainly reflect a simple rule regardless of the prime ministers' actions (e.g., choose the midpoint or one of the endpoints of the scale), this pattern would not emerge.

Priming. Experiment 1 is preceded by a prompt and information question about the confidence vote. The wording for the prompt is as follows: “The French constitution (article 49.3) allows the Prime minister, with the approval of the ministers' council, to use the confidence vote to adopt a bill. In this case the bill is adopted without a vote in the National Assembly provided no censure resolution is adopted. Some people feel that the 49.3 is a legitimate tool to enable the Prime minister to govern efficiently and to hasten the adoption of bills. Others feel that it is undemocratic and allows the adoption of governments' proposal that are not supported by a parliamentary majority.” The wording reflects the advantages and disadvantages associated with the procedure in public debate going back to the adoption of the procedure in the 1950s (Huber, 1996), reflecting a trade-off between efficiency and majoritarian process, and it does not take a particular side on the issue. The wording is not particularly strong and avoids partisan or other political references.

One may nonetheless be concerned that the experimental results are shaped by the initial priming of the issue. However, multiple pieces of evidence suggest that this is not the case. First, the prompt and information questions are not repeated before experiments 2 and 3, which take place 5 months and 9 months after the first experiment – a long time for any initial priming to be diluted. The fact that substantively and statistically significant process effects emerge in these follow-up experiments indicates that priming is unlikely to be an issue. Second, as an additional test we can leverage that some respondents that were never primed because they did not participate in the initial experiment. While exposure to the initial prime is not random, we can explore the heterogeneity of the results in experiment 3 and compare those primed in experiment 1 (N=14,449) and those not primed because they did not participate in the first experiment (N=599). The results are reported in Figure A4.

Process effects are present regardless of the initial exposure to the prime. Among those never primed, the confidence vote leads to a substantial decline of satisfaction with the executive. This effect is somewhat smaller than that for respondents who had participated in the initial experiment, though this difference is not statistically significant. The same pattern holds for bill withdrawal.

Executive evaluations and vote choice. The outcome variable in the experiments is the satisfaction with the performance of the prime minister. Research on executive popularity shows that satisfaction with the executive strongly predicts vote choice in France (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2000, 201). Conceptually and empirically they are so closely related that satisfaction is excluded from most vote models. The experiments deliberately refrain from asking a vote choice question as this requires comparing the incumbent with an alternative that may also vary on multiple dimensions. However, we can use the observational data from the election survey to show that satisfaction with the real-world prime minister is a strong predictor of vote choice after controlling for ideology, socio-demographics and even party identification in the context of our experiments. With the usual caveats about the correlational nature of the analysis, it further illustrates that the process effects uncovered in the experiment are substantively important and matter for electoral politics.

Specifically, we use data from the November 2016 wave French election study that includes the required data during the period of our experimental studies. First, the wave includes an item about the satisfaction with incumbent Socialist prime minister Manuel Valls on a 10-point scale ranging from absolutely not satisfied (1) to absolutely satisfied (10). As in the experiment, for better interpretability we rescale the satisfaction variable to range between 0 and 1. Second, the survey also asks about respondents' vote intention in the first round of the upcoming presidential election for a specified set of 10 candidates. As the primaries for several parties had not been concluded at the time of the survey, the survey asks multiple

questions with varying sets of potential candidates. Two scenarios include Manuel Valls, who was one of the two main contenders in the primary of the Socialist Party (in January 2017, he lost against Benoit Hamon in the second round). In one scenario Nicolas Sarkozy and in the other Alain Juppé is nominated as the candidate of the Republicans (LR). The variables are re-coded as binary vote intention for Valls (1 = if support for Valls, = 0 if support for any other candidate).

Columns 1-4 of Table A2 display the results from Logistic regressions of vote choice (supporting the incumbent prime minister) as a function of satisfaction with the prime minister, the respondents' ideology, measured as the left-right self-placement scaled to range between 0 and 1, and a large number of socio-demographic control variables (age, gender, 15 occupational categories capturing class, education, urbanization). Extended specifications in columns 2 and 4 also include include partisanship, measured as a series of 15 dummy variables, each one indicating for a particular party whether a respondent is close to it; this variable was measured in a previous wave of the panel. In all four specifications, satisfaction with the prime minister has the expected positive and precisely estimated effect on vote choice ($p < 0.001$), despite partialing out ideology and partisanship. Moreover, columns 5 and 6 show that satisfaction of the prime minister also is a significant predictor of vote intention for incumbent president Hollande, in a scenario where he is the candidate of the Socialist Party. A few weeks after the survey, Hollande announced that he would not seek re-election.

