

# Carrots and sticks: Experimental evidence of vote-buying and voter intimidation in Guatemala

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Ezequiel Gonzalez-Ocantos 

*Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Oxford*

Chad Kiewiet de Jonge

*Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas*

Carlos Meléndez

*Universidad Diego Portales*

David Nickerson

*Temple University*

Javier Osorio

*School of Government and Public Policy, University of Arizona*

## Abstract

How do parties target intimidation and vote-buying during elections? Parties prefer the use of carrots over sticks because they are in the business of getting voters to like them and expect higher legitimacy costs if observers expose intimidation. However, their brokers sometimes choose intimidation because it is cheaper and possibly more effective than vote-buying. Specifically, we contend that brokers use intimidation when the cost of buying votes is prohibitively high; in interactions with voters among whom the commitment problem inherent to clientelistic transactions is difficult to overcome; and in contexts where the risk of being denounced for violence is lower. We probe our hypotheses about the different profile of voters targeted with vote-buying and intimidation using two list experiments included in an original survey conducted during the 2011 Guatemalan general elections. The list experiments were designed to overcome the social desirability bias associated with direct questions about illegal or stigmatized behaviors. Our quantitative analysis is supplemented by interviews with politicians from various parties. The analysis largely confirms our expectations about the diametrically opposed logics of vote-buying and intimidation targeting, and illuminates how both are key components of politics in a country with weak parties and high levels of violence.

## Keywords

clientelism, Guatemala, Latin America, list experiments, voter intimidation

## Introduction

Students of politics in the developing world are aware of the broad ‘menu of manipulation’ that politicians have at their disposal to influence elections (Schedler, 2002; Birch, 2011; Hilgers, 2011). These tactics include intimidation (Chatuverdi, 2005; Collier & Vicente, 2008,

2012; Robinson & Torvik, 2009), ballot manipulation (Lehoucq, 2007), and clientelism (Stokes, 2005; Díaz Cayeros, Magaloni & Estevez, 2016). Among the

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### Corresponding author:

ezequiel.gonzalez@politics.ox.ac.uk

manipulation tactics directly targeted at voters, clientelism and intimidation stand out because they reflect diametrically opposed ways of campaigning: offering carrots versus resorting to sticks. What determines the way parties target carrot and sticks? This article uses list experiments to explore how vote-buying<sup>1</sup> and intimidation<sup>2</sup> were employed in Guatemala during the 2011 election. Lessons from this case afford the opportunity to advance our understanding of electoral mobilization in democracies where clientelism and intimidation coexist.

Vote-buying is a well-studied part of parties' campaign toolkits (Hicken, 2011). Targeting is driven by factors such as income, partisan identities, and voters' willingness to comply faithfully with transactions (Calvo & Murillo, 2004; Stokes, 2005; Nichter, 2008; Gonzalez-Ocantos et al., 2012; Díaz Cayeros, Magaloni & Estevez, 2016). Research on the micro-targeting of voter intimidation during elections, by contrast, is still in a developing stage. A burgeoning literature on the electoral role of armed actors discusses the conditions that facilitate their engagement in, and hijacking of, democratic processes (Dal Bó, Dal Bó & Di Tella, 2006; Eaton, 2006; Steele & Schubiger, 2018), as well as the effects of violence on the electoral performance of incumbents and insurgent-affiliated parties (de la Calle & Sánchez-Cuenca, 2013; Birnir & Gohdes, 2018). New work also develops typologies of interventions by armed groups in elections and the relationships they establish with parties (Staniland, 2015; Matanock & Staniland, 2018). This scholarship focuses on high-level behaviors by armed groups: creating parties; funding existing ones; assassinating rivals; pre-electoral ethnic or ideological cleansing; and boycotts. Intimidation to support candidates or enforce boycotts is also explored at an aggregate level. This article focuses on a narrower type of electoral violence, namely individually targeted threats of violence, or limited, non-lethal forms of physical violence, aimed at intimidating voters. This form of electoral violence is not dependent on the presence of armed groups and is deployed by political parties via their intermediaries. As a result, intimidation does not necessarily respond to the meta-dynamics of an armed conflict but is driven by immediate electoral considerations. We therefore focus on a form of electoral violence that is not

indiscriminate and responds to the vote-maximizing goals of partisan organizations that field candidates for office.

