

# Election Quality and Public Confidence in Political Institutions: Revisiting the Orange Revolution<sup>1</sup>

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## **Abstract**

How does election quality influence public confidence in political institutions? The conventional wisdom assumes that electoral manipulation reduces citizen confidence in government, but the link between election quality and voter attitudes towards political institutions has not yet been fully investigated, in part because of the difficulty in separating the effects of winning or losing an election from more general concerns about election quality. Using individual survey data collected before and after the 2004 presidential election cycle in Ukraine, we evaluate changes in voter confidence in electoral practices, political institutions, and democracy. We find that partisanship is an important and often neglected variable in the relationship between electoral quality and voter confidence. Although national trends match the conventional wisdom, subnational variation suggests important partisan differences throughout the electoral cycle, and direct exposure to fraud matters far less than anticipated.

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## Introduction

How does the quality of an election influence public confidence in political institutions? Recent scholarship on electoral integrity highlights the potential damaging effects of contentious or fraudulent elections, including reduced legitimacy and trust in elected officials, political institutions, and support for democracy (Birch, 2008; Norris, 2013a). A number of studies have further linked perceptions of electoral manipulation to decreased voter turnout (Birch, 2010; Carreras & İrepoğlu, 2013; Simpser, 2013). As Birch states, “confidence in electoral processes is arguably a precondition for popular support for the other institutions of representative systems” (2008, p. 305). Yet the impact of election quality on citizen confidence in political institutions and general notions of democracy has yet to be empirically solidified (Norris 2013b). Moreover, any potentially positive impact on voter confidence following a high quality election—or the peaceful resolution of a contentious election—has received little empirical attention.

Using individual-level survey data collected before and after the 2004 presidential election in Ukraine, we evaluate changes in voter confidence regarding electoral practices, political institutions, and democracy. We focus on data from the 2004 Ukraine election rather than more recent events because they provide a unique opportunity to hold many variables constant while gauging citizen attitudes toward election events that varied significantly in perceived quality. Following a second round run-off widely considered fraudulent,<sup>2</sup> upwards of a million people engaged in mass non-violent demonstrations, now known as the Orange Revolution. After nearly two weeks of widespread protests, behind-the-scenes negotiations, and

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<sup>2</sup> See OSCE/ODIHR (2005). Subsequent academic studies have used election forensics to show that the results were fraudulent, see Clem & Craumer (2005) and Wilson (2005).

a lengthy court hearing, the Ukrainian Supreme Court officially invalidated the results and called for a re-run of the second round. In the re-run of the second round (which we also refer to as the third round), heralded by the international community as free and fair, opposition candidate Viktor Yushchenko defeated Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich, reversing the second round results. In surveys conducted by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), voters were asked to rate their confidence in electoral practices and political institutions before and after both the low quality round two and high quality round three elections. Thus, the context of this single election presents a unique opportunity to evaluate how vastly different levels of electoral quality impact public perceptions of democratic institutions.

On the aggregate level, the survey data are consistent with the conventional wisdom about election manipulation and public opinion: On average, Ukrainian voters exhibit much lower confidence in election quality following the second round. Additionally, following the successful resolution of the Orange Revolution, the data suggest a massive jump in confidence in electoral institutions. This increased confidence further extends to a range of government institutions, including improved assessments for the parliament, the military, and other government ministries. After the Orange Revolution, Ukrainians were also more likely to say that they considered Ukraine a democracy. “We are free. The old era is over. We are a new country now,” Yushchenko declared after winning the third round election (Karatnycky, 2005). The international community shared in the euphoria, hailing the Orange Revolution as “a dramatic case of democratic breakthrough and maybe the most important instance of democratic breakthrough in this decade” (McFaul, 2007, p. 48).

Yet the aggregate data obscure important subnational variation, which complicates this optimistic conclusion, and may have foreshadowed the persistent polarization that continues to

threaten democracy in Ukraine today. We find that the increases in electoral and institutional confidence following the end of the 2004 election cycle are nearly entirely driven by changes in attitudes within the electoral districts (or *oblasts*) that voted for Yushchenko, the ultimate winner of the presidency. Overall, voters in Yanukovych-dominant *oblasts* registered little change in confidence in electoral institutions throughout the turbulent 2004 electoral cycle: their attitudes toward institutions and democracy did not increase dramatically when their candidate won, and they did not decrease dramatically when their candidate lost. Thus, while the aggregate results fall in line with normative and theoretical predictions from the literature, our analysis suggests that partisanship seems to be an important and often neglected variable in assessments of electoral quality and confidence in political institutions. Our findings thus contribute to the literature on winner and loser effects linking citizen support of the winning or losing candidate to a number of variables including political trust, satisfaction with democracy, support for the political system, and attitudes about its effectiveness.

The survey data also allow us to test whether personal exposure to fraud during the election changes voter confidence. We predicted that having personal exposure to fraud would significantly decrease voter confidence in electoral practices and trust in other political institutions relative to voters who did not experience fraud. Yet remarkably, voters directly exposed to fraud are barely distinguishable from the other voters in their districts. In short, controlling for all other demographic factors, including exposure to fraud, Yushchenko districts experienced deep discontent following the second round and jubilation after the third; Yanukovych districts showed little change in attitudes between rounds despite the dramatic change in their favored candidate's electoral fortunes.

Our findings have a number of implications for studies that link voter confidence with electoral quality and subsequent democratization and the emerging research agenda on electoral integrity (Norris, 2013b). If, as our results suggest, questions of democratic legitimacy and confidence in political institutions are often filtered through the lens of partisanship, the real test of democracy may not be improvements in electoral conduct but in acceptance of the process and the potential for alternation (Moehler & Lindberg, 2009; Przeworski, 2005). Further, comparative cross national assessments of the impact of election quality on voter confidence may be misleading if they fail to take partisan influences into account.

Finally, our findings underscore the entrenched regional polarization that continues to threaten democracy in Ukraine today. Our study thus contributes to the growing body of research reconsidering the Orange Revolution. Rather than the “democratic breakthrough of the decade,” more recent studies using data from additional public opinion surveys and focus group interviews present a much more diverse, dubious and polarized picture of the Ukrainian population than the original pro-democratization “People Power” narrative suggested (Beissinger, 2013; White & McAllister, 2009). Indeed, as Darden and Way (2014) conclude: “If 20 years of scholarship and surveys teach us one thing it is that Ukraine is a country that is deeply divided on virtually every issue pertaining to relations with Russia or the West, with very deep historic divisions that continue to bear on contemporary politics.” Our survey data suggests that these divisions also condition how election quality changes (or doesn’t change) attitudes toward political institutions.

Our paper proceeds as follows. After briefly examining the existing scholarship on voter confidence, partisanship, and the consequences of election fraud on democratization, we provide an overview of the 2004 presidential election in Ukraine. Building on the existing literature, we

introduce several hypotheses about expected changes in voter confidence based on changes in the quality of the election, partisan affiliation, and personal exposure to fraud. After describing the results in detail we discuss the implications for these findings for both our revised assessment of the Orange Revolution and broader literature on contentious elections and electoral manipulation.

### **Voter Confidence and Contentious Elections**

Voter confidence in the electoral process is arguably a key aspect of democratic legitimacy (R. Michael Alvarez, Hall, & Llewellyn, 2007; R. Michael Alvarez, Hall, & Llewellyn, 2008; Birch, 2008; Llewellyn, Hall, & Alvarez, 2008). Elections provide an opportunity not only for citizens to participate in the government through electing representatives, but also serve to build trust in democratic institutions and democracy in general (Banducci & Karp, 2003). Indeed, free and fair elections are seen as an institutional prerequisite for democracy (Dahl, 1971; Svensson & Elklit, 1997). Free and fair multiparty elections are considered especially important for transitional countries emerging from civil war or authoritarian rule as a foundational first step toward democratization. Yet as elections have spread to most countries in the world, the quality of elections is uneven, and a vibrant area of research continues to focus on the consequences of electoralism for democracy. Ample literature suggests that electoral manipulation or misconduct is the rule, rather than the exception (e.g. Birch, 2010, 2011; Hyde, 2011; Norris, 2014).