These results suggest that a reduction of prime ministerial popularity through the use of confidence vote can lead to a politically significant decline in political support in the voting booth. Combining the AMCE of the confidence vote on satisfaction with the prime minister from the first experiment (-0.084) with the estimation results from the extended vote choice equation in column (2), we can do a back-of-the-envelope calculation of the implied effect of the confidence vote on electoral support. The basic idea is to compare, using first differences,

the predicted support for Valls with the counterfactual support for Valls assuming that each respondent experiences a decline in satisfaction corresponding to the experimental effect of the confidence vote (for a similar approach, see Duch and Stevenson, 2008). We left-censor the change for respondents whose satisfaction is already at or close to the lower bound so that satisfaction stays within the variable range. This simulation exercise suggests that the use of the confidence vote reduces the vote intention for the prime minister by 23 percent. This is a large drop in electoral support. For incumbent president Hollande, based on model (5) the corresponding reduction in electoral support is 16 percent. As made clear in the main text, these figures are just meant to be suggestive. We interpret them as an upper bound for the effect of constitutional force on voting because the effect of the former on satisfaction is likely to decay over time.

Coding of policy agreement (Figure 1 panels f and g). Respondents' preferences concerning the two issues, wealth taxation and refugees, were measured before the experiment on a 11-point scale between "decrease a lot" (0) and "increase a lot" (10). In particular, respondents were asked to indicate their relative preference on both issues: "According to you, in France, the wealth tax should decrease, stay stable, or increase?; According to you, in France, the number of refugees and asylum seekers welcome in France should decrease, stay stable, or increase?" For the analysis of the effect heterogeneity in panels (f) and (g) of Figure 1, we code that respondents agree with the policy proposal either when they favor an increase of the wealth tax (>5) and the policy allocated in the experiment is the wealth tax or when they favor a decrease of the number of refugees and asylum seekers (<5) and the policy allocated in the experiment is the number of refugees and asylum seekers.

Correlation between evaluations of prime minister and the president. Table A3 shows evidence that evaluations of prime minister Valls and president Hollande are highly correlated. In model 1, satisfaction with the prime minister alone explains 59% of the

variation in satisfaction with the president. This relationship remains substantively large and significant if one adds socio-demographic as well as political (ideology and partisanship) controls (models 2 and 3).

Table A1: Sample characteristics for experiment 1

	Mean	SD
Age (years)	46.3	15.7
Female	0.56	0.50
Education (university degree)	0.52	0.50
Occupation	0.23	0.42
City > 100k	0.55	0.50
Ideology	0.53	0.25
Co-partisan	0.13	0.34
Policy congruent	0.54	0.50

Notes: Sample characteristics of experiment 1 (embedded in June 2016 French election study). Ideology refers to left-right self-placement rescaled to 0-1. Based on a recoding of the 13-category professional classification following the National Institute for Statistics (Insee), occupation is a dummy equal to 1 for Cadre supérieur, Profession indépendante or Agriculteur exploitant and 0 for all other (Profession intermédiaire, Employé, Ouvrier). Co-partisan and policy congruent refer to partisanship and policy preferences (measured before the experiment) relative to the randomly assigned prime minister and policy proposal in the vignette.