Our study builds on prior findings on the micro-targeting of intimidation. Weak parties in Africa target pre-electoral violence at opposition voters with the aim of suppressing turnout (Collier & Vicente, 2008, 2012; Bratton, 2008; Robinson & Torvik, 2009; Rauschenbach & Paula, 2019). Electoral intimidation has also been used to influence vote choice, not just abstention, in contemporary Eastern Europe (Mares, Muntean & Petrova, 2016) and imperial Germany (Mares, 2015). A common thread to most studies is that vote-buying and targeted intimidation operate under very different logics and involve different risks for those investing in these tactics. For example, while vote-buying is a resource-expensive tactic, often requiring the development of complex partisan infrastructures to distribute goods and monitor voters (Kitschelt, 2000; Wang & Kurzman, 2007; Oliveros, 2016), intimidation is cheaper (Collier & Vicente, 2008; Cunningham, 2013). Furthermore, vote-buying is usually regarded as tolerable or 'politics as usual', whereas intimidation, even when not lethal or indiscriminate, cannot be portrayed as such (Beaulieu & Hyde, 2009; Hyde, 2011). In fact, scholars have shown that actors involved in vote-buying transactions often see them as mutually beneficial (Auyero, 2001; Gonzalez-Ocantos, Kiewiet di Jonge & Nickerson, 2014). Because intimidation carries a relatively heavier stigma, if denounced it can delegitimize both an election and the party in whose name violence is deployed (Van Ham & Lindberg, 2015).

Given these contrasting dynamics, it is unsurprising that the literatures on the targeting of vote-buying and intimidation focus on different cases and are largely disjointed.<sup>3</sup> This lacuna is unfortunate, however, because we know that parties take a portfolio approach to campaigning (Birch, 2011). Just as personalistic campaigns craft policies to appeal to voters, campaigns engaged in vote-buying may also stoop to voter intimidation. This dynamic likely applies even in democracies, where overall levels of electoral violence tend to be lower than in non-democracies (Van Ham & Lindberg, 2015). By analyzing the targeting of both vote-buying and intimidation in the same electoral context, this article provides a more comprehensive portrayal of parties' strategies than much of the existing literature. Crucially, juxtaposing the two

<sup>1</sup> Vote-buying is a more particularized form of clientelism involving the exchange of goods for votes at the individual level during electoral campaigns.

<sup>2</sup> Intimidation refers to the use of violence or the threat of violence by political campaigns to compel voters to abstain or vote in a particular way.

<sup>3</sup> See Van Ham & Lindberg (2015) and Rauschenbach & Paula (2019) for recent exceptions.

tactics can clarify the logic of how parties target carrots and sticks at the individual level, and thus integrate theories of non-programmatic campaigning.

We argue that vote-buying and intimidation respond to politicians' different strategic considerations. All things being equal, parties in democracies prefer the use of carrots over sticks because they are in the business of getting voters to like them and expect higher legitimacy costs if observers or the media expose intimidation. However, parties may sometimes choose intimidation because it is cheaper and possibly more effective than vote-buying. We contend that parties use intimidation primarily when the cost of vote-buying is prohibitively high; in interactions with constituencies among whom the commitment problem inherent to clientelistic transactions is difficult to overcome; and in contexts in which the risk of being denounced for violence can be minimized. At the level of the individual voter, this cost/benefit equation suggests that clientelistic largesse should be directed at people who are likely to respond favorably to the gift and vote as instructed. Specifically, people who express strong reciprocity values (Lawson & Greene, 2014; Finan & Schechter, 2012) and who are unsure whether their ballot is secret (Stokes, 2005; Gonzalez Ocantos et al., 2012) are good candidates for vote buying. The same is true for voters who have unreliable turnout records and therefore need additional incentives to participate (Nichter, 2008). By contrast, intimidation, a demobilizing strategy, should be targeted at people who are reliable voters and are opposed to the campaign, and at those who are least likely to comply with the terms of clientelistic transactions, either because they value reciprocity the least or are more convinced about ballot secrecy. Moreover, given the higher legitimacy cost of intimidation, the weakest and most isolated members of society will be disproportionately targeted, since they are least likely to denounce the practice.

