

Open for Politics?
Economic Globalization and Political Survival

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Abstract:

We inspect some of the political effects of economic openness based on the logic of economic attribution. Building on existing work that examines how globalization affects clarity of responsibility, we argue that politicians could use “globalization” as a means to deflect blame for poor economic performance while still claiming credit for good economic performance. We test our theory of responsibility attribution in survey experiments in the United States and Canada and cross-national observational data on the propensity of incumbent prime ministers to survive in office. We find little impact of globalization on credit claiming or blame avoidance in our survey experiments and find little evidence that globalization has any impact on executive survival. Our strongest finding, one that was not in our original pre-registration document but fits with the broader literature, is that voters blame politicians for poor economic performance but give politicians very little credit for strong economic performance. Our findings stand against the notion that economic openness promotes obfuscation of political responsibility for economic outcomes, while painting an image of unforgiving voters that are quick to blame politicians for low economic growth but do not award them credit for good economic times.

Economic openness, especially the liberalization of international trade, has the potential to generate economic benefits while concentrating the costs of adjustment on a set of sectors (such as manufacturing or agriculture), factors (such as low-skill labor), or regions. Much political economy scholarship on the topic has taken these distributional consequences of economic openness into account, especially when explaining the politics behind trade protection. While the literature on the politics of trade policy is massive, a number of central themes have emerged. One of these themes is that the “concentrated losers/dispersed winners” character of liberalization processes creates mobilization advantages for protectionist coalitions over pro-free trade interests. In light of this view, it is puzzling that massive economic liberalization has taken place across countries over the past few decades. Traditional trade barriers such as tariffs have become less of an impediment to trade, while non-tariffs barriers, still formidable across industries, have steadily declined.

What political consequences has liberalization brought about? In particular, how does economic openness affect the political behavior of citizens and, consequently, the political fortune of governments and politicians? As noted by Kayser in a review of the existing literature on politics and globalization, “[v]ery little of it addresses the effects of globalization on actual politics” (Kayser 2007, 341). In this paper we directly examine how openness to international trade, a distinct and important trait of globalization, shapes political outcomes such as the survival of governments and the degree of electoral support that incumbents receive.

We argue that an important mechanism connecting globalization to domestic politics works through voter evaluations of their elected leaders following positive or negative economic performance under varying levels of economic openness. Building on existing work in political psychology, we argue that globalization can have a direct impact on

responsibility attribution, but this effect need not be symmetrical. Globalization can reduce “clarity of responsibility”, limiting the ability of voters to award credit or assign blame during periods of economic expansions or recession. Clarity of responsibility theories have long shaped political science research on responsibility attribution and, more recently, work such as Hellwig (2001) has identified globalization as a means of further muddling responsibility attributions. In short, globalization should make it difficult for voters to reward or punish politicians for economic outcomes. Our own theoretical contribution is to argue that globalization induces an asymmetric impact on credit and blame attributions. While individuals may or may not attribute credit to politicians for good economic performance regardless of the level of trade openness, we expect individuals to assign blame for bad economic performance in less open economies.

If this account is correct, we should find that openness increases the survival capacity of incumbent governments. We believe our theory could also explain the partial economic openness of many economies. In many cases, countries sign trade agreements, open up their economies to the ups and downs of global market forces, while they simultaneously shelter certain industries from economic competition. We argue that as long as voters have the perception that market forces shape economic outcomes, politicians can continue to selectively shield industries. Thus politicians can reap the rewards of blame avoidance while at the same time playing the game of special interest group politics.

Our empirical results *are not* consistent with our theoretical expectations. First, we consider a survey experiment conducted in the United States in April 2014 in which we vary frames about economic growth as “high” or “low” and the source of economic growth as “domestic” or “global”. Our survey experiment indicates (i) that voters are much more likely to blame politicians for poor growth and to credit businesses and entrepreneurs for

high economic growth, and (ii) that these responses are not affected *at all* by alternative globalization frames. Globalization has little impact on mitigating punishment to politicians on account of poor economic performance, which is inconsistent with our expectations and also with the “clarity of responsibility” argument. In follow-up survey experiments in the United States in April 2015 and Canada in October 2015 we find similar results on the asymmetric impact of credit and blame on politicians, and lack of impact of globalization on responsibility attribution.

Second, we find in an observational analysis of 29 West and East European countries that voters are about as likely to punish incumbent politicians (and parties) by removing them from office and reducing their legislative seat shares in relatively open and relatively closed economies, which is consistent with the findings of our survey experiments. We also observe that the vote share of incumbent governments decreases in bad economic times, but these effects are relatively small. Put together, our findings are inconsistent with our original theory about the blame-reducing effect of globalization, but they also bring into question the idea that economic openness promotes obfuscation of political responsibility for bad economic outcomes. At the end of the day, the evidence we uncover is consistent with an image of voters that remain reluctant to award credit to politicians that oversee periods of high economic growth, but are quick to blame them for low economic growth. This willingness to blame might reduce electoral support for incumbents, but these reductions appear to be relatively trivial, at least compared to the anti-incumbent animus we detect in our survey experiments.

1. Globalization and responsibility attribution

While some economic sectors remain relatively closed to trade and investment, economic liberalization has dramatically reduced tariffs across countries, led to reduced restrictions on foreign investment, and started to chip away at many non-tariff barriers. The real extent to which economies are open to the rest of the world is an interesting and important debate, but the general trend towards liberalization is difficult to dispute. Politicians have chosen to open up their economies to global market forces. Why? Different explanations for economic liberalization all add a piece of the puzzle. International institutions, such as the World Trade Organization, may have been essential in promoting trade liberalization across countries.¹ An increasing number of stable democratic regimes can enhance the ability of states to cooperate in the formation of mutually beneficial trade agreements.² Other domestic institutions—ranging from delegation of trade policy to the executive³ to the inclusion of reciprocity into trade agreements—all have been linked to trade liberalization.⁴

¹ The classic study on the effect of the WTO on trade is Rose (2004). See Goldstein, Rivers and Tomz (2007) for a reevaluation.

² Mansfield, Milner, and Rosendorff (2002). See also Milner and Kubota (2005) for a study of democracy and trade liberalization.

³ For example, see Lohmann and O'Halloran (1994).

⁴ See Gilligan (1997) for an exploration of how reciprocity mobilized pro-trade export interests. Hiscox (1999) makes a strong case that reciprocity wasn't central to the landmark Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act (RTAA).

Electoral institutions can also shape both the amount and type of trade protection.⁵ Finally, studies of globalization preferences include studies on how trade views are affected by occupation⁶, consumer prices⁷, exposure to economic ideas⁸, economic insecurity⁹, and views towards out-groups.¹⁰

Missing from many of these accounts is a direct test of how economic openness shapes political outcomes, particularly the fortunes of incumbent politicians. Are politicians in open economies more or less likely to win reelection and live long careers as government incumbents than those in closed economies? We believe an exploration of how globalization affects political survival is an important empirical contribution, although it only further opens up interesting questions on the causal mechanism linking openness and survival. In this section we build on previous theoretical contributions to suggest that economic openness should empower incumbents to avoid blame for bad economic outcomes and take credit for good ones.

⁵ See McGillivray (1997, 2004) for work on how electoral institutions shape the geographic targeting of trade protection. See Kono (2006) for how democratic institutions incentivize the use of more opaque forms of trade protection.

⁶ For work on trade policy preferences, see Scheve and Slaughter (2001); Mayda and Rodrik (2005). For foreign direct investment preferences, see Pandya (2010).