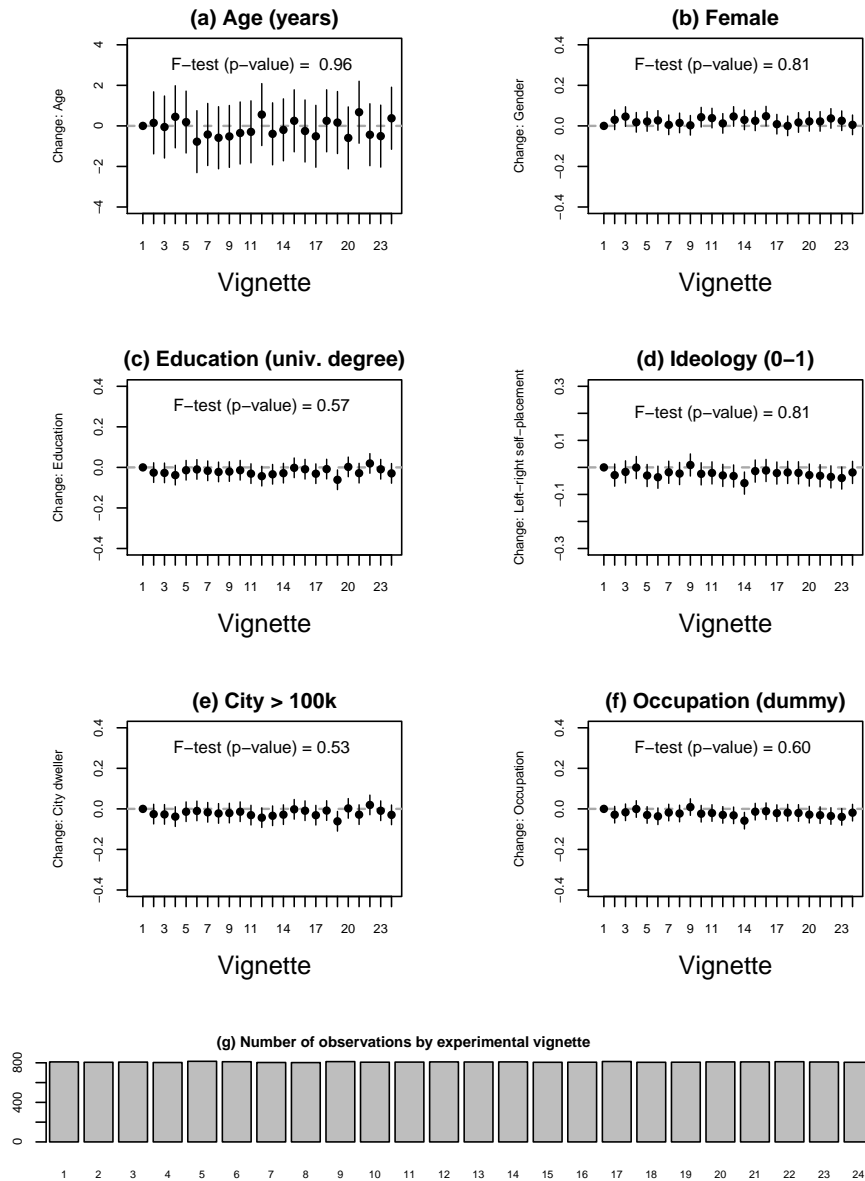


Figure A2: Balance of pre-treatment covariates in experiment 1 (embedded in June 2016 French election study). Plots (a) - (f) show difference in covariates (measured in the baseline survey of November 2915 before the experiment) across the 24 randomized vignettes (vignette 1 is reference category) with 95% confidence intervals and p-value for joint F-test. Each vignette contains 3 independently randomized features: party of PM (4 attributes), policy (2 attributes), legislative process and outcome (3 attributes). Ideology refers to left-right self-placement rescaled to 0-1. Occupation is a dummy equal to 1 for Cadre supérieur, Profession indépendante or Agriculteur exploitant and 0 for all other (Profession intermédiaire, Employé, Ouvrier).