Our expectations were largely confirmed in a survey conducted during the 2011 Guatemalan national election using two list experiments to minimize social desirability bias and estimate who is targeted by each tactic. To complement the quantitative analysis and understand the rationale behind the use of carrots and sticks, we report qualitative evidence from a meeting with 21 Guatemalan politicians from all political parties.

### Carrots versus sticks

Political parties act to maximize the probability of victory in a context of uncertainty. In most consolidated democracies this entails legal campaign activities. In many

developing countries parties also revert to illegal forms of politicking such as vote-buying and intimidation. Following Szwarcberg (2012, 2015) and Stokes et al. (2013), examining both the incentives of brokers and the campaigns that hire them is key for understanding how particularistic goods and intimidation are targeted during electoral campaigns. Specifically, we posit that brokers' incentives to deliver votes as efficiently as possible will often lead them to intimidate voters, since threats can be monetarily less costly than buying preferences, allowing these 'middle-men' to pocket part of the campaign budget. For example, in the eyes of their bosses, suppressing opposition voters using sticks can be mathematically equivalent to mobilizing supporters or persuading undecideds using carrots.

But the use of different manipulation strategies is heavily conditioned by individual-level characteristics and contextual factors. Mares's (2015) study of imperial Germany shows that as a result of the high penalties associated with vote-buying, parties preferred intimidation over clientelism. However, in constituencies where parties anticipated the need to form run-off coalitions with some of their rivals, or industries relied on workers with various exit options in the labor market, party bosses and business elites preferred to rein in electoral intimidation to avoid reputational costs. Similarly, we contend that in the case of contemporary democracies, brokers are constrained in their use of intimidation because electoral violence can expose the politicians who hire them to higher electoral costs, both in terms of parties' current and future reputation among victims and in terms of legitimacy, for example, vis-à-vis the international community (Birch, 2011; Hyde, 2011; IFES, 2014; Collier & Vicente, 2012). As a result of these conflicting imperatives, we expect brokers to carefully design vote-buying and intimidation campaigns in order to (1) maximize personal rents while simultaneously (2) retaining a reputation for delivering votes and (3) minimizing the relatively higher costs associated with the deployment of violent tactics.

### *The logic of voter intimidation*

Effectively distributing gifts to potential voters requires employing brokers who are embedded in local communities. However, this principal-agent relationship presents a significant information asymmetry: while brokers have specific knowledge about individuals in their networks, candidates only observe aggregated outcomes such as attendance at rallies and electoral results (Szwarcberg, 2012, 2015). This means that candidates

have limited capacity to monitor brokers' effectiveness and the tactics they use. Additionally, while brokers have incentives to demonstrate their competence so that they will be hired again, they also have incentives to maximize rents—that is, retain some of the resources distributed in the campaign—and build their own power bases to enhance their negotiating capacity vis-à-vis future employers (Stokes *et al.*, 2013).

Brokers are aware that intimidation is cheaper than vote-buying and can therefore increase opportunities for personal gain. Intimidation does not require the distribution of gifts or favors and has no costs associated with mobilizing voters. Further, since monitoring turnout is less costly than monitoring vote choice, it is more efficient for brokers to use intimidation in order to induce abstention. And if others observe voters being threatened, it could also deter them from voting, enhancing the demobilizing potential of intimidation. When targeting intimidation, brokers are therefore likely to consider voters' propensity to turn out. Specifically, intimidation will be most useful when directed at reliable voters, especially swing or opposition voters whom brokers would like to keep away from the polling booth. This is consistent with much of the literature on electoral intimidation, which argues that intimidation is primarily a demobilization tactic (Robinson & Torvik, 2009; Collier & Vicente, 2012; Wilks, 2012; Rauschenbach & Paula, 2019). Once a party boss allocates campaign funds to specific constituencies, the broker has an incentive to skew the investment portfolio in favor of intimidation and pocket the surplus.