⁷ Baker (2003).

⁸ Hainmuller and Hiscox (2006).

⁹ Scheve and Slaughter (2004).

¹⁰ Mansfield and Mutz (2009, 2013).

The ability of voters to sanction or reward politicians through elections is at the heart of democratic governance. Research in political science has documented that economic performance shapes voting, either through sociotropic considerations about growth, inflation, and unemployment at the national level, or through “pocketbook” assessments of financial standing at the individual or household level.¹¹ Work on political behavior has expanded our knowledge about economic voting by describing “asymmetries” in voters’ reactions to the economy. Chief among them, scholars have noticed the existence of a “negativity bias” that generates asymmetrical responses to *positive* and *negative* economic outcomes of similar magnitude.¹² Thus, for example, a recession in economic growth of –3% would lead voters to express a very large degree of dissatisfaction with the incumbent government; in contrast, a positive growth rate of the same magnitude (3%) would only lead to mild praise for the incumbent. These reactions are consistent with the main tenets of prospect theory, especially with the idea that most individuals experience “loss aversion” and are prone to react more sharply to economic deterioration than to improvements in economic performance.¹³

A second kind of asymmetric response to economic outcomes follows not from the psychological dispositions of individuals but from the political and institutional milieu within which they form opinions about responsibility attribution. Building on the influential work

¹¹ See Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier (2000).

¹² In political science literature on presidential popularity and presidential support, negativity bias is known to generate a “grievance asymmetry” (Nannestad and Paldam 1997, Bloom and Price 1975). See Soroka (2006, 2014) and Stanig (2013) for extensions to this argument.

¹³ Kahneman and Tversky (1979).

of Powell and Whitten (1993), scholars have argued that globalization can limit “clarity of responsibility”, reducing the ability of voters to attribute responsibility to elected officials for economic outcomes. The evidence in favor of this proposition is however mixed: Hellwig (2001) documented in a cross-national study of voting intentions that greater exposure to trade reduces the probability that economic factors shape an individual’s vote choice, although Fernández-Albertós (2006) finds no such relationship. Hellwig and Samuels (2007) find that economic openness weakens the relationship between economic performance and vote choice in 75 countries from 1975 to 2002.¹⁴

This theoretical background provides the foundation for our three hypotheses. A straightforward interpretation of the clarity of responsibility framework in the context of globalization suggests that economic liberalization limits both the ability of individuals to credit politicians for economic growth and to blame them for recessions. This leads to our first hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Globalization reduces the probability that respondents allocate responsibility to politicians for good *or* bad economic performance.

¹⁴ Hellwig (2008) argues that economic openness increases the weight that voters place on non-economic factors when deciding their vote. In an original survey experiment in the United States, Hellwig et al (2008) find that the majority of Americans believe that the government still can affect economic policy outcomes, although this does vary by partisanship and level of knowledge. While these clarity of responsibility arguments are compelling, the empirical literature on the topic is mixed. Kayser (2009) documents how globalization, by affecting domestic business cycles, has led to co-variation in voting intentions across countries.

This hypothesis is built upon previous work that argues globalization muddles the clarity of responsibility for economic performance. We deviate from this previous work and submit that citizens view the relationship between economic performance, globalization, and government performance in a manner that potentially increases the survival chances of incumbent governments. In the extreme, we argue, incumbents can have the best of both worlds. They can blame global market forces for poor economic performance — this follows directly from the clarity of responsibility hypothesis and has been empirically tested by Alcañiz and Hellwig (2011) — but they can also take credit for strong domestic economic performance. That is, economic openness “confounds” voters, who may not be entirely clear that they can pin blame for a poor economy on governments.¹⁵

One could then argue that the same effect of “obfuscation” of accountability would stop voters from giving credit to incumbents that oversee periods of economic expansion. We do not believe this to be the case. For starters, negativity bias already implies that voters will be stingy with credit for good economic outcomes.¹⁶ But we also anticipate that incumbent governments have the ability and the means to claim credit in a globalized world. For example, they could self-servingly trumpet good economic performance as an outcome delivered by superior macroeconomic management ability in a globalized world that they can

¹⁵ Weaver (1986) suggests that politicians engage in blame avoidance strategies precisely to counteract “negativity bias” on the part of voters.

¹⁶ Previous research has noted the tendency of voters to punish politicians for poor economic performance while giving politicians little credit for a booming economy (Pacek and Radcliff 1995).

portrait as extremely competitive.¹⁷ In short, we claim that, at a minimum, incumbent politicians can claim credit for economic growth, regardless of the circumstances in which the country finds itself.¹⁸ If true, this proposition implies that negativity bias could very well be much tempered in economies that are open to trade with the rest of the world.¹⁹ This leads to our second hypothesis:

¹⁷ We recognize that there are potential limits to politicians' ability to "dupe" voters. Thus, there is evidence that voters themselves are far from gullible, and that they consider the economic performance of structurally similar countries as a benchmark against which to compare the performance of their own country (Kayser and Peress 2012).

¹⁸ Recent evidence suggests that citizens give more credit to politicians that claim it. Based on an experimental design, Grimmer, Messing, and Westwood (2012) suggests that constituents are susceptible to messages from their representatives claiming credit for particularistic spending; the twist is that constituents are more susceptible to the total number of credit-claiming messages they receive than to the dollar amount of the particularistic spending.

¹⁹ Our theory has similarities to Carlin et al.'s (2015) contribution on political scandals, economic performance, and government approval. They argue that the effect of political scandals is conditional on economic performance, where voters are willing to trade poor political behavior off for strong economic performance, and find support for this conditional theory in rates of approval for Latin American presidents in 18 Latin American countries. Unlike the work on scandals, our theory does not focus on voters making an implicit tradeoff between scandals and economic performance. See Muñoz, Anduiza and Gallego (2012) for experimental work on this tradeoff.

Hypothesis 2 (Blame Avoidance): Globalization reduces the probability that respondents allocate responsibility to politicians for bad economic performance.

In short, our expectation is that asymmetric responses to positive and negative economic growth should be tempered under economic openness, both because blame-avoiding statements from incumbents will be more credible, and because credit-claiming statements will be at least as credible as they would be in a closed economy. As an observable and relevant consequence of this credit-claiming/blame avoidance mechanism, we expect that the political survival of incumbents will vary across different environments.

We expect incumbents to have a tough time surviving economic downturns in closed economies. We believe that they will face similarly better chances of survival in any of the other three circumstances: in a closed economy that delivers growth, or in an open economy regardless of whether the government presided over positive or negative economic growth.

Our first two hypothesis were pre-registered prior to fielding our first survey experiment (we discuss our pre-registration in section 3). Our final hypothesis was developed after the first survey in the United States and was tested using US and Canadian survey data in our second and third survey experiments. This hypothesis directly tests the asymmetric impact of positive and negative growth, independent of our globalization treatment. As we noted earlier (see footnote 12), existing work has theorized that voters are more likely to respond to negative rather than positive economic performance, a proposition often described as the “grievance asymmetry” hypothesis in American politics. We test this hypothesis in our survey experiments:

Hypothesis 3 (Grievance Asymmetry): Respondents are more likely to allocate responsibility to politicians for bad economic performance than for good economic performance.

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Comment [1]: Nate, is this well worded? Does it make sense to you? Does it end up obfuscating the expectations that you set out in H1 and H2? And is this the place to talk about this? Or should we send it to the observational study?