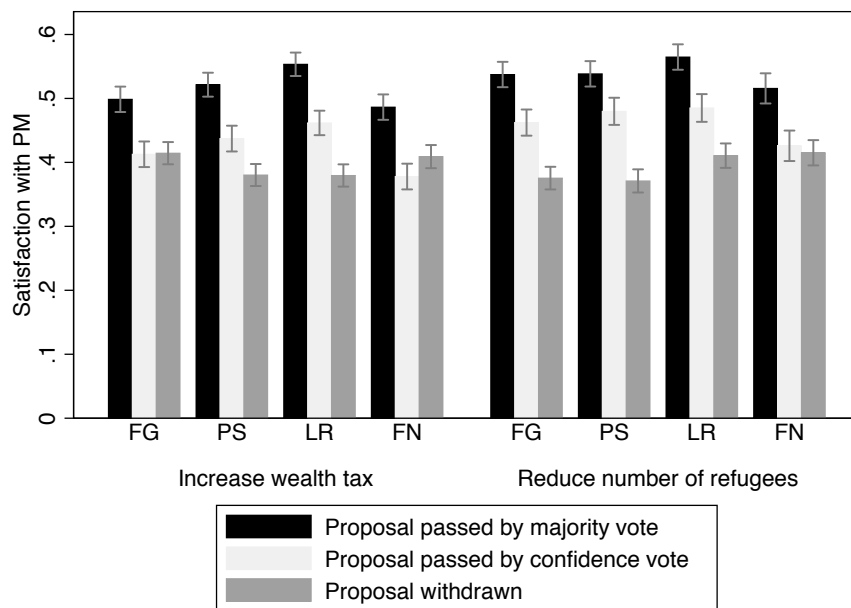
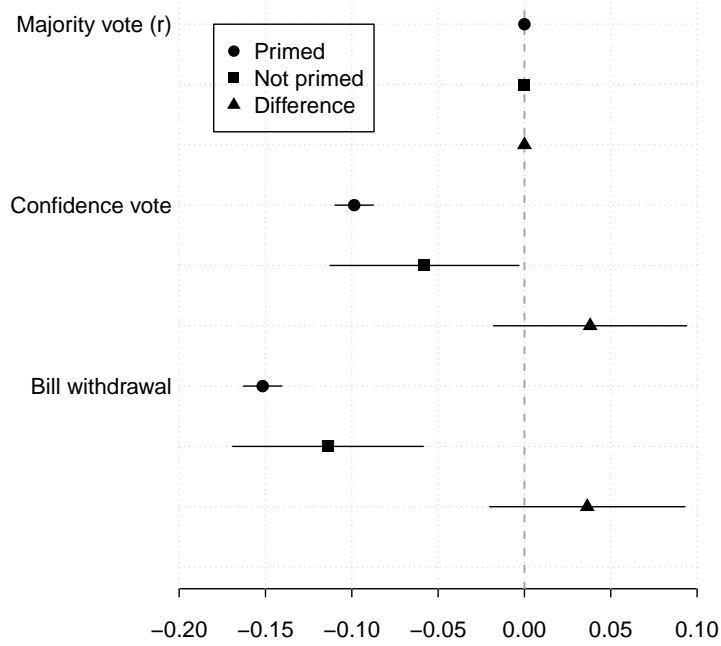


Figure A3: Summary of outcome across experimental conditions in experiment 1 (embedded in June 2016 French election study)



Change: Executive Evaluation (0 'Absolutely dissatisfied' – 1 'Absolutely satisfied')

Figure A4: Process effects in experiment 3 based on exposure to experiment 1. Based on experiment 3 (N=15,623) embedded in French election study (March/April 2017), these plots show heterogeneity in the effects of confidence vote and bill withdrawal between respondents who had participated in experiment 1, being exposed to an information “prime” about the confidence vote, and those who did not participate in experiment 1 and thus were never primed. Process effects are present regardless of the priming and the difference in effects across the prime are not statistically significant. Estimates are from nonparametric estimator implemented via linear regression; horizontal bars represent 95% confidence intervals; points without bars denote reference category.

Table A2: Evaluations of prime minister Valls and vote choice

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
PM Satisfaction	8.51 (0.20)	7.40 (0.24)	8.32 (0.20)	7.36 (0.25)	4.96 (0.22)	4.93 (0.21)
Ideology	-2.72 (0.15)	-0.77 (0.26)	-2.94 (0.16)	-0.91 (0.26)	-1.98 (0.27)	-2.08 (0.26)
Age	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Gender	0.06 (0.07)	0.00 (0.08)	0.03 (0.07)	-0.02 (0.08)	-0.14 (0.09)	-0.07 (0.08)
Occupation (13 dummies)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Education (4 dummies)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Urbanization (5 dummies)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Partisanship (15 dummies)		✓		✓	✓	✓
Observations	13,862	11,079	14,315	11,384	10,972	11,310

Notes: Dependent variable: vote intention for prime minister Valls in hypothetical first-round presidential contest with multiple contenders including either Sarkozy (models 1-2) or Juppé (models 3-4) as candidate from LR; vote intention for president Hollande in hypothetical first-round presidential contest with multiple contenders including either Sarkozy or Juppé as competitor from LR (models 5-6); all based on November 2016 round of the French election study. PM satisfaction measures the stated satisfaction with incumbent prime minister Valls, measured on a 10-point scale and re-scaled to range between 0 and 1. Estimation is by Logistic regression. Standard errors in parentheses.