Many scholars have pointed to the negative consequences when voters have low levels of confidence in elections. Disillusionment in election quality is linked to lower voter participation in a number of country and regional case studies (e.g., Birch, 2008; Bratton & Walle, 1997; Simpser, 2012) as well as within cross-national analyses (Birch, 2010; Carreras & İrepoğlu,

2013; Simpser, 2013). In extreme cases, citizen discontent over fraudulent elections spurred mass protests (e.g. Serbia 2000, Ukraine 2004, Iran 2009) and at times sparked violent riots, causing hundreds of deaths (e.g. Kenya 2008, Nigeria 2011) (Beaulieu, 2014; Bunce & Wolchik, 2011; Hyde & Marinov, 2011; Meirowitz & Tucker, 2013; Tucker, 2007).

However, other scholars have argued that holding repeated elections, even if they fall short of free and fair, is most critical for democratization (Gandhi & Lust-Okar, 2009; Lindberg, 2006). From this perspective, regardless of election quality, repeated elections that allow for alternation of power is a key to democratic consolidation, (i.e. Huntington's (1991) two-turnover rule). Thus, democratization depends on the acceptance of the election by the losing candidate and their supporters (Anderson, Blais, Bowler, Donovan, & Listhaug, 2005; Moehler & Lindberg, 2009; Przeworski, 1991, 2005).

Indeed, what may matter for voter confidence in elections and democratic institutions may not depend on the quality of the election, but on their partisan affiliation and connection to the election outcome. In fact, winner and loser effects have been widely studied using survey data, and the emerging consensus is that across a variety of institutional contexts, citizen support for an election winner or loser is likely to influence a number of variables, including political trust, satisfaction with democracy, support for the political system, and attitudes about the effectiveness of the political system (Anderson et al., 2005; Anderson & Guillory, 1997; Anderson & LoTempio, 2002; Anderson & Tverdova, 2001; Banducci & Karp, 2003; Blais & Gélinau, 2007; Esaiasson, 2011; Jou, 2009; Maldonado & Seligson, 2013; S. Singh, Karakoç, & Blais, 2012). Many of these effects can be conditional on institutional or individual level variables, such as the electoral system, government performance more generally, support for other candidates, or the size of the vote margin (Anderson & Guillory, 1997; Howell & Justwan,

2013; Rose & Mishler, 2009; Singh, 2013; Singh, Karakoç, & Blais, 2012). Although a blunt interpretation on the literature on winner and loser effects suggests that electoral losers should have less confidence in institutions, and winners should have increased confidence, these effects are often difficult to separate out from other partisan influences, as well as overall assessments of electoral quality. And, as our findings suggest, winner and loser effects may not influence all parties equally.

### **The Orange Revolution Revisited**

The 2004 Presidential elections in Ukraine took place over three rounds between October 31 and December 26, 2004. The Ukrainian state, led by outgoing President Leonid Kuchma, backed Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich with ample administrative, institutional, and financial resources (Kuzio, 2005). Yet in the weeks prior to the election, opposition candidate Viktor Yushchenko emerged as the leading contender, despite scant media coverage and the continual harassment of his supporters during campaign rallies. In a dramatic turn a month before the October election, Yushchenko suspiciously experienced nearly fatal ricin poisoning. After treatment in Austria, he returned to the campaign trail with an epidural of morphine in his back and his skin visibly scarred.

The first round of the election occurred on October 31, 2004. Yushchenko and Yanukovich finished as the top two out of 25 candidates, requiring a run-off election. The second round of the election—the run-off—occurred on November 21, 2004. Instant exit polls conducted by civil society groups projected a clear Yushchenko victory; three days later the Central Election Commission announced Yanukovich as the official winner. Over one million people took to the streets, participating in non-violent demonstrations across the country, most notably in Maidan, Kyiv's Independence Square.

Throughout the country, “Orange Revolution” protesters remained outside in freezing temperatures day and night. Meanwhile, lawyers from the Yushchenko campaign brought multiple cases of election irregularities to the Supreme Court. After five days of testimony, and nearly two weeks of continual demonstrations, the Supreme Court invalidated the second round election on grounds of systematic electoral manipulation and called for a re-run of the run-off. This third round occurred on December 26, 2004. In what was viewed as a much-improved electoral process (OSCE/ODIHR, 2005), opposition candidate Viktor Yushchenko won the presidency with 52% of the vote.

The 2004 elections in Ukraine attracted global attention, and quickly became a widely cited example of the power of popular protests and electoral revolutions: “Ukraine’s victory over tyranny has been dramatic and inspiring” raved Freedom House Senior Scholar Adrian Karatnycky (2005, p. 52). Michael McFaul (2007, p. 48) hailed the Orange Revolution as a critical moment in Ukrainian history and “maybe the most important instance of democratic breakthrough in the decade.” Freedom House subsequently upgraded Ukraine from “Partly Free” in 2004 to “Free” in 2005. Many scholars utilized the Ukrainian success to further theories on social mobilization and protest, including the use of elections as a focal point (Kuntz & Thompson, 2009; Tucker, 2007), the importance of international diffusion effects through elite and civil society networks (Beissinger, 2011; Bunce & Wolchik, 2006, 2011), as well as direct external assistance (McFaul, 2007).

Others have looked at the Orange Revolution not as a victory of democracy but as an example of authoritarian breakdown (Way, 2008). Indeed, a handful of recent studies of the Orange Revolution have re-examined the assumption that the protests were driven by a shared desire for democracy. Using micro-level survey data of participants in the protests, Beissinger

(2013) finds the protesters were a diverse negative coalition, united more by a desire to remove the Kuchma regime and its affiliates rather than shared motivations or strong commitment to democratic ideals. Similarly, in focus groups throughout the country, White and McAllister (2009) found distinctly different interpretations of the events, with an “Orange” narrative understanding the Orange Revolution as a genuine mass protest and the “Blue” narrative of a western-funded coup. Prior to the Orange Revolution, numerous scholars of Ukrainian politics often pointed to the persistence of regional polarization since independence, the main political cleavages dividing the country into the Ukrainian-speaking, Europe-looking West and the Russia-speaking, Russia-leaning East (Kubicek, 2000; O’Loughlin, 2001). More recent events, including the 2014 Euromaidan crisis, Russian annexation of Crimea, and ongoing violence in Eastern Ukraine between armed forces and pro-Russian militants have also underscored the dynamic of deep regional polarization.

Indeed, despite the dramatic context of the Orange Revolution, the third round of the election remained remarkably competitive, with Yanukovich still securing 12.8 million votes (44%). As in previous elections, Ukrainian voters split primarily along these regional lines, with *oblasts* in the West and Central part of the country voting for reform-minded Yushchenko and the Southern and Eastern parts of the country voting for Prime Minister Yanukovich, the favored candidate of outgoing President Leonid Kuchma and Russian President Vladimir Putin. Even after the blatant fraud was revealed and massive demonstrations shut down the country not a single *oblast* switched its majority from one candidate to the other in Round 3.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See Clem & Craumer (2005). Very few of the survey respondents in our data changed their votes between the Nov 21 and December 26 elections. 96% of Yushchenko voters and 91% of

## Hypotheses

Building on the literature and exploiting the unique context of Ukraine's 2004 turbulent presidential elections, we test a series of hypotheses about how electoral fraud influences voter confidence in elections and political institutions. Overall, the conventional wisdom suggests that a fraudulent election should lower voter confidence. As discussed above, although the literature argues that disillusionment in the electoral process may result in reduced confidence in other government institutions, there has been little empirical research directly examining the link between changing attitudes about elections and attitudes about other political institutions. On the other side of the spectrum, elections determined to be free and fair (particularly those that follow fraudulent elections) should improve voter confidence in electoral processes, and other government institutions may also be seen in a more favorable light.

**H1: If widespread election fraud occurs, voter confidence in elections and institutions should decrease. Conversely, if elections are viewed as democratic, voter confidence in elections and institutions should increase.**

Although previous studies have focused on national levels of voter confidence, the effects of a fraudulent election on voter confidence are unlikely to be homogenous across the population. Rather, these effects may be conditioned by partisanship. Voters who support the winning candidate or party should be less likely to lose confidence in the electoral process and political institutions, whereas voters who support the losing party or candidate should be more likely to lose confidence in the electoral process and political institutions. Partisan impact may

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Yanukovich voters cast their vote for the same candidate between the disputed second round and “do-over” third round of the election.

be particularly salient in the Ukrainian context, which has deeply rooted polarization. This logic yields our second hypothesis:

**H2: If voters support the winning candidate, they should be more likely to have increased confidence in the electoral process and institutions. Conversely, if voters support the losing candidate, they should be more likely to have decreased confidence in the electoral process and institutions.**

Although we anticipate that winner/loser effects will have a larger effect on voter confidence than overall perceptions of election fraud, we also expect that personal exposure to electoral manipulation may trump partisan influence. In other words, if fraud happens to you or someone you know, it should lower your confidence in elections and institutions regardless of whether the candidate you support wins or loses.