Not sure this fits well here. Maybe talk about it in the observational study part.

2. Evidence from survey experiments in the United States

To test our hypothesis that citizens reward politicians for economic growth but fail to punish them for bad economic outcomes under openness, we designed an original survey experiment fielded in the United States. Our first step was to pre-register our hypotheses, research design, and analysis plan at Experiments in Governance and Politics (EGAP).²⁰ Design registration promotes both transparency in the research process and pre-commitment of theory and analysis, limiting the ability of researchers to “fish” or “mine” the data, or develop theory ex post.²¹ We registered our designs prior to fielding each of two surveys. Our first registration included two hypothesis and research design. After fielding our first survey we received substantive and methodological comments and suggestions on further testing our theory, and thus we pre-registered a follow-up survey in the United States.

We fielded two online surveys to 2,000 respondents in the April 2014 and April 2015 modules of the The American Panel Survey (TAPS) at Washington University in St. Louis. TAPS is a five-year panel of 2,000 respondents administered by KnowledgeNetworks which uses individual demographic data and residential addresses to build a nationally representative sample based on observable characteristics.²² While the use of online, opt-in surveys can lead to concerns about unobserved factors leading to samples that are not representative of the national population, a recent comparison of online survey versus other

²⁰ Our registration is available at: <http://egap.org/registration/665>. The wording of our hypotheses varies slightly between the three registration documents.

²¹ See Humphreys et al (2013).

²² Technical details on the TAPS survey can be found online at <http://taps.wustl.edu/>.

survey formats (mail-out, telephone, etc) finds few differences based on survey mode.²³

More importantly for our study, we harness the power of randomization to achieve balance between treatment and control groups.

Our original research design asked a small number of questions in a survey experiment with block randomization of two treatment conditions: the state of the economy and the primacy of domestic or global causes of economic performance. Each respondent obtains one of four possible combinations of treatments (frames), where each treatment randomizes the current status of the economy (high or low growth) and the main factor behind economic outcomes (domestic or global market forces). We thus have a total of four treatments plus one control group that does not receive any frames. The first question we ask focuses on retrospective evaluations, asking respondents to assign credit or blame for past economic growth. Our control group was asked to react to the following text:

Question 1 (Control)

How much blame or credit do you place on policy makers for US economic growth in past decades?

1. A great deal of blame or credit
2. Some blame or credit
3. Very little blame or credit
4. No blame or credit
5. Don't know

For our experimental manipulations we varied (i) whether or not we highlighted only domestic factors or global market factors as influences on economic growth, and (ii) whether recent economic growth was portrayed as relatively “fast” or “slow” compared to the historical average. For example, we present below questions 1a and 1b, where both groups are treated with “fast” growth yet we vary frames on whether global forces affect economic

²³ See Ansolabehere and Schaffner (Forthcoming).

growth or not. The questions that respondents see are identical with the exception of the treatments (we italicize the treatments here for the sake of illustration). Respondents registered an answer based on the same four-point ordered scale as before (from “no blame or credit” to “a great deal of blame or credit”, with an additional “don’t know” option).

Question 1a: Fast Growth and Domestic Treatment

Economic growth can be affected by government policy and the decisions of companies. Some experts have noted that over the past decades US economic growth has been relatively *fast compared to the US historical average*. How much credit do you give government policy makers for this economic growth?

Question 1b: Fast Growth and International Treatment

Economic growth can be affected by government policy, the decisions of companies and *global market forces*. Some experts have noted that over the past decades US economic growth has been relatively *fast compared to the US historical average*. How much credit do you give policy makers for this economic growth?

The two additional treatments for “slow growth”, with either domestic or international treatments, are analogously worded. We provide the full text for all questions in the Appendix.

In Table 1 we present the survey-weighted average responses along with 90% confidence intervals by treatment. For the sake of presentation we coded responses where politicians were given “A great deal” of credit or blame as “Highly responsible”; otherwise, we code the indicator as “Not very responsible”. Alternative codings, including elimination of “don’t know” responses from the denominator, yield very similar results.

The interesting comparison for our purposes is between the “domestic” and “global” treatments. When respondents are primed to observe slow growth in the recent past, 48% of respondents assign policy-makers the highest levels of blame for slow growth in the “domestic” treatment, which is substantively identical to the 50% of respondents in the “global” treatment. When economic growth is “fast” only 3% of respondents gave the

government high levels of credit. This estimate is basically identical for both the “domestic” and “global” treatments. The finding that the “global market forces” frame does not generate different attributions of blame/credit for low/high economic growth runs counter to our expectations.

Table 1: Retrospective Evaluations

	Treatments				Control	Average
Politicians perceived to be:	Domestic Fast	Domestic Slow	Global Fast	Global Slow		
Highly responsible	0.03 [0.01, 0.05]	0.48 [0.39, 0.57]	0.03 [0.01, 0.05]	0.50 [0.41, 0.60]	0.45 [0.36, 0.53]	0.28 [0.25, 0.32]
Not very responsible	0.97 [0.95, 0.99]	0.52 [0.43, 0.61]	0.97 [0.95, 0.99]	0.50 [0.41, 0.59]	0.55 [0.47, 0.64]	0.72 [0.68, 0.75]

Note: Survey weighted estimates, with 90% confidence levels in parenthesis.

While our globalization treatments had no impact on blame or credit, the asymmetry between credit and blame is interesting and is consistent with previous research on the topic (Pacek and Radcliff 1995). This willingness to blame politicians could be an artifact of the recent financial crisis, whose effects were still felt by the time we fielded our first survey. Luckily we also included a question on prospective economic evaluations. Our block randomization assured us that respondents that were treated with a “high growth/domestic source” treatment, for example, were exposed to the same treatment for all of our questions. Our prospective evaluation question is almost identical to our first retrospective question, with only a change in focus on evaluation of expected growth in 2016. For example, our question for the fast growth, domestic treatment is as follows:

Question 2a: Fast Growth and Domestic Treatment

Economic growth can be affected by government policy and the decisions of companies. If the US economy is in recession and is growing at a slow rate in 2016, how much blame would you place on policy makers for this economic growth.

1. A great deal of blame
2. Some blame
3. Very little blame
4. No blame
5. Don't know

Table 2: Prospective Evaluations

	Treatments				Control	Average
Politicians perceived to be:	Domestic Fast	Domestic Slow	Global Fast	Global Slow		
Highly responsible	0.03 [0.2, 0.05]	0.40 [0.32, 0.49]	0.04 [0.02, 0.07]	0.48 [0.39, 0.58]	0.40 [0.30, 0.50]	0.23 [0.20, 0.28]
Not very responsible	0.97 [0.95, 0.98]	0.60 [0.51, 0.68]	0.96 [0.93, 0.98]	0.52 [0.42, 0.61]	0.60 [0.50, 0.40]	0.77 [0.72, 0.80]

Note: Survey weighted estimates, with 90% confidence levels in parenthesis.

In Table 2 we present results for prospective evaluations. Our results are basically unchanged. Contrary to our expectations, there is no meaningful difference between the domestic and global treatments, and we still observe the same asymmetry between substantial blame for poor economic performance and very minimal levels of credit for good economic performance.

In our final question, we examined prospective voting intentions for the Democratic presidential candidate in 2016 using the same treatments. We present the survey weighted results and the 90% confidence intervals in Table 3. We find a pattern similar to the one conveyed by Tables 1 and 2, although the confidence intervals between the “high growth” and “low growth” treatments overlap this time. In short, our survey experiments provide no evidence that globalization has any impact on evaluations or voting intentions, although we found a very marked asymmetry between respondent evaluations of politicians in good and bad economic times.