Table A3: Correlation between evaluations of prime minister and president

	(1)	(2)	(3)
PM Satisfaction	0.76 (0.01)	0.68 (0.01)	0.63 (0.01)
Ideology		-0.23 (0.01)	-0.12 (0.01)
Age		-0.11 (0.01)	-0.09 (0.00)
Gender		0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Occupation (13 dummies)		✓	✓
Education (4 dummies)		✓	✓
Urbanization (5 dummies)		✓	✓
Partisanship (15 dummies)			✓
R-squared	0.59	0.66	0.67
Observations	12,904	12,904	12,904

Notes: Dependent variable: satisfaction with president Hollande, measured on a 10-point scale and re-scaled to range between 0 and 1. PM satisfaction concern M. Valls. Data are from November 2016 round of the French election study. Estimation is by OLS Standard errors in parentheses. The coefficient on age is multiplied by 100. The sample is restricted to respondents with information about partisanship.

Experiment 2

Vignette question wording. See Table A4.

Sample characteristics. See Table A5.

Table A4: Vignette question wording for experiment 2

	Majority vote condition	Confidence vote condition	Withdrawal condition
Obstructionism by opposition	Suppose that the next Prime minister belongs to [Party]*. The prime minister proposes to limit the number of refugees and asylum seeker welcome in France. Then the reform is adopted by a majority the National Assembly after the opposition introduced thousands of amendments to delay the adoption of the prime minister's proposal.	Suppose that the next Prime minister belongs to [Party]*. The prime minister proposes to limit the number of refugees and asylum seeker welcome in France. Then the reform is adopted without a parliamentary vote on the bill as the Prime minister invoked a confidence vote (article 49.3) after the opposition introduced thousands of amendments to delay the adoption of the prime minister's proposal.	Suppose that the next Prime minister belongs to [Party]*. The prime minister proposes to limit the number of refugees and asylum seeker welcome in France. Then the reform is not adopted as the Prime Minister withdrew the bill after the opposition introduced thousands of amendments to delay the adoption of the prime minister's proposal.
Internal dissent within government (split majority)	Suppose that the next Prime minister belongs to [Party]*. The prime minister proposes to limit the number of refugees and asylum seeker welcome in France. Then the reform is adopted by a majority the National Assembly after many MPs from the government majority announced that they did not support the prime minister's proposal.	Suppose that the next Prime minister belongs to [Party]*. The prime minister proposes to limit the number of refugees and asylum seeker welcome in France. Then the reform is adopted without a parliamentary vote on the bill as the Prime minister invoked a confidence vote (article 49.3) after many MPs from the government majority announced that they did not support the prime minister's proposal.	Suppose that the next Prime minister belongs to [Party]*. The prime minister proposes to limit the number of refugees and asylum seeker welcome in France. Then the reform is not adopted as the Prime Minister withdrew the bill after many MPs from the government majority announced that they did not support the prime minister's proposal.
Street protests	Suppose that the next Prime minister belongs to [Party]*. The prime minister proposes to limit the number of refugees and asylum seeker welcome in France. Then the reform is adopted by a majority the National Assembly after the multiplication of mass demonstrations against the prime minister's proposal since the beginning of the parliamentary debate.	Suppose that the next Prime minister belongs to [Party]*. The prime minister proposes to limit the number of refugees and asylum seeker welcome in France. Then the reform is adopted without a parliamentary vote on the bill as the Prime minister invoked a confidence vote (article 49.3) after the multiplication of mass demonstrations against the prime minister's proposal since the beginning of the parliamentary debate.	Suppose that the next Prime minister belongs to [Party]*. The prime minister proposes to limit the number of refugees and asylum seeker welcome in France. Then the reform is not adopted as the Prime Minister withdrew the bill after the multiplication of mass demonstrations against the prime minister's proposal since the beginning of the parliamentary debate.

Notes: * Party is a random allocation of one of the following: the Socialist party, the Republicans. In total, there are 18 experimental conditions. Original survey wording is in French.