**H3: If supporters of the election winner have personal experience with electoral manipulation, they should have lower confidence in the electoral process and political institutions than other co-supporters. Similarly, if supporters of the election loser have personal experience with electoral manipulation, they should have lower confidence in the electoral process and political institutions than other co-supporters.**

To test these hypotheses, we analyze two public opinion surveys conducted by the firm TNS Ukraine and fielded by IFES.<sup>4</sup> The first survey (TNS Ukraine, 2004) was conducted in October 2004, before the first round election on October 31. The second survey (TNS Ukraine, 2005) was conducted in February 2005, after the cancelled fraudulent second round runoff election (November 21), the subsequent “Orange Revolution” demonstrations, and the peaceful third round re-run of the runoff election (December 26), . For each survey, TNS created a

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<sup>4</sup> These reports are available from IFES or the authors.

separate nationally representative random sample of Ukrainian citizens using a multistage sampling process. First, *oblasts* were grouped into 10 regions using factor and cluster analysis based on economic, social, and cultural indicators.<sup>5</sup> Second, all cities and towns within each region were grouped by population size and then randomly selected to ensure urban areas and rural settlements were representatively selected from each region. Finally, streets, houses, and respondents were selected by the random route method (TNS Ukraine, 2004, pp. 5–8, 2005, pp. 5–8)

Other public opinion surveys were conducted in Ukraine around the 2004 presidential elections and have been utilized in recent research.<sup>6</sup> However, the two IFES surveys are unique because they were conducted before the election cycle and following the resolution of the electoral crisis, used the same survey design and sampling procedures, and asked key questions concerning confidence in electoral and government institutions before and after the elections. This provides us with an opportunity to assess empirically the extent that the turbulent election period shaped respondents opinions.<sup>7</sup> Note that an important limitation of these data is that TNS

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<sup>5</sup> Based on this sampling technique, six oblasts were excluded from the survey. See TNS Ukraine (2004) and TNS Ukraine (2005).

<sup>6</sup> For example, a December 2004 survey conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) and the March 2005 Institute of Sociology at the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences Monitoring survey were analyzed in a recent article on participation in the Orange Revolution Protests (Beissinger, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> TNS has included identical questions on a number of subsequent surveys of Ukraine, including surveys conducted before and after the 2010 Presidential election. The 2010 election, with Yanukovich as the winner, was considered free and fair by international observers. Comparing

did not conduct a survey between the second and third rounds. Rather, assessments of citizen attitudes about the quality of the second round election as well as the third round were asked retrospectively on the February 2005 survey.

[Insert Table 1 About Here]

We compare pre-election attitudes to post-election assessments, measured with the variable *PostSurvey*, which represents 1 for all responses in the February 2005 survey, and 0 for all responses from the October 2004 survey. The full results are confined to the online appendix, with the effects illustrated in figures for ease of comparison. Because we are unable to compare the changes in voter confidence and any winner/loser effects on an individual voter level, it is helpful to find a proxy for each respondent's likely vote choice. In addition, fraudulent election results can complicate the attribution of voice choices, which makes using a proxy measure additionally advantageous. To do so, we exploit the high political polarization of Ukraine's political geography; most *oblasts* in the country overwhelmingly voted for one side or the other. As there were almost no "swing" *oblasts* and little changes in voting patterns between rounds, we assume that if a respondent lives in a Yushchenko-dominant district, the respondent voted for Yushchenko. We then look for change over time, separated by which candidate the *oblast*

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pre and post-election attitudes broadly supported our findings from the 2004/2005 surveys, with improvements in voter confidence overall but results primarily driven by increased confidence in winning *oblasts*, this time Yanukovych *oblasts*. However, due to significant political upheaval between elections, the impact of elections on voter confidence over time would be impossible to disentangle from the larger political context.

ultimately supported.<sup>8</sup> The variable *Yushchenko District* is equal to 1 if Yushchenko won the *oblast*, and equal to 0 if Yanukovych won the *oblast*. Figure 1 illustrates the coding with Yushchenko-dominant *oblasts* in light grey and Yanukovych *oblasts* in dark grey (*oblasts* not included in the survey are white).

[Figure 1 About Here]

Following the three hypotheses outlined above, the analysis focuses on three central explanatory variables. The first, *PostSurvey*, captures the potential effect of the turbulent election in general; it represents average changes in voter confidence from the pre-election survey to the post-election survey questions about the second and third rounds. The second variable, labeled as *YushOblast* and *YanuOblast*, represents the candidate supported by the majority in each of the *oblasts* surveyed, and captures the potential winner/loser effects on voter confidence. This variable is particularly interesting because each candidate “won” and “lost” one of the runoff rounds, with Yushchenko ultimately winning the presidency. Third, *Fraud* represents voters who were personally exposed to electoral malpractice. If a respondent answered “yes” to whether they had been directly threatened or offered a reward to vote in a particular way, or “yes” that they knew someone who was threatened or offered a reward, they were included in this category

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<sup>8</sup> According to the official third round results, of the 20 *oblasts* included in the survey, the vote margin between the winning and losing candidate ranged from 29 – 93%, with a majority of *oblasts* exhibiting a margin >60%. For example, the Luhansk *oblast* in the Eastern part of the country split 91% vs. 6% in favor of Yanukovych, while in Lviv in the West, Yushchenko won the *oblast* 94% to 5% (“Ukraine. Presidential Election 2004 | Electoral Geography 2.0,” n.d.) Similarly, our survey respondents supported the winning candidate with a similar magnitude in each *oblast*.

Each dependent variable is the voter response to the relevant survey questions on confidence in election processes and institutions listed in Table 1. For Questions 1-12, respondents were given a statement (e.g. “Elections in Ukraine are competently administered”) and asked to what extent they agreed with the statement on a four-point scale (strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree). For Questions 13-17, respondents were given a list of government institutions and leaders (e.g. “The Verkhovna Rada” (Ukrainian Parliament)) and asked how much confidence they had in the institution on a four-point scale (A great deal, fair amount, not very much, none at all). There are many ways to analyze data from Likert scales, and little agreement on the best method. Substantively, we are most interested in contrasting agreement with disagreement for each statement based on partisanship and exposure to fraud, and the difference in responses before and after the electoral crisis. Thus we transformed these responses into dichotomous positive and negative values with 1=Agree (Strongly or Somewhat/Great Deal or Fair Amount) and 0=Disagree (Strongly or Somewhat/ Not Very Much or Not at all). Finally, Question 18 asked whether citizens believed Ukraine was a democracy (1=Yes and 0=No).

In the IFES survey conducted in February 2005, after the final rerun of the second-round election, 17% of respondents reported exposure to fraud.<sup>9</sup> Thus, these surveys provide insights into the impact of election fraud on voter confidence at the macro-level (national climate) and at the micro-level (individual experiences). As questions concerning personal exposure to fraud during the election were only included in the post-election surveys, we cannot assess the impact

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<sup>9</sup> Self-reports of experiencing fraud can be biased and can also reflect a misunderstanding of what is considered fraud in a legal sense. However, such data are still important to consider when evaluating public confidence in institutions and elections.

of exposure to direct fraud on voter confidence before the election (e.g., in previous Ukrainian elections) and after the election. Instead, we compare whether voters with personal experience with fraud had more or less confidence relative to their co-partisans following the election

For each survey question we estimate a linear probability model (LPM) with our central explanatory variables (*PostSurvey* and *Fraud*). In order to simplify presentation, we have elected to show the most pared down models possible, and have not included a vector of demographic variables, though these results are available upon request. The coefficients on the central explanatory variables can be interpreted as the change in the probability associated with voters answering the relevant question in a more positive or negative manner. Rather than rely on interaction terms that include each explanatory variable and a measure of whether the *oblast* is Yushchenko or Yanukovych *oblast* (and the interaction between them), we divided the data into two subsets and ran each model for all Yushchenko dominant *oblasts* and for all Yanukovych dominant *oblasts*. This decision yields nearly identical results as the interactive models, but saves several steps in presentation, and in our view, makes the comparison between Yushchenko and Yanukovych *oblasts* more straightforward. We are aware of criticisms of linear probability models (LPMs), but agree with other scholars who argue that they are less problematic than other options in many contexts, and we chose to employ LPMs primarily for ease of presentation, and because our conclusions are based on general trends in positive or negative changes rather than point estimates (e.g., Angrist & Pischke, 2008). Expansions of our empirical analysis could include estimating each response on the Likert scale, or employing alternative models (e.g. ordered logit).