We are careful in our interpretation of these results. In a manipulation check for our first two questions, we asked respondents to recount whether their treatment was “high growth” or “low growth”. While 78% of respondents correctly identified “low growth” when they were exposed to the “low growth” treatment, only 39% correctly identified “high growth” when they were exposed to the “high growth” treatment. Put another way, the majority of our respondents believed, many of them erroneously, that they were exposed to the low growth treatment. We can only speculate why respondents were much more likely to believe they read “low growth” in our question, but one plausible explanation is that most respondents truly believed that the U.S. had experienced a period of historically low growth at the time of the survey. Yet it is striking that despite our weak “high growth” treatment we find large differences in blame and credit.

Table 3: Voting Intentions

Likelihood of voting for Democrats	Treatment				Control	Average
	Domestic High	Domestic Low	Global High	Global Low		
Very likely	0.24 [0.17,0.31]	0.20 [0.15,0.27]	0.20 [0.13,0.28]	0.13 [0.09,0.20]	0.25 [0.18,0.32]	0.20 [0.17,0.23]
Likely	0.14 [0.09,0.21]	0.08 [0.05,0.13]	0.12 [0.07,0.18]	0.17 [0.11,0.24]	0.12 [0.08,0.17]	0.13 [0.10,0.15]
Undecided	0.19 [0.13,0.26]	0.21 [0.15,0.28]	0.38 [0.28,.49]	0.26 [0.18,0.36]	0.20 [0.14,0.29]	0.25 [0.22,0.29]
Unlikely	0.10 [0.06,0.16]	0.11 [0.06,0.20]	0.07 [0.04,0.11]	0.08 [0.04,0.14]	0.05 [0.03,0.10]	0.08 [0.06,0.10]
Very unlikely	0.33 [0.26,0.42]	0.40 [0.32,0.49]	0.25 [0.17,0.33]	0.36 [0.28,0.45]	0.38 [0.30,0.47]	0.34 [0.30,0.38]

Note: Survey weighted estimates, with 90% confidence levels in parenthesis.

To further examine the relationship between globalization and accountability we fielded a follow-up experiment in April 2015. This second survey was pre-registered before we fielded it, but after analyzing the results from the original survey experiment we just

reported. The second experiment again uses the TAPS panel to examine how globalization shapes accountability, probing further into both how global frames affect responsibility and the asymmetric attributions of credit and blame during high and low levels of economic growth. We specifically added two questions to complement the first experiment. The main difference is that we shift our focus from asking how much respondents blame or reward politicians, to asking which actors respondents believe to be responsible for high or low levels of economic growth.

We include the following question using the same four treatment groups as before.

Question 3: Fast Growth and Domestic Treatment

As we mentioned before, economic growth can be affected by government policy and the decisions of U.S. companies. While the recent recession has led to a period of very poor economic performance, some experts have noted that U.S. economic growth over the past few decades has been relatively fast compared to the U.S. historical average.

Who is most responsible for the strong economic performance of the United States over the past few decades?

1. business people
2. U.S. politicians
3. global market forces
4. other: [textbox]
5. don't know

In addition to this question we included an item about future economic growth, along with manipulation checks. To save space we only focus on the retrospective question, but we notice that results are very similar when examining the prospective item. In Table 4 we present our results, coding respondents as crediting (blaming) politicians if these actors were primarily seen as responsible for high (low) economic growth. We present the results in the same format as the previous tables. Similar to our first survey experiment, we find that respondents are much more likely to blame politicians for low economic performance. Roughly 40% of respondents indicated politicians were primarily responsible

for low growth (columns 2 and 4), while only 11% gave politicians credit for high growth. This asymmetry of credit and blame is consistent with our previous experiment, and as in our previous experiment we also fail to find evidence that our globalization treatment had any impact on credit or blame.

Table 4: Attributing Growth to Politicians

	Treatment				Average
Politicians perceived to be	Domestic Fast	Domestic Slow	Global Fast	Global Slow	
Highly responsible	0.12 [0.07, 0.18]	0.41 [0.34, 0.47]	0.11 [0.08, 0.15]	0.39 [0.32, 0.47]	0.26 [0.25, 0.32]
Not very responsible	0.88 [0.82, 0.93]	0.59 [0.52, 0.66]	0.89 [0.85, 0.92]	0.61 [0.53, 0.67]	0.74 [0.23, 0.29]

Note: Survey weighted estimates, with 90% confidence levels in parenthesis.

In Table 5 we code responses in an alternative manner, capturing whether respondents pointed at global market forces as responsible for high or low economic growth. In sharp contrast to our findings on assigning responsibility to politicians, we find much higher levels of stability in attribution to global market forces, as 25% of respondents indicated global market forces as primarily responsible, and this level of attribution only varied slightly under the two different economic growth frames. To put it another way, when given the choice between allocating responsibility among politicians, business people, and global market forces, respondents shifted blame and credit between “business people” and “politicians” based on the level of economic growth. Business people got all of the credit and none of the blame for economic performance, and vice versa for politicians.

Table 5: Attributing Growth to Global Market Forces

	Treatment				
Global market	Domestic	Domestic	Global	Global	Total

forces perceived to be	Fast	Slow	Fast	Slow	
Highly responsible	0.28 [0.22, 0.35]	0.23 [0.18, 0.28]	0.26 [0.21, 0.32]	0.21 [0.16, 0.28]	0.25 [0.22, 0.28]
Not very responsible	0.72 [0.65, 0.78]	0.77 [0.43, 0.61]	0.74 [0.95, 0.99]	0.79 [0.41, 0.59]	0.75 [0.72, 0.78]

Note: Survey weighted estimates, with 90% confidence levels in parenthesis.

3. Evidence from survey experiments in Canada

Our empirical results from the United States suggest no evidence that globalization primes have any impact on the attribution of responsibility for economic outcomes. Our main finding is that economic growth has an asymmetric impact on responsibility attribution, in the sense that politicians are blamed for poor economic performance, yet reap very little credit for higher levels of economic growth. These results are consistent across a number of different questions fielded in the United States.

As a check on these results, we replicate the analysis in Tables 4 and 5 with a survey experiment fielded in Canada in October 2015. We ask questions almost identical to those fielded in our 2015 survey experiment in the United States, simply substituting “Canada” for the “United States” in the question. We provide some additional details on the survey experiment in the footnotes, but we note that this survey was designed to mirror the United States survey and was also pre-registered at EGAP. We provide this registration document in the Appendix.²⁴

²⁴ This survey was fielded through the Local Parliament Project

(<http://www.localparliament.ca/>.) Our survey was conducted only in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec.

In Table 6 we present the evidence on how Canadian respondents allocated credit between “business people”, “Canadian politicians”, “global market forces”, “don’t know” or “other”. Similar to our U.S. survey we find no difference between the globalization treatments and the domestic treatments. Highlighting globalization in the introduction to the survey has no impact on credit or blame. This is inconsistent with our theoretical expectations. Furthermore, we again find support for asymmetric blame/credit to politicians for different rates of economic growth. During periods of low economic growth, between 30–31% of respondents blamed politicians for poor economic performance. In contrast, credit attribution for high economic growth decreased by almost half; only about 16–17% of respondents indicated the politicians were primarily responsible for superior economic performance.