But brokers are also concerned about their long-term viability as brokers. A key distinction between illegal forms of campaigning, such as vote-buying and intimidation, and traditional forms of campaigning is that illegal tactics are usually conducted in a clandestine manner. However, the costs of exposing vote-buying and intimidation differ significantly. While many countries exhibit a grudging acceptance of vote-buying (Schaffer, 2007), tolerance for the use of intimidation is much lower as it constitutes a pressing concern in the international community (USAID, 2013). For example, accusations of widespread vote-buying have not generally led international monitors to declare elections illegitimate (Beaulieu & Hyde, 2009), whereas violent intimidation is much less likely to be overlooked. This is because intimidation inherently signals a disregard for human rights and a preference for repression, whereas gift-giving is in isolation a beneficial act (Gonzalez-Ocantos, Kiewiet de Jonge & Nickerson, 2014). Exposure of violent tactics can trigger a loss of international legitimacy, sustained

opposition protests (Hyde & Marinov, 2014; Young, 2020), and reductions in foreign aid (Wright, 2009; Donno, 2010). Similarly, at the domestic level accusations of vote-buying may prove unflattering and engender resentment (Weitz-Shapiro, 2012), but accusations of intimidation can be more damaging. In fact, both opponents and a candidate's own followers may be put off by this news. If brokers use force, voters may infer that party bosses will be equally coercive in government. Violence can also put into question politicians' commitment to fighting crime, a top concern in many developing countries.<sup>4</sup>

Due to the costs of voter intimidation, bosses are wary of the widespread use of violent tactics by their brokers. Brokers, for their part, are aware that if the media or monitors catch them red handed, they may become a liability, lose the trust of their principals, and jeopardize their jobs as campaign strategists. As a result, although brokers might prefer to use intimidation to maximize the probability of victory, and in the process pocket unspent resources, they are constrained by the risks of exposure. Crucially, however, intimidation tactics are not uniformly likely to be detected, leaving brokers with room to maneuver. We therefore argue that brokers also target intimidation (1) at citizens who have the least capacity to denounce such practices, and (2) in contexts in which candidates' capacity to monitor broker behavior is limited. Specifically, brokers will target intimidation toward very poor voters with few means to denounce violence, and residents of rural areas where monitoring violence is more difficult. This is consistent with a literature on violence identifying the poorest members of society and those living in isolated areas as the most usual targets of repression (Scott, 1987, 2010).

Brokers prefer to use targeted forms of intimidation rather than indiscriminate or extreme violence. In this sense, they differ from armed groups that use violence to back political parties (Staniland, 2015; Matanock & Staniland, 2018). Brokers are concerned with the costs associated with damaged reputations in a way that armed insurgents are not. In particular, brokers are often trying to cultivate a personal following among voters, whose support they can leverage for future business. In contrast, most armed groups are more concerned with the acquisition of resources or territory. Furthermore, violence is not the only tactic at a broker's disposal, and rarely is violence the comparative advantage of these campaign

<sup>4</sup> The reputational effects of violence are, however, far from straightforward. See Gutiérrez-Romero & LeBas (2020).

specialists. In contrast, most armed groups are well-versed in various forms of violence but encounter roadblocks when engaging in nonviolent tactics. As a result, brokers have reasons and resources to avoid the indiscriminate use of violence, and instead target sticks surgically as a complement to other electioneering tactics.