Table A5: Sample characteristics for experiment 2

	Mean	SD
Age (years)	46.4	15.9
Female	0.55	0.50
Education (university degree)	0.52	0.50
Occupation	0.23	0.42
City > 100k	0.56	0.50
Ideology	0.53	0.25
Co-partisan	0.16	0.37
Policy congruent	0.56	0.50

Notes: Sample characteristics of experiment 2 (embedded in November 2016 French election study). Ideology refers to left-right self-placement rescaled to 0-1. Based on a recoding of the 13-category professional classification following the National Institute for Statistics (Insee), occupation is a dummy equal to 1 for Cadre supérieur, Profession indépendante or Agriculteur exploitant and 0 for all other (Profession intermédiaire, Employé, Ouvrier). Co-partisan and policy congruent refer to partisanship and policy preferences (measured before the experiment) relative to the randomly assigned prime minister and policy proposal in the vignette.

Experiment 3

Vignette question wording. See Table A6.

Sample characteristics. See Table A7.

Importance of two issues. In the Kantar-SOFRES survey (1500 respondents each) conducted in February 2016, only 35% of the respondents considered the issue of the power of subnational governments very or extremely important whereas for the refugees and wealth tax issues, they were 67% and 57%. Results are available at <http://www.cevipof.com/fr/dynamiquespolitiques/resultats/>

Effects of the economy conditional on process. The paper reports the the finding that confidence vote effect varies little with economic conditions. A related question is whether the effect of the economy on satisfaction with the executive vary by democratic process. Figure A5 shows that this is generally not the case. It displays the effect of economic conditions – reduced, constant or increased unemployment – conditional on the policy being passed by majority voting, the confidence procedure or not being passed. In all cases except one, the effects of economic conditions is very similar and statistically indistinguishable across these non-economic conditions. When the economy is doing better, prime ministers are evaluated more favorable regardless of the process used to enact the policy and even if the government withdraws its proposal. If the economy is doing worse, prime ministers are evaluated worse regardless of whether the policy is passed by majority vote or it is not passed. Only in one case is there a relevant difference. The effect of declining economic performance is practically zero under the confidence vote condition (the difference with respect to the effect under the majority vote is statistically significant, $p = 0.003$). This rules out a signaling interpretation based on a separating equilibrium where only low-quality prime ministers use the confidence

vote. If the confidence vote is perfect signal of the quality of the prime minister, the economy should play no additional role. This is not what we find.

Heterogeneity by policy. As part of the experimental vignette, respondents are either asked about a high-saliency policy, which concerns a reduction in the number of refugees, or a low-saliency policy, political decentralization. Figure A6 presents ACMEs conditional on policy. Pronounced process effects are present under each condition. However, the confidence vote effect is 32% larger for the less salient decentralization policy ($p < 0.000$) and the withdrawal effect is twice as large for the more salient refugee policy ($p < 0.000$). Note that the effects of the economy are smaller here than the average effects presented in the paper, as these analyses exclude the situation where no policy action is taken.

Table A6: Vignette question wording for experiment 3 with example of refugee policy condition