Table 6: Attributing Growth to Politicians (Canada)

Politicians perceived to be	Treatment				Average
	Domestic Fast	Domestic Slow	Global Fast	Global Slow	
Highly responsible	0.16 [0.14, 0.19]	0.31 [0.28, 0.34]	0.17 [0.14, 0.20]	0.30 [0.27, 0.34]	0.24 [0.22, 0.25]
Not very responsible	0.84 [0.81, 0.86]	0.69 [0.66, 0.72]	0.83 [0.80, 0.86]	0.70 [0.66, 0.73]	0.76 [0.75, 0.78]

Note: Survey weighted estimates, with 90% confidence levels in parenthesis.

In Table 7 we present results from the same survey question, this time focusing on the frequency of respondents’ allocation of responsibility to global market forces. Similar to United States respondents, Canadian respondents are remarkably consistent across all treatments in their allocation of credit or blame to global markets. The only major

difference is the higher percentage of Canadian respondents that allocate credit or blame to globalization (on average 42%) relative to the U.S. respondents (on average 25%).²⁵

Table 7: Attributing Growth to Global Market Forces (Canada)

Global market forces perceived to be	Treatment				Average
	Domestic Fast	Domestic Slow	Global Fast	Global Slow	
Highly responsible	0.42 [0.38, 0.45]	0.45 [0.41, 0.49]	0.40 [0.37, 0.44]	0.42 [0.39, 0.46]	0.42 [0.40, 0.44]
Not very responsible	0.58 [0.55, 0.62]	0.55 [0.51, 0.59]	0.60 [0.56, 0.63]	0.58 [0.54, 0.61]	0.58 [0.56, 0.60]

Note: Survey weighted estimates with 90% confidence levels in parenthesis.

4. Evidence from cross-national observational data

Our survey experiments highlight the limited ability of politicians to use globalization — rather, a country’s degree of economic openness — to increase credit or reduce blame for economic performance. Based on Hypothesis 2, we would anticipate governments in more open economies to survive in power more easily and to retain broader electoral support when fighting for re-election. Based on the individual-level responses to our survey experiments, in contrast, we would anticipate a country’s degree of economic openness to have absolutely no impact on the ability of incumbent governments to survive. Instead, if voters are anything like our survey respondents, they should blame incumbent governments

²⁵ Consistent with this observed differential in opinions about the importance of globalization in accounting for economic growth, Canada is relatively more open to trade than the United States. According to the World Bank national accounts data, trade as a percentage of GDP hovers about 60-64% in Canada, but only at about 30-31% for the United States. Both countries are similar in terms of capital openness.

that presided over economic recessions or periods of low economic growth and punish them with lower rates of reelection or at least much diminished electoral support, which is consistent with Hypothesis 3.

In this section, we consider the electoral fortunes of incumbent governments in a convenience observational sample of 29 European parliamentary regimes.²⁶ Though the bulk of our survey data was collected in the United States, a presidential regime, we confirmed in an independent survey experiment that the logic of blaming poor economic results on incumbent politicians exists as well in Canada's parliamentary regime. We have thus reason to suspect that European voters might similarly blame incumbent governments for poor economic results, but would not allow economic openness to temper this judgment.

Specifically, we consider the electoral success and ability to retain power of the party to which the prime minister belongs. Our starting point is a dataset on the vote and seat shares of governing coalitions in West Europe's postwar and East Europe's post-communist era (Andersson, Bergman and Ersson 2014).²⁷ This dataset allows easy identification of the prime minister's party. For ease of exposition, we refer to the prime minister's party as the *incumbent*; we seek to assess whether the electoral fortunes of incumbents wax and wane as a consequence of levels of economic openness and/or rates of economic growth. We omit

²⁶ The full list of countries appears in the Appendix. Strictly speaking, France is a semi-presidential regime, as were Finland before 2000, Greece before 1985, and Portugal before 1982.

²⁷ Andersson, Bergman & Ersson (2014).

from our analysis all “technical” governments, as well as any government where the prime minister lacked a party affiliation.²⁸

A further caveat is in order: in many parliamentary regimes, governmental coalitions can form even in the absence of new elections. Oftentimes, successive governments coalesce around the same political party and even the same prime minister, and change only marginally if a handful of MPs or a surplus party in an oversized coalition withdraws support for the government.²⁹ It is rather infrequent to see wholesale ideological changes in a government coalition without a call to general elections.³⁰ This facet of parliamentary politics complicates our analysis because voters may have differing ideas about which party is to

²⁸ In a handful of cases neither of these criteria were available and so we simply recorded the data as missing. We also drop from our analyses Eastern European foundational post-communist elections; this is because we need information on prior elections to code electoral performance, and in these cases the immediately prior elections had occurred several decades before.

²⁹ For example, elections on June 3, 1979 gave rise in Italy to the first Cossiga government built around a majoritarian coalition led by the Christian Democratic party (DC). Within the next four years, this first government was followed by a second Cossiga government, and then by governments led by prime ministers Forlani (DC), Spadolini (PRI) and Fanfani (DC) before Italians were again asked to express their political preferences in the general elections of June 26, 1983.

³⁰ An example comes from the first Kohl CDU government in Germany, which substituted Schmidt’s SPD government without an intervening election when the Liberal Party (FDP) shifted its support from the SPD to the CDU.

blame or credit for economic outcomes, whether the one that was first formed after elections, or the one that held power just prior to a new round of elections. Here, we only consider governments whose termination was immediately followed by a general election. Our decision follows from our interest in understanding vote choice, which requires that voters have an actual chance to express a vote. By only inspecting governments that were followed by elections we err on the side of believing that voters are myopic and that they blame or credit the government standing just before an election for recent economic outcomes.

We analyze two different outcomes. First, *incumbent survival* is an indicator coded 1 if the incumbent retains the prime ministership after an election. In a very strict sense, electoral accountability requires that an incumbent that satisfies a majority of voters retains her ability to lead a new government. Because of the vagaries of coalition building in parliamentary regimes, however, many incumbents manage to retain control of the prime ministership even after losing an important amount of electoral support. Consequently, the second outcome we inspect is *incumbent vote share*, which is simply the percentage of votes that the party of the incumbent prime minister receives in the election immediately following a spell in power.³¹

Our key predictors are *Economic growth* — the annual rate of economic growth of a country's per capita gross domestic product, from the World Bank's World Development Indicators (WDI) — and *Economic openness*, for which we use two alternative indicators: *capital openness* (we use the Chinn-Ito index based on the IMF AREAR indicators of openness of an economy to capital flows) and *trade openness* (the logarithm of the ratio of exports plus imports over GDP, from the WDI). The timing of our measurement of all economic

³¹ Data on vote shares were taken from Parties and Elections in Europe online dataset

predictors depends on the exact day in which a government was dissolved. For governments dissolved before July 1, the relevant economic data are from the previous year; we use same-year values of economic data for governments dissolved after July 1. We include interactions between *economic growth* and the two *openness* indicators in order to capture the kind of effects anticipated by recent literature on globalization and clarity of responsibility.