We do not claim that the legitimacy costs of exposing intimidation are always prohibitively high. Under certain conditions, brokers may enjoy greater latitude to rely on intimidation. For example, intimidation is likely to be more prevalent in environments where other forms of violence are pervasive. Where non-state violent actors are active, brokers may find it easier to camouflage their actions and avoid reputational costs. Similarly, intimidation is more likely among weak parties (Fjelde, 2020). In such contexts, parties' organizational capacity tends to be deficient, candidates' ability to monitor brokers is lower, and brokers are often not vertically integrated to parties. These factors reduce their incentives to avoid the reputational costs of using violent intimidation. The threat of not being hired in the future is lower because brokers know that parties are likely to be replaced by others in desperate need for operatives. Finally, to the extent weak candidates/parties have 'less to lose' in terms of baseline support by turning a blind eye to violence (Collier & Vicente, 2012: 118), such weak partisan contexts should prove particularly fertile ground for intimidation. Our argument is simply that in contemporary democracies, where elections are closely monitored by domestic and international observers, the legitimacy costs of exposing intimidation are relatively higher than those associated with the exposure of vote-buying, leading brokers with the ability to deploy both carrots and sticks to balance their campaign portfolio and thus minimize risk.

### *The logic of vote-buying*

Thus far we have argued that given the demobilizing potential of intimidation, voters with a high turnout propensity, especially swing and opposition voters, are vulnerable. We also suggested that because of the costs of violence, intimidation is likely to be used against those with limited resources to denounce the practice. But exclusive reliance on violence is hardly ever an option. This leads brokers to diversify non-programmatic campaign portfolios. In this section we explore the logic of vote-buying, focusing on how voters' location, income, and turnout propensity shape the distribution of carrots in ways that contrast sharply with the dynamics of intimidation. We also analyze how individual-level attributes that moderate commitment issues inherent to

clientelism also shape the choice between carrots and sticks. The discussion highlights how in contexts where both violence and vote-buying are viable options, these tactics complement each other and affect different voters.

A complex organizational infrastructure is essential in order to guarantee the success of vote-buying operations. Not only must goods be distributed, but parties must also invest in machines that can monitor the vote (Kitschelt, 2000). For logistical reasons, it is much easier to accomplish these tasks in urban settings with high population density than in rural areas, making vote-buying more prevalent in urban settings. In addition to these practical considerations, concerns about the costs of using intimidation play a role. Urban voters should also be preferentially targeted with vote-buying because in cities intimidation is more likely to be exposed and generate legitimacy damage. Party machines sometimes forge strong ties with specialists in urban violence such as gangs, which means that electoral intimidation may also be present in these settings. Our claim is simply that *ceteris paribus*, voters in rural areas remain differentially more likely to experience intimidation.

Much of the literature on vote-buying also argues that gifts and favors are primarily targeted at the poor (Calvo & Murillo, 2004; Stokes, 2005). New research, however, indicates that this relationship might not always hold, and that relatively richer voters in poor countries are frequently targeted (Gonzalez-Ocantos et al., 2012; Gonzalez-Ocantos, Kiewiet de Jonge & Nickerson, 2015). Importantly, in contexts where violence is a viable electoral strategy, carrots may not be disproportionately used to court the very poor. Endorsing the conventional wisdom, some authors suggest that because vote-buying is most effective with poor constituents, campaigns will target intimidation toward wealthier ones (Wilks, 2012). But such an argument neglects legitimacy concerns, a central aspect of our theory. Like urban residents, relatively wealthier individuals are more capable of exposing violence and triggering legitimacy backlashes. As a result, violence may be an attractive strategy among very poor voters, leading brokers to reserve vote-buying for citizens who are better off, but still sufficiently susceptible to inexpensive gifts and favors. This is likely to be the case among many nominally middle-income voters in poor countries.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The relationship could be more complicated if we consider voters' partisanship. Brokers might use intimidation when they want to demobilize poor voters in opposition areas and use vote-buying in areas where their bosses are stronger.