Economy	No bill condition	Majority vote condition	Confidence vote condition	Withdrawal condition
Better	Suppose that at the end of the first year in power of the next Prime there are 350 000 people in power of the next Prime there are 350 000 people less unemployed. The prime minister proposes to limit the number of refugees and asylum seeker welcome in France.* Then the reform is adopted by a majority the National Assembly after heated debates both with the opposition and within the majority.	Suppose that at the end of the first year in power of the next Prime there are 350 000 people more unemployed. The prime minister proposes to limit the number of refugees and asylum seeker welcome in France.* Then the reform is adopted without a parliamentary vote on the bill as the Prime Minister invoked a confidence vote (article 49.3) after heated debates both with the opposition and within the majority.	Suppose that at the end of the first year in power of the next Prime there are 350 000 people less unemployed. The prime minister proposes to limit the number of refugees and asylum seeker welcome in France.* Then the reform is not adopted as the Prime Minister withdrew the bill after heated debates both with the opposition and within the majority.	Suppose that at the end of the first year in power of the next Prime there are 350 000 people less unemployed. The prime minister proposes to limit the number of refugees and asylum seeker welcome in France.* Then the reform is not adopted as the Prime Minister withdrew the bill after heated debates both with the opposition and within the majority.
Same	Suppose that at the end of the first year in power of the next Prime there is the same number of unemployed people. The prime minister proposes to limit the number of refugees and asylum seeker welcome in France.* Then the reform is adopted by a majority the National Assembly after heated debates both with the opposition and within the majority.	Suppose that at the end of the first year in power of the next Prime there is the same number of unemployed people. The prime minister proposes to limit the number of refugees and asylum seeker welcome in France.* Then the reform is adopted without a parliamentary vote on the bill as the Prime Minister invoked a confidence vote (article 49.3) after heated debates both with the opposition and within the majority.	Suppose that at the end of the first year in power of the next Prime there is the same number of unemployed people. The prime minister proposes to limit the number of refugees and asylum seeker welcome in France.* Then the reform is not adopted as the Prime Minister withdrew the bill after heated debates both with the opposition and within the majority.	Suppose that at the end of the first year in power of the next Prime there is the same number of unemployed people. The prime minister proposes to limit the number of refugees and asylum seeker welcome in France.* Then the reform is not adopted as the Prime Minister withdrew the bill after heated debates both with the opposition and within the majority.
Worse	Suppose that at the end of the first year in power of the next Prime there are 350 000 people more unemployed. The prime minister proposes to limit the number of refugees and asylum seeker welcome in France.* Then the reform is adopted by a majority the National Assembly after heated debates both with the opposition and within the majority.	Suppose that at the end of the first year in power of the next Prime there are 350 000 people more unemployed. The prime minister proposes to limit the number of refugees and asylum seeker welcome in France.* Then the reform is adopted without a parliamentary vote on the bill as the Prime Minister invoked a confidence vote (article 49.3) after heated debates both with the opposition and within the majority.	Suppose that at the end of the first year in power of the next Prime there are 350 000 people more unemployed. The prime minister proposes to limit the number of refugees and asylum seeker welcome in France.* Then the reform is not adopted as the Prime Minister withdrew the bill after heated debates both with the opposition and within the majority.	Suppose that at the end of the first year in power of the next Prime there are 350 000 people more unemployed. The prime minister proposes to limit the number of refugees and asylum seeker welcome in France.* Then the reform is not adopted as the Prime Minister withdrew the bill after heated debates both with the opposition and within the majority.

Notes: *The experiment also varies the policy issue. In a condition with a low-salience policy, the prime minister proposes "to increase subnational governments' powers". In total, there are 21 experimental conditions. Original survey wording is in French.

Table A7: Sample characteristics for experiment 3

	Mean	SD
Age (years)	46.9	15.7
Female	0.56	0.50
Education (university degree)	0.52	0.50
Occupation	0.23	0.42
City > 100k	0.56	0.50
Ideology	0.53	0.25
Policy congruent	0.53	0.50

Notes: Sample characteristics of experiment 3 (embedded in March/April 2017 French election study). Ideology refers to left-right self-placement rescaled to 0-1. Based on a recoding of the 13-category professional classification following the National Institute for Statistics (Insee), occupation is a dummy equal to 1 for Cadre supérieur, Profession indépendante or Agriculteur exploitant and 0 for all other (Profession intermédiaire, Employé, Ouvrier). Policy congruent refers to policy preferences (measured before the experiment) relative to the randomly assigned prime minister and policy proposal in the vignette.