Our specifications are purposefully sparse in terms of control covariates, mostly because we already include country fixed effects in all of our specifications. Fixed effects allow us to control for potential country-specific factors that might affect the electoral performance of cabinets within the country and that may also have a bearing on levels of openness and rates of economic growth; in other words, quantities of interest are only identified by within-country variation. Additionally, we control for the political strength of the prime minister by including the incumbent's vote share in the election that led to her current spell in power. To block the potential confounding effect of a devastating economic crisis, which would reduce both economic growth and the government's reelection chances, we also present specifications that include a dummy indicator coded 1 if the country underwent a sovereign-debt, banking, or currency crisis.³² We lose a large number of observations because this variable is available only for the period between 1970 and 2007; consequently, our specifications alternate between inclusion and exclusion of this control. Summary statistics for all variables appear in the Appendix.

³² This information is from Laeven and Valencia (2008); we follow the same coding decision we used for economic growth, trade and capital openness.

Table 8. OLS estimates of the effect of openness and growth on incumbent vote share (linear regression model, includes country fixed effects)

	Incumbent vote share					
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
GDP growth	1.310*** (0.468)	1.381** (0.606)	1.254** (0.583)	1.449*** (0.477)	1.351*** (0.493)	2.645*** (0.746)
Trade openness	1.484 (2.211)	2.929 (3.663)	1.357 (2.618)			
Capital openness				3.291 (2.441)	2.929 (3.104)	12.013*** (3.933)
Crisis in term		6.572** (3.244)			8.270** (3.433)	
Previous PM vote share	0.637*** (0.058)	0.620*** (0.060)	0.575*** (0.075)	0.598*** (0.068)	0.580*** (0.070)	0.576*** (0.090)
Growth x Trade	-1.136** (0.561)	-0.824 (0.782)	-1.027 (0.681)			
Growth x Capital				-1.235** (0.565)	-0.503 (0.761)	-2.571*** (0.834)
N	270	230	186	232	194	158
Countries	29	29	29	28	28	28
Governments	4-19	2-18	3-15	4-16	2-15	2-13
Adj. R-squared	0.314	0.338	0.253	0.258	0.288	0.212

*** p < .01; ** p < .05; * p < .1

Table 8 presents least-squares estimates of the effects of economic growth and trade openness (Models 1 to 3) or capital openness (Models 4 to 6) on the incumbent's vote share. All models include country fixed effects and a control for the incumbent's previous vote share. In addition, Models 2 and 5 include a control for economic crisis (but limit the size of the sample to cabinets observed in the years 1970 to 2007), and Models 3 and 6 eliminate

governments that were followed by an “opportunistic” election.³³ These models help us determine whether levels of openness and rates of economic growth correlate with the electoral chances of incumbent governments, after controlling for their previous levels of support and for country-specific characteristics.

Across different specifications, we observe positive estimates of the main effect of *GDP growth*, which at first sight is consistent with the findings from our survey experiments. However, because our specifications include interactions with *trade openness* (Models 1 to 3) and *capital openness* (Models 4 to 6), assessing the marginal effect of *GDP growth* on *incumbent vote share* requires more effort. Table 9 shows expected incumbent vote shares at combinations of high/low economic growth and high/low trade openness, where low and high correspond to the 25th and 75th sample percentiles of these variables and control covariates are held at median sample levels (the expected incumbent vote shares are based on the coefficients of Models 2 and 5). As Table 9 suggests, once we consider the interaction with *trade* or *capital openness* the effect of growth is substantively small. For example, under conditions of low trade openness, an incumbent that presides over a rate of economic growth of about 1.19% (25th sample percentile) can expect a vote share of about 24.8 ± 3.05 during the next electoral round. In contrast, if the government presides over a rate of economic growth of 4.35% (75th sample percentile), the expected vote share increases almost 3 percentage points to about 27.65 ± 3.37 . This difference is statistically significant at the 99%

³³ We follow Schleiter and Tavits (2014), who consider elections held within a month of the expiry of a government’s term to be regular and those held before this threshold to be opportunistic. We gratefully acknowledge access to their classification of opportunistic elections.

confidence level, but implies an increase in electoral performance that, at about one-third of one standard deviation of the sample distribution of vote shares, is of very small magnitude. Note as well that, across low and high levels of economic openness, expected incumbent vote shares remain basically unchanged, as the cross-column differences in Table 9 are not statistically significant at commonly-accepted confidence levels. This finding is also consistent with the results of our survey experiments, where frames for open and closed economies had no discernible effect on the willingness of respondents to attribute responsibility to politicians.

Table 9. Expected incumbent vote shares under alternative configurations of economic growth and openness

	Low trade openness	High trade openness	Low capital openness	High capital openness
Low Growth	24.79 (3.05)	25.54 (3.89)	23.15 (3.02)	24.57 (3.95)
High Growth	27.65 (3.37)	27.47 (3.74)	26.8 (3.38)	27.32 (3.73)

Table 10 collects information about the association between *growth* and *openness*, on the one hand, and *incumbent survival*, on the other. Recall that the outcome is coded positively if the prime minister’s party retains the position (almost always under the same individual), so we would expect the overall effects of growth and openness to be similar to those exposed in Table 8, where the outcome was the incumbent’s *vote share* — to put it simply, incumbent’s that enjoy an increase in their vote share should also be more likely to survive. At first sight, our estimates for economic growth betray this expectation, as the main coefficients all have negative signs but are for the most part not statistically distinguishable from 0 at conventional levels (only in Model 8 do we see a statistically significant coefficient). As before, we need to incorporate as well potential interactive effects in order to

comment more precisely on a party's chances of losing the prime ministership under different conditions.

Table 10. ML estimates of the effect of openness and growth on Incumbent survival (probit regression model, includes country fixed effects)

	Incumbent survival					
	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12
GDP growth	0.085 (0.083)	0.215* (0.117)	0.014 (0.105)	0.122 (0.091)	0.097 (0.102)	0.297 (0.189)
Trade openness	-0.248 (0.386)	0.615 (0.688)	-0.537 (0.463)			
Capital openness				0.558 (0.448)	0.526 (0.581)	2.174** (0.901)
Crisis in term		0.138 (0.681)			0.302 (0.701)	
Previous PM vote share	0.022** (0.011)	0.018 (0.012)	0.022* (0.013)	0.029** (0.012)	0.024* (0.013)	0.034** (0.016)
Growth x Trade	-0.061 (0.099)	-0.181 (0.149)	0.024 (0.125)			
Growth x Capital				-0.117 (0.108)	-0.034 (0.156)	-0.285 (0.203)
N	270	232	186	232	196	158
Countries	29	29	29	28	28	28
Governments						
Log-likelihood	-157.6 (d.f. 33)	-133.3 (d.f. 34)	-99.8 (d.f. 33)	-134.1 (d.f. 32)	-111.8 (d.f. 33)	-79.9 (d.f. 32)

*** p < .01; ** p < .05; * p < .1

We incorporate an illustration of all potential interactive effects in Table 11, which suggests that the probability that a party will keep the prime ministership is 0.89 under conditions of high economic growth and low trade openness, and that it drops to 0.83 when economic growth is low and trade openness remains low as well (these results are based on

coefficients from Model 8, with other covariates held constant at median sample levels, and are statistically significant at the 99% confidence level). Results based on inclusion of *capital openness* as opposed to *trade openness* appear to be consistent with this story, though the difference in the probability of election across economic growth scenarios is not statistically significant at conventional levels. The appearance of improved odds of retaining the prime ministership under higher levels of capital openness is also illusory, as the difference in probabilities across capital openness scenarios is not statistically significant. The same goes for potential cross-column differences. As in Table 9, the odds of retaining the prime ministership are basically identical across high and low levels of trade and capital openness. Again, this is consistent with the finding in our survey experiments that individuals attribute responsibility for the economy to politicians regardless of economic openness.