To maximize the effectiveness of vote-buying, brokers must additionally target citizens who are unlikely to defect. In this sense, the literature focuses on two individual-level attributes that are expected to minimize the commitment issues characteristic of clientelism. First, feelings of reciprocity have been found to be an important aspect of successful vote-buying (Lawson & Greene, 2014; Finan & Schechter, 2012). This is because, absent monitoring by brokers, individuals who experience a strong moral imperative to return gifts are more likely to reciprocate in the privacy of the voting booth. Second, since vote-choice monitoring can be hard in the presence of the secret ballot, brokers often spread the belief that voting can be observed (Stokes, 2005). The perception that parties can monitor peoples' vote might increase the propensity of some voters to vote as instructed. Consequently, we expect campaigns to direct carrots towards people who have doubts about the secrecy of the ballot and have strong reciprocity values. Conversely, voters with weak reciprocity values and who trust ballot secrecy present riskier investment opportunities, and may either be sidestepped or join the list of those who are more vulnerable to demobilization via intimidation.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, the literature on vote-buying finds that turnout propensity is an important determinant of gift dispensation. Vote-buying is often seen as a mobilization tactic aimed at boosting participation among individuals who in the absence of inducements may fail to turn out (Nichter, 2008). In the presence of the secret ballot it is much easier for brokers to monitor participation than it is to monitor vote choice, which means that they often target carrots to supporters with unreliable voting records. We therefore contend that clientelistic largesse will be directed at voters with a low turnout propensity in an effort to mobilize them. As argued earlier, the prediction is different for intimidation. Since intimidation is mainly used to demobilize, it will be primarily targeted at individuals who have more reliable voting records.

Consistent with the literature that suggests brokers 'employ any and all information' to maximize the cost-effectiveness of targeted distributions (Carlin & Moseley, 2015), our propositions assume that brokers know voters in their area well. Beyond factors such as turnout propensity or partisanship, scholars show that brokers are

also able to gather information about voters' beliefs in ballot secrecy, reciprocity values, and even commitment to democracy. Brokers gain this information because they are not parachuted into the territory just before an upcoming election, but live among their targets and are at the center of community networks. As Auyero (2001: 177) puts it, when brokers are present in the territory 'politics intermingles with people's lives'.<sup>7</sup>

The logic of each campaign strategy suggests five testable hypotheses. For each one, voter intimidation and vote-buying have an inverse targeting logic.

*Hypothesis 1 (Turnout):* Voter intimidation is used to suppress turnout among reliable voters. Vote-buying is used to mobilize voters with less reliable turnout records.

*Hypothesis 2 (Commitment problem – Reciprocity):* Brokers will target vote-buying at individuals who display a high degree of reciprocity because they are more likely to feel obligated to vote as instructed. Individuals whose vote is less likely to be secured by gifts because they display low levels of reciprocity are more at risk of being intimidated.

*Hypothesis 3 (Commitment problem – Ballot secrecy):* Brokers will target vote-buying at people who have doubts about the secrecy of the ballot because they are more likely to feel pressured to vote as instructed. Individuals whose vote is less likely to be secured by gifts because they believe ballots are secret are more at risk of being intimidated.

*Hypothesis 4 (Income):* Vote-buying will be used to target citizens with relatively higher socio-economic status, whereas voter intimidation will be primarily used against the very poor.

*Hypothesis 5 (Location):* Voter intimidation will be more prevalent in rural areas due to the lower risks of exposure, whereas vote-buying will be observed more frequently in urban areas due to the presence of machines and higher risks of exposure of violent tactics.

## Electoral politics in Guatemala

In September 2011, elections for President and Congress were held in Guatemala. Otto Pérez-Molina (*Partido*

<sup>6</sup> This is consistent with von Borzyskowski & Kuhn's (2020) finding that violence is often directed against voters who cannot be persuaded by other means.

<sup>7</sup> See Online appendix D for a longer discussion, including the possibility of reverse causality in the relationship between manipulation tactics and target characteristics.

*Patriota*, PP) received the most support in the first round (36% of valid votes). The closest contender, Manuel Baldizón (*Libertad Democrática Renovadora*, LIDER), received 23%. Both candidates competed in a run-off in November in which Pérez-Molina won with 53.7%. Prior to the election, a legal controversy erupted when Sandra Torres divorced then-President Alvaro Colom in order to run for the incumbent party, *Unidad Nacional de la Esperanza* (UNE). The Guatemalan constitution prohibited relatives of the president from participating in presidential elections. Divorce articles notwithstanding, the courts banned Torres's ticket. This forced the incumbent to support Baldizón.