## Results

The first set of analyses focus on changes in respondent attitudes between the pre-election survey and attitudes about the second and third rounds of the election. We focus only on questions related to confidence in institutions and electoral processes that were asked identically in both surveys (Table 1). H1 evaluates the conventional wisdom that voter confidence in elections and institutions are influenced by election quality. These results are shown in Figures 2-4. The point estimates should be interpreted as the change in probability that respondents agree with the indicated statement between the pre-election (October 2004) survey and after the third round of the election (February 2005), with the bars indicating 95% confidence intervals. For reasons of space, more detailed tables are confined to the online appendix.

### *Overall Response to Perceived Climate of Fraud*

As expected in Hypothesis 1, and consistent with the conventional wisdom, when compared to their attitudes before the elections, Ukrainian citizens overall were less likely to express confidence in electoral processes when asked about the widely criticized second round election in November. They were significantly less likely to believe their vote was kept secret (a decrease of 9.1 percentage points), the results were accurate (-14.6 percentage points) or the elections were competently administered (-8.4 percentage points). Ukrainians were particularly disillusioned by the role of domestic and international observers in improving the fairness of elections; following the second round, respondents were 15.9 percentage points less likely to trust domestic observers and 17.5 percentage points less likely to trust international observers. On a positive note, Ukrainians were 10.1 percentage points more likely to agree that there were adequate means of challenging fraud—a likely reflection of the mass civic demonstrations in the weeks following the election and the decision of the Supreme Court to call for a new election.

[Figures 2 and 3 About Here]

Figure 3 continues to look at all respondents, but compares pre-election attitudes with attitudes following the (cleaner) third and final round. Following the successful resolution of the Orange Revolution—the demonstrations remaining non-violent, the Supreme Court exercising significant independence from the state apparatus by invalidating the election, and a vastly improved December 26 re-run of the election—the data suggest a massive jump in confidence in electoral institutions, a significant increase across every question of electoral procedures (Figure 3). Comparing Round 3 attitudes to the pre-election survey, Ukrainian citizens were 19.4 percentage points more likely to agree that elections in the country are competently administered, and an astounding 42.8 percentage points more likely to agree that there were adequate channels to contest violations. In the wake of the Orange Revolution, were 32.8 percentage points more likely to agree that voters had political influence in the country.

As Figure 4 shows, this increased confidence further extends to a range of government institutions. At the national level, higher levels of confidence were expressed after the elections for the Parliament (32.8 percentage points), the Military (22.7 percentage points), and the Cabinet of Ministers (33.5 percentage points). At the local level, there was small positive increase in confidence in local councils (5.9 percentage points) but no change in attitudes toward mayors.<sup>10</sup> Following the peaceful resolution of the electoral crisis, Ukrainians were more likely to say that they considered Ukraine a democracy by 15.8 percentage points.

[Figure 4 About Here]

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<sup>10</sup> The survey conducted after the election in February 2005 did not include questions about confidence in the Supreme Court.

### *Effects by Oblast & Candidate Support*

Charting the changes in voter confidence before and after the election tell an optimistic story, as the resolution of the electoral crisis increased Ukrainian's confidence in their electoral and other political institutions. However, in a country as politically polarized as Ukraine, these results do not hold across the population. To evaluate Hypothesis 2, we now turn to similar comparisons across Yushchenko-dominant *oblasts* and Yanukovych-dominant *oblasts* (Figures 5-7). From these figures, we see that the aggregate increases in electoral and institutional confidence following the end of the 2004 election cycle are nearly entirely driven by changes in attitudes within districts that voted for Yushchenko, the ultimate winner of the presidency. In other words, partially consistent with our second hypothesis, the results demonstrate that “winners” have significantly positive increases in confidence about electoral processes and government institutions. For example, after the third round election, respondents in Yushchenko *oblasts* were 20.5 percentage points more likely to agree that their vote was kept secret compared to the pre-election results. Likewise, respondents in Yushchenko *oblasts* were 45.2 percentage points more confident that the electoral results were accurate, and a 45 percentage point boost in beliefs that elections are competently administered (Figure 6). Following the peaceful mass demonstrations, the likelihood that Yushchenko respondents would agree in their ability to challenge election violations increased a remarkable 62.2 percentage points.

However, there are also some unexpected results that are contrary to our second hypothesis. Although the Yushchenko sides of Figure 5 and Figure 6 demonstrate large increases in confidence in electoral institutions after the final round, results from the Yanukovych *oblasts* illustrate surprising consistency before and after the election, and little change based on winning

(R2) and losing (R3). This is in contrast to the existing literature on winner and loser effects on public opinion.

After the disputed November 21 round in which Yanukovych was named the winner, we expected to see increases in voter confidence among Yanukovych supporters (Figure 5). The results illustrate some significant increases in feelings of safety (10.4 percentage points), information (16.3 percentage points), and ability to challenge violations (17 percentage points). However, even among supporters of the winning candidate, there was no significant change between pre-election opinions and attitudes about the second round for most questions and decreased confidence in the impact of domestic and international election observers. This lukewarm response by Yanukovych oblasts after their victory is surprising, given the large winning and losing effects exhibited by the Yushchenko supporters.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, their attitudes following the final round of the election in which their candidate lost only decreased slightly; respondents in Yanukovych *oblasts* were 13.9 percentage points more likely to disagree that elections were competently administered (compared to a 45 percentage point increase in confidence in Yushchenko districts) (Figure 6). Overall, Yanukovych *oblasts* experienced little change in confidence in electoral institutions throughout the turbulent 2004 electoral cycle.

[Figures 5 and 6 About Here]

Although strong winner and loser effects are well documented in past studies of voter confidence in elections, these studies have only suggested broader implications for confidence in government institutions and democratic engagement. Our analysis demonstrates clear evidence

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<sup>11</sup> It is important to keep in mind here that *PostSurvey* asked questions about attitudes following Round 2 and Round 3 at the same time, and that opinions about the short-lived Yanukovych victory may have been tempered in retrospect.

for winner effects having a positive impact on attitudes about a wide variety of institutions beyond the election, including the military and local and national governing bodies (Figure 7). For example, following the election, Yushchenko *oblasts* were 52.5 percentage points more confident in the Verkhovna Rada (the parliament) and 31.3 percentage points more confident in the military. Moreover, Yushchenko *oblasts* exhibit increased optimism in democracy overall, more likely to believe that voters have influence by 52.5 percentage points and an increase in belief that Ukraine is a democracy (35.4 percentage points).

When we consider institutional confidence (Figure 7), Yanukovych districts exhibit smaller, but significant, increases in confidence in Parliament (7.4 percentage points) and the military (11.9 percentage points), with a decrease in confidence in the Cabinet of Ministers (-9.7 percentage points). Finally, Yanukovych *oblasts* exhibit a slightly positive increase in voter influence (7.4 percentage points) and were less likely to think Ukraine was a democracy (-8.1 percentage points). Although these changes are statistically significant, substantively they are small changes compared to the large increases of confidence within Yushchenko *oblasts*.

Overall, our results confirm Hypothesis 2, demonstrating a strong winner effect on increased confidence in elections and government institutions. The election had little impact on the political attitudes of respondents in Yanukovych *oblasts*. This relative consistency of political attitudes in Yanukovych *oblasts* is especially remarkable considering the turbulence of the campaign and the Orange Revolution.

[Figure 7 About Here]

### *Effects of Fraud*

Finally, we examine whether personal exposure to fraud during the election reduces voter confidence, as reflected in the post-election survey. Because relatively few individuals answered

that they had experienced fraud directly, we combined several measures of electoral malpractice.

The post-election survey asked four questions related to fraud:

- Were you offered a reward to vote a certain way for any round of the 2004 presidential elections?
- Do you know someone else who was offered a reward in exchange for their voting a certain way?
- Were you threatened to vote a certain way for any round of the 2004 presidential elections?
- Do you know someone else who was threatened to vote a certain way in the elections?