Table 11. Expected probability of retaining the position of Prime Minister under alternative configurations of economic growth and openness

	Low trade openness	High trade openness	Low capital openness	High capital openness
Low growth	0.83 (0.13)	0.85 (0.14)	0.85 (0.12)	0.88 (0.13)
High growth	0.89 (0.1)	0.88 (0.12)	0.89 (0.11)	0.92 (0.10)

5. Discussion

The results of our survey experiments and observational study are not consistent with our original theoretical expectations, either those directly following from the “globalization blurs clarity of responsibility” literature (Hypothesis 1) or from our own theoretical expectation that politicians would be able to spin economic growth under globalization as a consequence of their superior managerial know-how (Hypothesis 2). We find no direct impact of

“globalization” on the propensity of voters to assign responsibility to politicians in our survey, nor do we find substantively important effects of globalization on the odds of political survival for incumbent governments. We believe that this is an important result that casts doubt on the notion that globalization attenuates responsibility attribution.

One potential concern is that these findings could be an artifact of a weak treatment or of how voters within the United States are already conditioned to think of economic performance as being driven by domestic factors. We do note, however, that almost 25% of respondents attribute primary responsibility for economic performance to global market forces. Our additional survey in Canada finds similar results, with 42% of respondents attributing primary responsibility to global market forces. These baseline figures do not change drastically even as we vary exposure of our respondents to alternative low/high globalization frames.

Our key finding, which was *not* pre-registered prior to our first survey experiment, is the asymmetric impact of economic growth on responsibility attribution, which is consistent with Hypothesis 3 (grievance asymmetry). Politicians receive at most a minimal boost in credit with high levels of economic growth while, in very sharp contrast, low levels of growth are devastating for their future election prospects. Our cross-national study of electoral outcomes also produces evidence that globalization has little, if any, impact on the political survival for parties and executives. These two findings, taken together, suggest that if there are any mechanisms linking globalization to elections they might not operate through a straightforward logic of responsibility attribution.

When we take a panoramic look at the findings in this paper, we see evidence that presents a cohesive picture about voters. This picture confirms the most basic tenet of the literature on economic voting, namely, that voters take into account the general status of the

economy in deciding whether to support the incumbent or not. The picture does not sit very well with recent literature on economic openness and obfuscation of responsibility. To see why, consider what we have uncovered. First, survey respondents are quick to blame incumbent politicians for low economic growth but withhold credit in good economic times, and this happens regardless of the level of openness that we use to frame our questions.

Second, as we move on to the observational part of our study we find that the vote shares of prime minister parties tend to fall under scenarios of low economic growth. Though the effect is statistically significant, it is admittedly small in substantive terms, as it only adds up to a difference of a few percentage points. This means that the vast numbers of respondents that stand ready to blame incumbent politicians are not always willing to vote against them; again, this is not entirely surprising, as drivers of vote choice include a number of factors beyond economic outcomes. Finally, we detect very small differences in the probabilities that an incumbent party will return to power under alternative growth scenarios. In fact, economic growth appears to increase very minimally the chances of retaining the prime ministership, but only in countries with relatively low levels of trade and capital openness. This is about the only shred of evidence we can find that is consistent with an “obfuscation of responsibility” story, and even here the evidence is suggestive at best, since increases in the probability of survival are fairly small.

As we noted in Section 3, we pre-registered our hypotheses and the design of our survey experiment. While our observational data and survey experiments point in directions different than those we had originally expected, our commitment to research transparency provides us with some direction on where to go with this research agenda in the future. Of particular importance to us is the revealed asymmetric disposition of voters to evaluate politicians. Why are our respondents quick to assign blame to politicians for poor economic

results but slow to award them credit for good outcomes? Is this simply an artifact of the current anti-establishment animus that seems to have gripped electorates around the world or is it an example of Tversky and Kahneman's "loss aversion" instinct at play? Or are voters truly making radically different inferences about the managerial competence of incumbents depending on economic performance? Is this because they understand the economic stewardship role of politicians as basically a responsibility "not to mess things up"? We expect future research to corroborate whether the disposition known as grievance asymmetry is equally strong regardless of the degree of economic openness of a country.

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Appendix A: The American Panel Survey (TAPS) Survey 1

Notes:

Randomize into five equally sized groups of respondents. For the treatment groups (Blocks 1-4), each respondent will receive five questions per block. For the control group (Block 5) respondents will receive 3 questions. Within each question, randomize the order of answers for each questions. “Don’t know” answers should be fixed as the last answer for each question.

BLOCK 1: DOMESTIC/High Growth

Question 1: Retrospective Credit and Blame

Economic growth can be affected by government policy and the decisions of companies. Some experts have noted that over the past decades US economic growth has been relatively fast compared to the US historical average. How much credit do you give government policy makers for this economic growth.

1. A great deal of credit
2. Some credit
3. Very little credit
4. No credit
5. Don't know

[Reverse order answers 1-4]

Question 2: Credit and Blame Manipulation Check

In the previous question we asked you about US economic growth. According to this question, was growth relatively slow or relatively fast compared to the historical average?

1. Relatively fast
2. Relatively slow
3. Don't remember

[Reverse order 1-2]

Question 3: Prospective Credit and Blame

Economic growth can be affected by government policy and the decisions of companies. If the US economy has recovered and is growing at a fast rate in 2016, how much credit do you give policy makers for this economic growth.

1. A great deal of credit
2. Some credit
3. Very little credit
4. No credit
5. Don't know

[Randomly reverse order 1-4]

Question 4: Prospective Voting Intentions

Economic growth can be affected by government policy and the decisions of companies. If the US economy has recovered and is growing at a fast rate in 2016, how likely are you to vote for the Democratic Presidential candidate?

1. Very likely
2. Likely
3. Undecided
5. Unlikely
5. Very Unlikely

[Reverse order 1-5]

Question 5: Voting Intention Manipulation Check

In the previous two questions we asked you about future US economic growth. According to this question, was the economy in recovery (high growth) or in recession (low growth)?

1. Recovery (High Growth)
2. Recession (Low Growth)
3. Don't remember

[Reverse order 1-2]

BLOCK 2: DOMESTIC/Low Growth

Question 1: Retrospective Credit and Blame

Economic growth can be affected by government policy and the decisions of companies. Some experts have noted that over the past decades US economic growth has been relatively slow compared to the US historical average. How much blame do you place on policy makers for this economic growth.

1. A great deal of blame
2. Some blame
3. Very little blame
4. No blame
5. Don't know

[Reverse order 1-4]

Question 2: Credit and Blame Manipulation Check

In the previous question we asked you about US economic growth. According to this question, was growth relatively slow or relatively fast compared to the historical average?

1. Relatively fast
2. Relatively slow
3. Don't remember

[Reverse order 1-2]

Question 3: Prospective Credit and Blame

Economic growth can be affected by government policy and the decisions of companies. If the US economy is in recession and is growing at a slow rate in 2016, how much blame would you place on policy makers for this economic growth.

1. A great deal of blame
2. Some blame
3. Very little blame
4. No blame
5. Don't know

[Reverse order 1-4]

Question 4: Prospective Voting Intentions

Economic growth can be affected by government policy and the decisions of companies. If the US economy is in recession and is growing at a slow rate in 2016, how likely are you to vote for the Democratic Presidential candidate?