Guatemalan politics are characterized by a fluid party system (Artiga, 2010; Estado de la Nación, 2011). Analysts agree that Guatemalan parties have lost their ability to mediate social demands and effectively organize political competition. Despite two decades of uninterrupted democracy, the political scene constantly sees the emergence of new personalistic parties, which disappear shortly after as their founders lose voters' trust (Seligson, 2005; Sánchez, 2008; Brolo, 2013). Party identification is extremely low (LAPOP, 2012), and incumbent parties often fail to win re-election (ASIES, 2013). Because of their fleeting and feeble nature, Guatemalan parties have been described as 'franchise' organizations (Lemus, 2013).

As a consequence of these weaknesses, there is an important disconnect between the parties' national leaders and their brokers. Ties between these two levels are maintained during elections, but once the campaign is over, cooperation ends: national leaders concentrate on parliamentary politics and local brokers govern municipalities and cultivate a following,<sup>8</sup> with little or no coordination between the two. Brokers therefore have short-lived loyalties to national parties. In fact, they are not selected due to their reliability, but on the basis of their capacity to galvanize local support in favor of whoever hires them. Brokers deliver favorable local results through a combination of clientelism, intimidation, and personalistic appeals. The pervasiveness of clientelism is explained by resilient patrimonial social structures that blur the distinction between private and public spheres (Foweraker & Kznaric, 2002). Similarly, in a country with a dark history of violence, including a civil war stained by genocide (Grandin, 2000; Brett, 2016), electoral intimidation can be easily camouflaged. In fact,

Guatemala still experiences high levels of violence perpetrated by non-state actors, including drug trafficking organizations and street gangs (Sanchez, 2008).

## Data and methods

To understand the dynamics of vote-buying and intimidation in the 2011 election, we used a survey fielded immediately prior to and during the second round of balloting (1–7 November). The survey contained two list experiments to estimate the incidence of vote-buying and intimidation separately.<sup>9</sup> When people are directly asked about sensitive topics, especially ones that violate the law or carry the threat of physical harm, they tend to give a socially acceptable answer rather than a more truthful but socially undesirable one (DeMaio, 1984; Tourangeau & Yan, 2007; Berinsky, 2004). This 'social desirability bias' often means that behavior perceived as 'bad' is underreported. The 'list experiment' technique has proven effective in minimizing social desirability bias by asking about illegal activities indirectly (Gonzalez-Ocantos et al., 2012).

In addition to the list experiments, the questionnaire included direct questions about the incidence of vote-buying and intimidation at the individual and neighborhood levels. To measure the respondents' socio-economic status, we divided the household income level into three groups: very poor (less than \$200 USD/month), poor (\$200–\$400 USD/month), and middle/upper (more than \$400 USD/month).<sup>10</sup> Since ideology and partisan identification do not structure political competition in Guatemala, we created an index of political preferences consisting of four items that measure pro/anti-government sentiments: presidential approval, opinion about the potential candidacy of Sandra Torres, and voting for either President Colóm or Pérez Molina in the first round of the 2007 presidential elections ( $\alpha = 0.51$ ).<sup>11</sup> As a rough proxy for turnout potential, we created a dummy variable indicating whether or not the respondent voted in 2007. To measure reciprocity, we asked the following question with a four-point agree/disagree response scale: 'Could you tell me how much you agree with the following phrase? "When someone does me a favor, I feel obligated to return the favor"'.

<sup>8</sup> Half of the mayors that run for re-election do not run under the same party brand (Brolo, 2013).

<sup>9</sup> See Online appendix A for details of the survey and the list experiments.

<sup>10</sup> See Online appendix E for a discussion of our income measure.

<sup>11</sup> We also ran models with party identification and ideology, but found that the pro/anti-government index best differentiated targeting patterns.