If a respondent answered “Yes” to any of these four questions, they were coded as having been exposed to fraud. About one out of six survey respondents encountered fraud at some point during the 2004 election (N=211). We hypothesized that exposure to fraud will decrease voter confidence in elections and institutions, regardless of partisan affiliation, compared to other voters in their *oblast*.

There is some limited support for our third hypothesis in reference to the effect of direct exposure to fraud on Round 2 attitudes about electoral institutions. Regarding the fraudulent second round, voters exposed to fraud were 17.9 percentage points less likely to believe their vote was secret in Yanukovych districts, and 17.7 percentage points less likely in Yushchenko districts (Figure 8). On this question, the effects of direct exposure to fraud occur in both types of districts. However, on a number of other questions, voters with personal experience with fraud are barely distinguishable from their neighbors regarding attitudes about election administration, feeling informed, believing that the results are accurate, or that the media is objective. The decreases in voter confidence if the respondent had witnessed fraud were of somewhat greater

magnitude in Yanukovych districts; this makes sense given that most of the fraud was believed to have occurred in Yanukovych dominant *oblasts*, especially in his home *oblast* of Donetsk (Clem & Craumer, 2005; Wilson, 2005). In addition, voters with personal exposure to fraud in Yanukovych *oblasts* were less likely to view domestic observers, international observers, and political party observers as helpful, which is a result deserving further exploration. Are respondents willing to admit exposure to electoral fraud also more likely to be more approving of fraudulent practices or complicit in bringing them about?

After the Dec 26 re-run of the election, which was considered significantly less fraudulent, our results show no change in confidence levels between those who had encountered fraud during the course of the election and those who did not (Figure 9). With the exception of a decline in confidence that the vote was kept secret in Yanukovych *oblasts*, voters exposed to fraud did not have any significant differences of opinion on every other question related to confidence in electoral institutions compared to other voters in their *oblasts*. Moreover, fraud exposure did not significantly impact levels of institutional confidence (Figure 10).

[Figures 8-10 About Here]

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

Building from previous studies on voter confidence, winning and losing effects, and election fraud, this article brings together these questions using unique survey data from before and after the turbulent 2004 Ukrainian elections in order to examine interactions between these dynamics. The particular context of this election provides a unique opportunity to explore how voter attitudes shift during a rare multi-round election in which the second round election was run again with the same candidates and voters, but a change in the quality of the election and the winner between rounds.

One of the more surprising findings is that while supporters of eventual winner Yushchenko exhibited strong increases in electoral and institutional confidence, Yanukovich supporters, rather than a decline in confidence, demonstrated little to no change in attitudes between the pre-election period and the second round (which their candidate won) and the third round (in which he lost). If winning and losing trumps all else in a period of institutional uncertainty, then the relatively stable attitudes among Yanukovich voters represent something of a puzzle. It suggests that winner and loser effects may vary significantly by party or by candidate, though our results do not speak to why the difference exists. However, it is possible that, even if the “losers” accept the results peacefully in one round (which is sometimes associated with democratization), the supporters of other candidates may react differently in subsequent elections.

Additionally, we were also surprised by the result that personal experience with fraud had little effect on citizen attitudes toward the electoral process or toward other political institutions. Our expectation was that personal exposure to fraud would decrease voter confidence and trump any partisan influences. Although there may be issues with citizen willingness to report direct experience with fraud, the evidence in this study suggests that individual attitudes about the quality of elections and confidence in political institutions are strongly conditioned by election outcomes rather than personal exposure to fraud.

This article takes advantage of the relative rare case in which a contentious election is rerun and the outcome changes. Ideally, the hypotheses in this article will be evaluated across a number of other contexts and overtime. Even so, the findings from Ukraine point to a more general possibility that within transitional countries, the effects of election manipulation have divergent effects on public opinion, and partisan affiliation may matter more than previously

thought. Additionally, personal exposure to fraud may matter far less than more general perceptions of election quality, which are themselves heavily influenced by which candidate or party one supports in an election. To put it starkly, even voters who were directly disenfranchised may perceive an electoral process and a government as legitimate if their favored candidate won. Determining where, when, and why partisanship matters for voter confidence in elections and political institutions is a critical question for countries undergoing democratic consolidation, and an important area for future research.

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**Table 1: Summary of Original Survey Questions and Recoding**

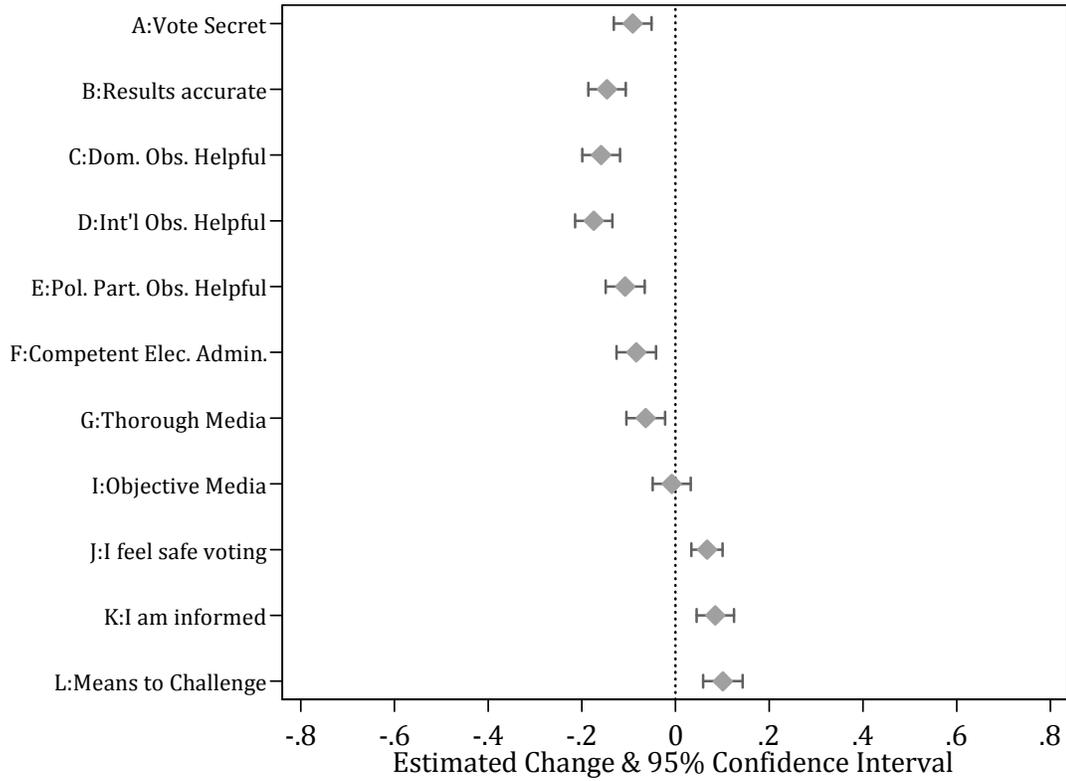
<b>Confidence in Electoral Institutions: To what extent do you agree with the following statements:</b>	<b>Response Coding</b>
A. My vote is kept confidential by election authorities in Ukraine.	<p>1=Strongly agree, somewhat agree;                      0=Somewhat disagree, strongly disagree                      missing=Don't know</p>
B. The results of elections in Ukraine accurately reflect the way people voted in the election.	
C. The presence of non-partisan domestic observers would have a positive effect on the fairness of elections in Ukraine.	
D. The presence of international observers has a positive effect on the fairness of elections in Ukraine.	
E. The presence of political party observers has a positive effect on the legitimacy of elections in Ukraine.	
F. Elections in Ukraine are competently administered.	
G. Our national media provides thorough coverage of parties and candidates up for election.	
H. Our national media provides objective coverage of parties and candidates up for election.	
I. I feel safe in voting however I wish in an election.	
J. I am informed about the electoral process in Ukraine.	
K. Ukraine's electoral system provides adequate means to challenge election violations.	
L. Voting gives people like you a chance to influence decision making in our country	
<b>Confidence in Other Institutions</b>	<p>1=A great deal, a fair amount;                      0=Not very much, none at all                      missing=Don't know</p> <p>1=Yes, 0=No</p>
M. How much confidence do you have in The Verhovna Rada?	
N. How much confidence do you have in The Cabinet of Ministers?	
O. How much confidence do you have in Ukraine's military forces?	
P. How much confidence do you have in your City/Village council?	
Q. How much confidence do you have in the Mayor of your city/village?	
R. Is Ukraine a Democracy?	