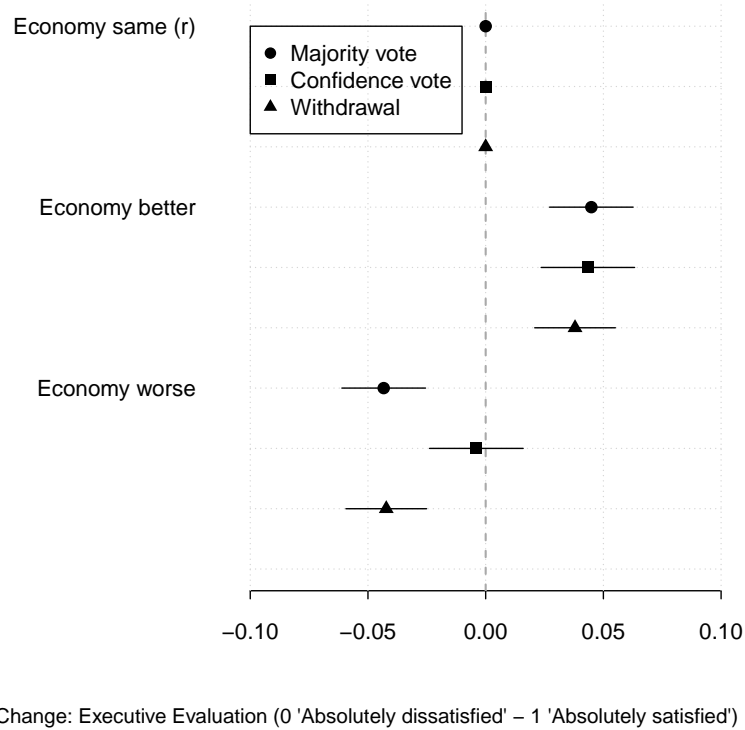


Figure A5: Effects of the economy varying by process. Based on experiment 3 (N=15,623) embedded in French election study (March/April 2017), this plots displays the effect of the economy on evaluations varying across legislative conditions relating to process and policy outcomes: majority voting, confidence vote or bill withdrawal. In all cases except one, the effects of the economy (better or worse unemployment relative to the reference of no change) is very similar and statistically indistinguishable across these non-economic conditions. Estimates are from nonparametric estimator implemented via linear regression; horizontal bars represent 95% confidence intervals; points without bars denote reference category.

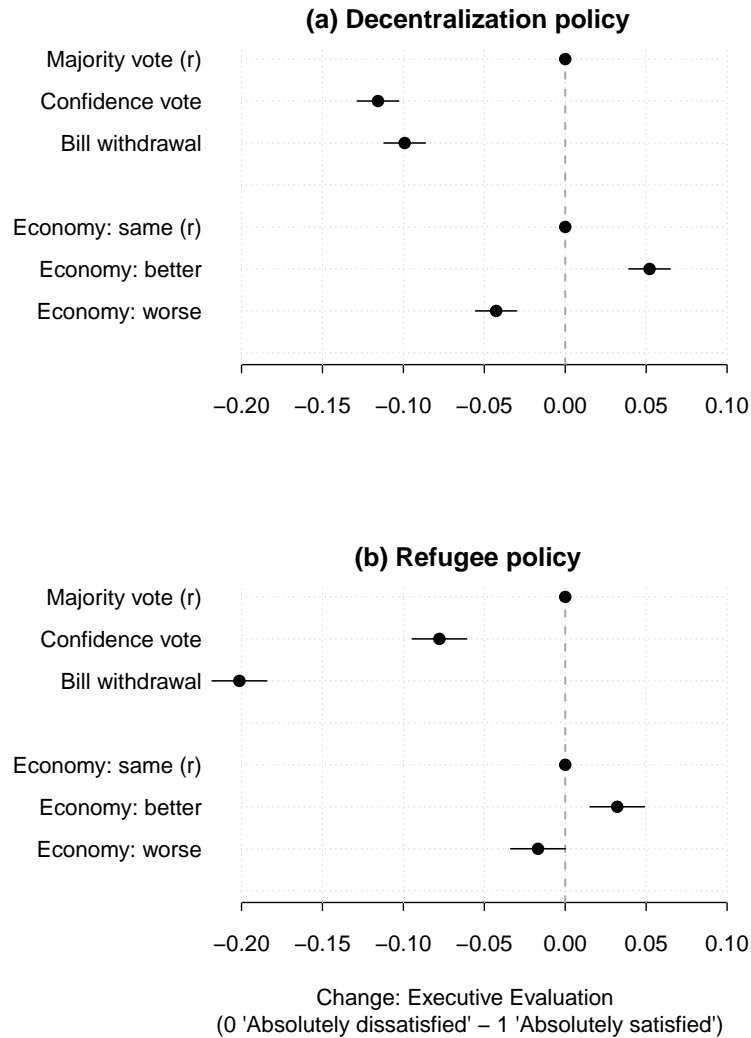


Figure A6: Effects varying by policy. Based on experiment 3 ($N=15,623$) embedded in French election study (March/April 2017), these plots show heterogeneity in the effects of confidence vote and bill withdrawal across policy issues: political decentralization and reducing the number of refugees. While pronounced process effects are present under each condition, the confidence vote effect is 32% larger for the less salient decentralization policy ($p < 0.000$) and the withdrawal effect is twice as large for the more salient refugee policy ($p < 0.000$). Estimates are from nonparametric estimator implemented via linear regression; horizontal bars represent 95% confidence intervals; points without bars denote reference category.

Appendix References

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