1. Very likely
2. Likely
3. Undecided
5. Unlikely
5. Very Unlikely

[Reverse order 1-5]

Question 5: Voting Intention Manipulation Check

In the previous two questions we asked you about future US economic growth. According to this question, was the economy in recovery (high growth) or in recession (low growth)?

1. Recovery (High Growth)
2. Recession (Low Growth)
3. Don't remember

[Reverse order 1-2]

BLOCK 3: International/High Growth

Question 1: Retrospective Credit and Blame

Economic growth can be affected by government policy, the decisions of companies and global market forces. Some experts have noted that over the past decades US economic growth has been relatively fast compared to the US historical average. How much credit do you give policy makers for this economic growth.

1. A great deal of credit
2. Some credit
3. Very little credit
4. No credit
5. Don't know

[Reverse order answers 1-4]

Question 2: Credit and Blame Manipulation Check

In the previous question we asked you about US economic growth. According to this question, was growth relatively slow or relatively fast compared to the historical average?

1. Relatively fast
2. Relatively slow
3. Don't remember

[Reverse order 1-2]

Question 3: Prospective Credit and Blame

Economic growth can be affected by government policy and the decisions of companies and global market forces. If the US economy has recovered and is growing at a fast rate in 2016, how much credit would you give to policy makers for this economic growth?

1. A great deal of credit
2. Some credit
3. Very little credit
4. No credit
5. Don't know

[Reverse order 1-4]

Question 4: Prospective Voting Intentions

Economic growth can be affected by government policy, the decisions of companies and global market forces. If the US economy has recovered and is growing at a fast rate in 2016, how likely are you to vote for the Democratic Presidential candidate?

1. Very likely
2. Likely
3. Undecided
5. Unlikely
5. Very Unlikely

[Reverse order 1-5]

Question 5: Voting Intention Manipulation Check

In the previous question we asked you about future US economic growth. According to this question, was the economy in recovery (high growth) or in recession (low growth)?

1. Recovery (High Growth)
2. Recession (Low Growth)
3. Don't remember

[Reverse order 1-2]

BLOCK 4: International/Low Growth

Question 1: Retrospective Credit and Blame

Economic growth can be affected by government policy, the decisions of companies and global market forces. Some experts have noted that over the past decades US economic growth has been relatively slow compared to the US historical average. How much blame do you place on policy makers for this economic growth.

1. A great deal of blame
2. Some blame
3. Very little blame
4. No blame
5. Don't know

[Reverse order 1-4]

Question 2: Credit and Blame Manipulation Check

In the previous question we asked you about US economic growth. According to this question, was growth relatively slow or relatively fast compared to the historical average?

1. Relatively fast
2. Relatively slow
3. Don't remember

[Reverse order 1-2]

Question 3: Prospective Credit and Blame

Economic growth can be affected by government policy and the decisions of companies and global market forces. If the US economy is in recession and is growing at a slow rate in 2016, how much blame would you place on policy makers for this economic growth?

1. A great deal of blame
2. Some blame
3. Very little blame
4. No blame
5. Don't know

[Reverse order 1-4]

Question 4: Prospective Voting Intentions

Economic growth can be affected by government policy, the decisions of companies and global market forces. If the US economy is in recession and is growing at a slow rate in 2016, how likely are you to vote for the Democratic Presidential candidate?

1. Very likely
2. Likely
3. Undecided
5. Unlikely
5. Very Unlikely

[Reverse order 1-5]

Question 5: Voting Intention Manipulation Check

In the previous question we asked you about future US economic growth. According to this question, was the economy in recovery (high growth) or in recession (low growth)?

1. Recovery (High Growth)
2. Recession (Low Growth)
3. Don't remember

[Reverse order 1-2]

Block 5: Control

How much blame or credit do you place on policy makers for US economic growth in past decades?

1. A great deal of blame or credit
2. Some blame or credit
3. Very little blame or credit
4. No blame or credit
5. Don't know

[Reverse order 1-4]

How much blame or credit would you place on US policy makers for economic growth in 2016?

1. A great deal of blame or credit
2. Some blame or credit
3. Very little blame or credit
4. No blame or credit
5. Don't know

[Reverse order 1-4]

How likely are you to vote for the Democratic Presidential candidate in 2016?

1. Very likely
2. Likely
3. Undecided
5. Unlikely
5. Very Unlikely

[Reverse order 1-5]

Appendix B: The American Panel Survey (TAPS) Survey 2

Notes:

To save space we only present the first treatment. Randomize into four equally sized groups of respondents. Our complete survey is available at egap.org.

BLOCK 1B: DOMESTIC/High Growth

Question 1b: Retrospective Credit and Blame

We are going to ask you a few questions about the US economy. As you know, many factors shape whether the U.S. economy grows fast or slow. These factors include the policy choices that politicians make and the investment choices of U.S. companies.

As we mentioned before, economic growth can be affected by government policy and the decisions of U.S. companies. While the recent recession has led to a period of very poor economic performance, some experts have noted that U.S. economic growth over the past few decades has been relatively slow compared to the U.S. historical average.

Who is most responsible for the weak economic performance of the United States over the past few decades?

1. business people
2. U.S. politicians
3. global market forces
4. other [Fill in]
5. don't know

Question 2b: Retrospective Credit and Blame Manipulation Check

In the previous question we asked you about U.S. economic growth in recent decades.

According to that question, was growth relatively slow or relatively fast compared to the U.S. historical average?

1. relatively fast growth
2. relatively slow growth
3. don't remember

Question 3b: Prospective Credit and Blame

Projections on how the U.S. economy will fair over the next ten years vary dramatically. Some experts think the U.S. could experience an unprecedented period of fast growth due to government policy and decisions of U.S. companies.

If the U.S. experiences slow growth, who do you think would be most responsible for the weak economic performance?

1. business people

2. U.S. politicians
3. global market forces
4. other: [textbox]
5. don't know

Question 4b: Prospective Credit and Blame Manipulation Check

In the previous question we asked you about predictions of future U.S. economic growth. According to that question, were experts predicting fast or slow growth?

1. relatively fast growth
2. relatively slow growth
3. don't remember

Appendix C: The Canadian Local Parliament Survey

Notes:

To save space we only present the first treatment. Randomize into four equally sized groups of respondents. Our complete survey is available at egap.org.

BLOCK 1C: DOMESTIC/High Growth

Treatment A, Display

We are going to ask you a few questions about the Canadian economy. As you know, many factors shape whether the Canadian economy grows fast or slow. These factors include the policy choices that politicians make and the investment choices of Canadian companies.

Treatment A, Question 1

As we mentioned before, economic growth can be affected by government policy and the decisions of Canadian companies. While the recent recession has led to a period of very poor economic performance, some experts have noted that Canadian economic growth over the past few decades has been relatively fast compared to Canada's historical average.

Who is most responsible for the strong economic performance of Canada over the past few decades?

[randomize responses 1-3]

1. business people
2. Canadian politicians
3. global market forces
4. other: [textbox]
5. don't know

Appendix D: Summary statistics for observational data

Statistic	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Incumbent vote share	349	34.32	10.86	8.6	66.3
Incumbent vote share (lagged)	347	31.75	11.56	4.9	52.3
Incumbent survival	347	0.56	0.50	0	1
Trade openness	279	0.81	0.42	0.25	3.58
Capital openness	235	0.71	0.32	0	1
GDP per capita growth	272	2.53	3.34	-12.9	13.1
Economic crisis	239	0.03	0.17	0	1
Opportunistic election	349	0.33	0.47	0	1