**Figure 1: Survey Region and *Oblast* Coding**



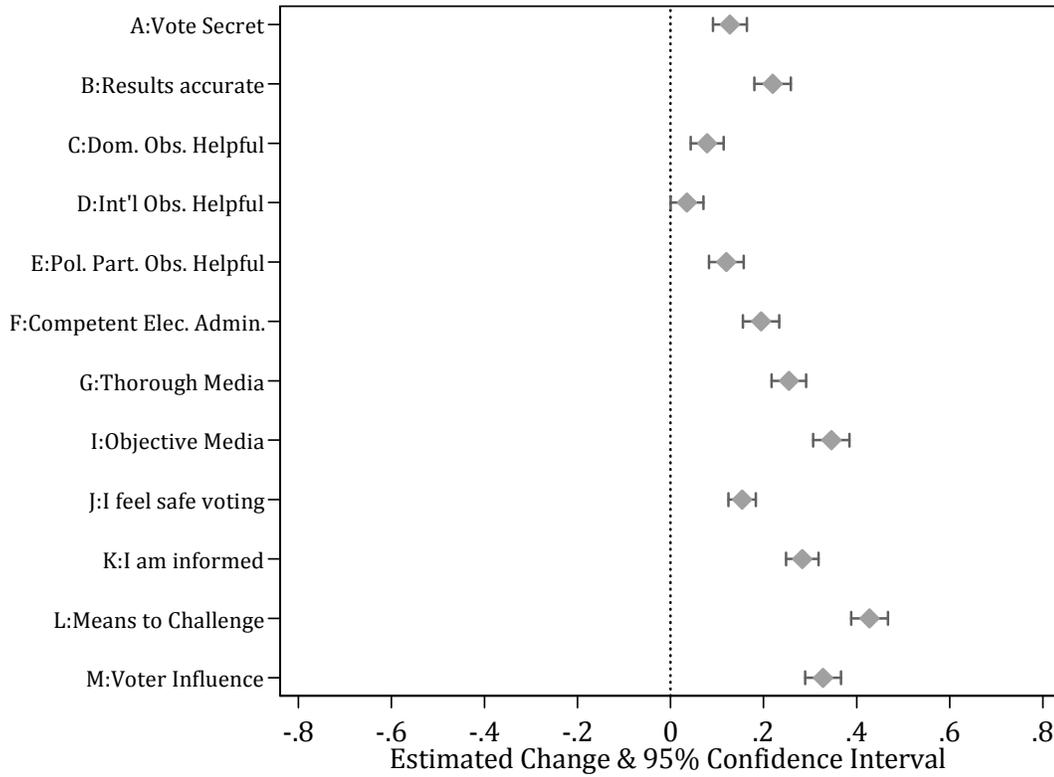
Note: Light grey indicates majority support for Yushchenko and dark grey indicates majority support for Yanukovich. White oblasts were not surveyed.

**Figure 2: Change in Confidence in Electoral Institutions (Before Election vs. Round 2)**



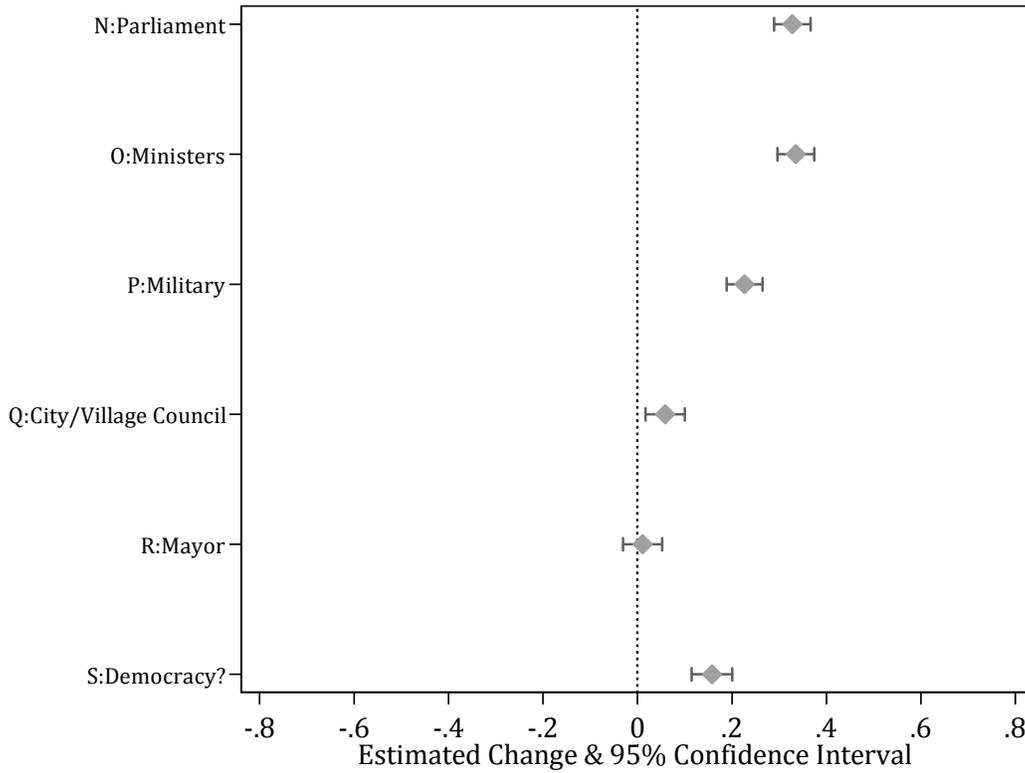
Note: Each point in the figure is the estimated change in opinion from the pre-election survey to opinions about Round 2 after the electoral cycle concluded. Whiskers show 95% confidence intervals. Estimates are shown without demographic control variables but are substantively the same when they are included. The full text of each question is reproduced in Table 1.

**Figure 3: Change in Confidence in Electoral Institutions (Before Election vs. Round 3)**



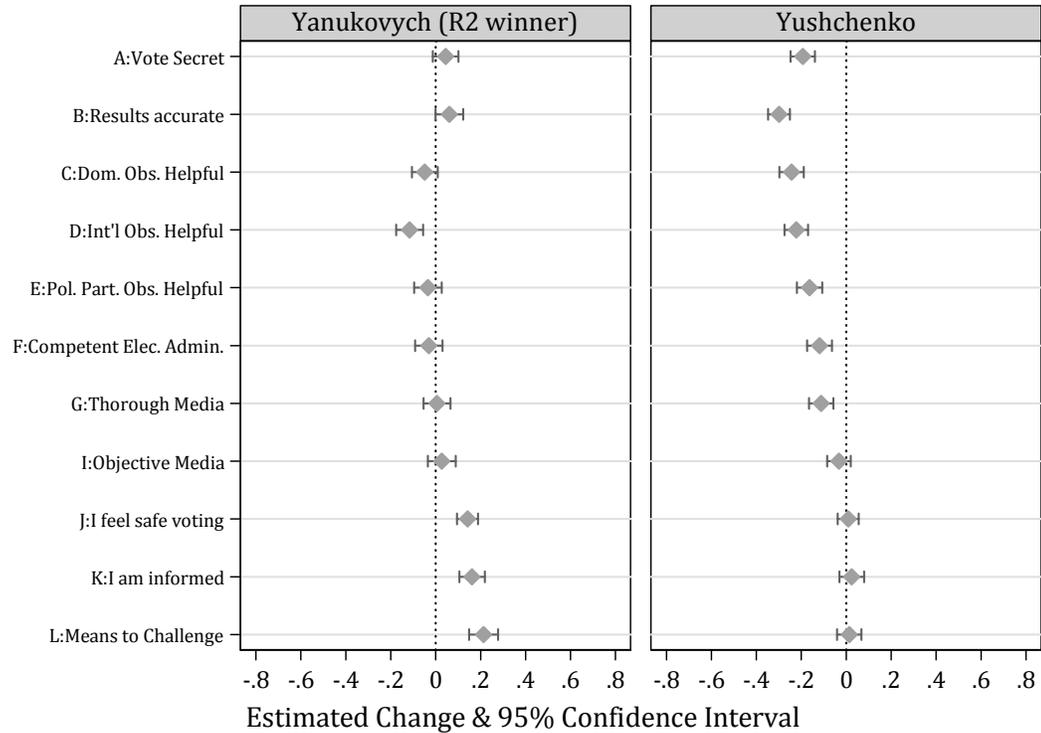
Note: Each point in the figure is the estimated change in opinion from the pre-election survey to opinions about Round 3 after the electoral cycle concluded. Whiskers show 95% confidence intervals. Estimates are shown without demographic control variables but are substantively the same when they are included. The full text of each question is reproduced in Table 1.

**Figure 4: Change in Confidence in Other Institutions (Before and After 2004 Elections)**



Note: Each point in the figure is the estimated change in opinion from the pre-election survey to opinions after the electoral cycle concluded. Whiskers show 95% confidence intervals. Estimates are shown without demographic control variables but are substantively the same when they are included. The full text of each question is reproduced in Table 1.

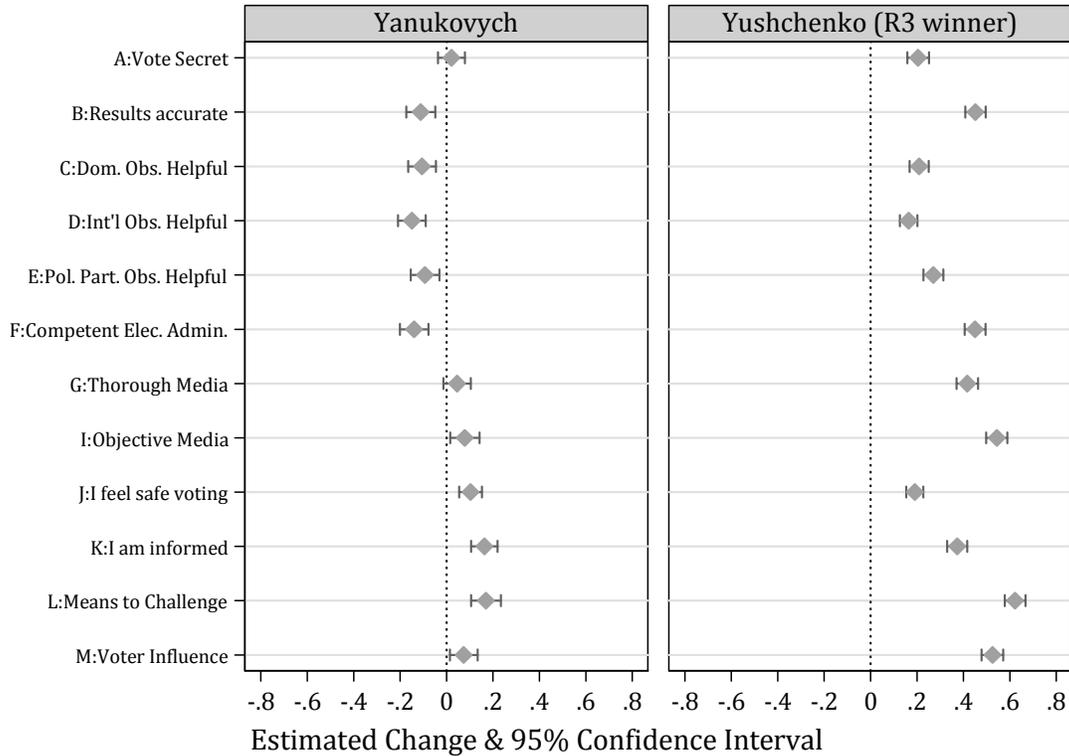
**Figure 5: Change in Confidence in Electoral Institutions by *Oblasts* (Before Election vs. Round 2)**



Graphs by oblast

Note: Each point in the figure is the estimated change in opinion from the pre-election survey to opinions about Round 2 after the electoral cycle concluded. The sample is split by whether the *oblast* is dominated by Yanukovych supporters (left panel) or Yushchenko supporters (right panel). Whiskers show 95% confidence intervals. Estimates are shown without demographic control variables but are substantively the same when they are included. The full text of each question is reproduced in Table 1.

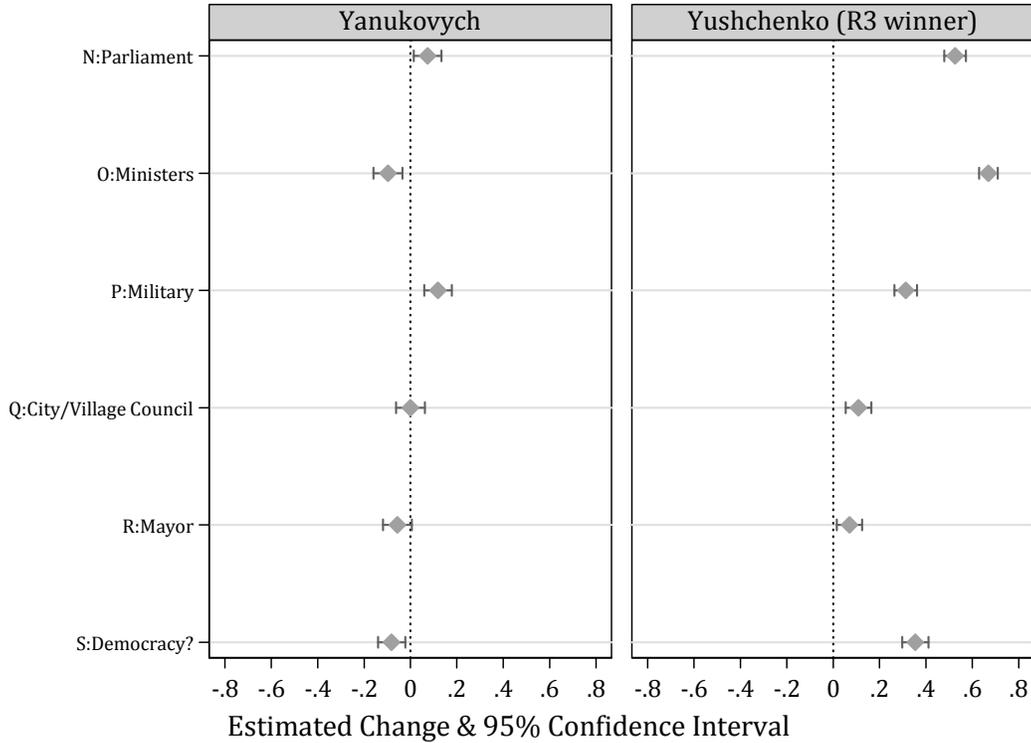
**Figure 6: Change in Confidence in Electoral Institutions by *Oblasts* (Before Election vs. Round 3)**



Graphs by oblast

Note: Each point in the figure is the estimated change in opinion from the pre-election survey to opinions about Round 3 after the electoral cycle concluded. The sample is split by whether the *oblast* is dominated by Yanukovych supporters (left panel) or Yushchenko supporters (right panel). Whiskers show 95% confidence intervals. Estimates are shown without demographic control variables but are substantively the same when they are included. The full text of each question is reproduced in Table 1.

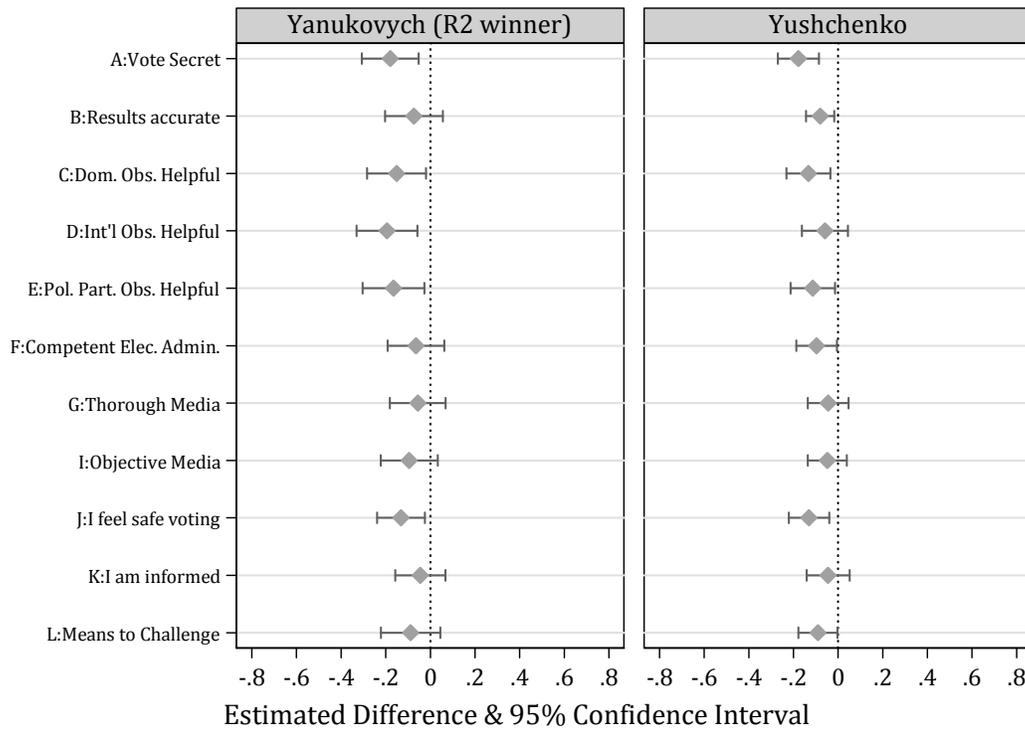
**Figure 7: Change in Confidence in Other Institutions by *Oblasts* (Before and After 2004 Elections)**



Graphs by oblast

Note: Each point in the figure is the estimated change in opinion from the pre-election survey to opinions after the electoral cycle concluded. The sample is split by whether the *oblast* is dominated by Yanukovych supporters (left panel) or Yushchenko supporters (right panel). Whiskers show 95% confidence intervals. Estimates are shown without demographic control variables but are substantively the same when they are included. The full text of each question is reproduced in Table 1.

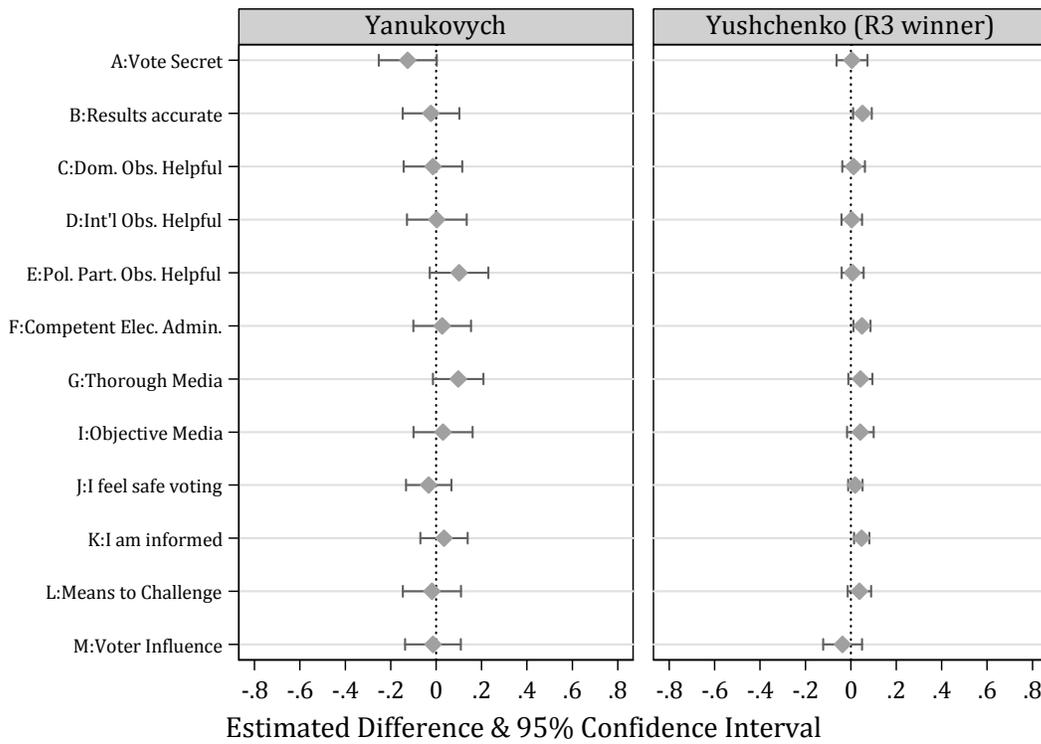
**Figure 8: Confidence in Round 2 Electoral Institutions by Personal Exposure to Fraud**



Graphs by oblast

Note: Each point in the figure is the estimated difference in opinion about Round 2 associated with personal exposure to fraud. The sample is split by whether the *oblast* is dominated by Yanukovych supporters (left panel) or Yushchenko supporters (right panel). Whiskers show 95% confidence intervals. Estimates are shown without demographic control variables but are substantively the same when they are included. The full text of each question is reproduced in Table 1.

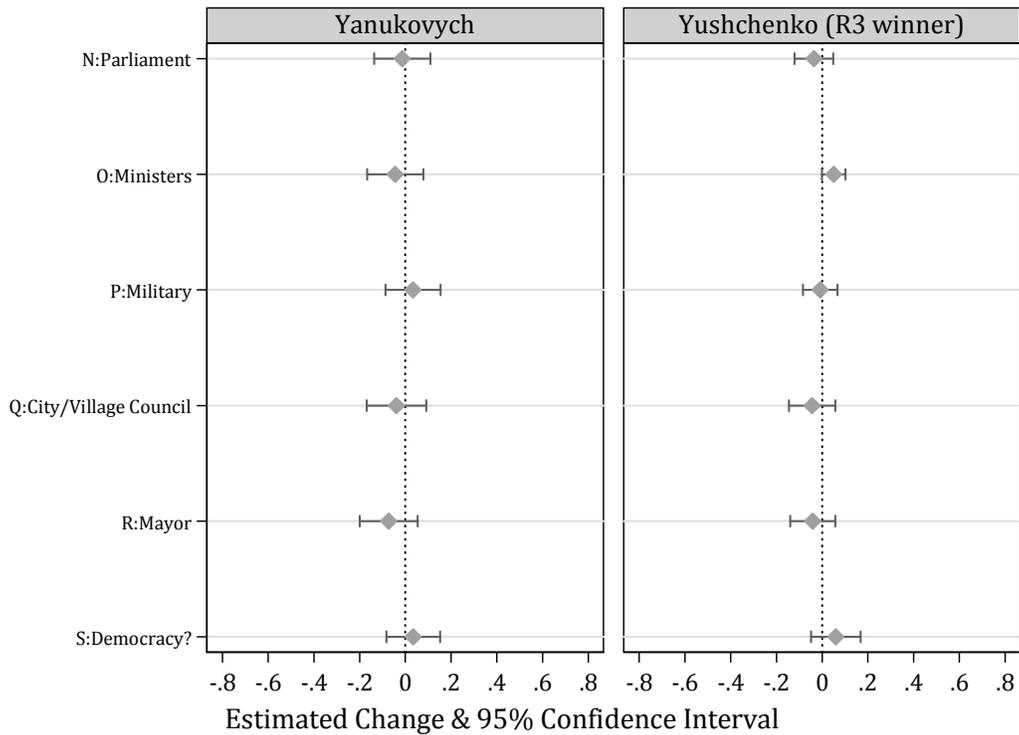
**Figure 9: Confidence in Round 3 Electoral Institutions by Personal Exposure to Fraud**



Graphs by oblast

Note: Each point in the figure is the estimated difference in opinion about Round 3 associated with personal exposure to fraud. The sample is split by whether the *oblast* is dominated by Yanukovych supporters (left panel) or Yushchenko supporters (right panel). Whiskers show 95% confidence intervals. Estimates are shown without demographic control variables but are substantively the same when they are included. The full text of each question is reproduced in Table 1.

**Figure 10: Confidence in Other Institutions by Personal Exposure to Fraud**



Graphs by oblast

Note: Each point in the figure is the estimated difference in opinion associated with personal exposure to fraud at the conclusion of the electoral cycle. The sample is split by whether the *oblast* is dominated by Yanukovych supporters (left panel) or Yushchenko supporters (right panel). Whiskers show 95% confidence intervals. Estimates are shown without demographic control variables but are substantively the same when they are included. The full text of each question is reproduced in Table 1.