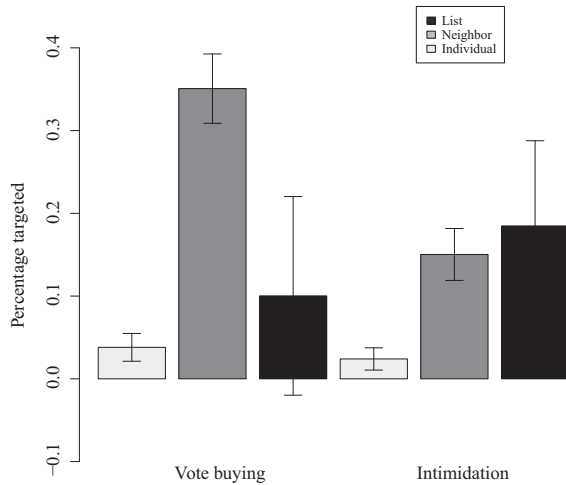


Figure 1. Vote-buying and intimidation targeting according to different measurement strategies

Beliefs about ballot secrecy were measured using a three-point scale, ranging from those who do not believe that parties can discover how the respondent voted (0) to those indicating that they do have this monitoring capacity (2), with uncertain respondents assigned to a middle category. Finally, we coded basic demographic characteristics such as gender, age, education, and rural/urban residence.<sup>12</sup>

## Results

Figure 1 presents the proportion of respondents who reported being targeted with vote-buying or intimidation according to questions that directly asked respondents about being personally targeted and inquired about the distribution of goods and threats in the neighborhood. It also shows the list experiment estimates generated with the method proposed by Imai (2011; see also Blair & Imai, 2012). Results indicate that when respondents are directly asked about vote-buying, only 4% acknowledge receiving gifts in exchange for their vote and 35% report the delivery of vote-buying in their neighborhood. The list experiment indicates that the proportion of vote-buying targets is 10%.<sup>13</sup> Results also show that 2% of respondents reported being personally threatened during the campaign, and 15% of them witnessed acts of intimidation in their neighborhood. In contrast, the list experiment suggests that about 18% of respondents were targets of violent intimidation, a figure that is higher but

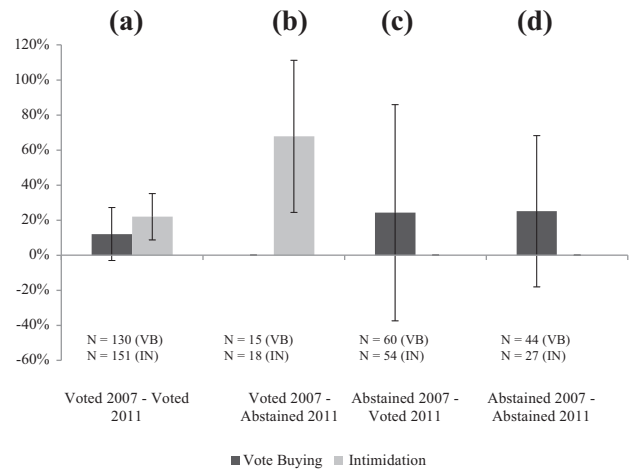


Figure 2. Probability of vote-buying and intimidation targeting by turnout groups

statistically indistinguishable from the neighborhood estimate. These results confirm the expectation that vote-buying and intimidation are sensitive topics that are likely to suffer systematic underreporting when respondents are asked directly. Most importantly, the list experiment reveals that vote-buying and intimidation constitute important strategies in the menu of manipulation in Guatemala. In particular, the proportion of respondents who experienced intimidation is larger than the number of vote-buying transactions, although the estimates are not statistically distinguishable.<sup>14</sup>

Turning to the targeting hypotheses, Figure 2 shows the results of the list experiment broken down by turnout in 2007 and 2011. We also report the N for every subgroup in each experiment. Our expectation is that vote-buying should be targeted at people who are unlikely to vote without material inducements, while voter intimidation will be targeted at likely voters in an effort to reduce turnout (H1). Turnout in the 2007 election serves as an indicator of turnout likelihood; people on the left side of the figure voted in 2007 – panels (a) and (b) – while people on the right side abstained – panels (c) and (d). The y-axis represents the estimated number of respondents reporting vote-buying and intimidation through the list experiment. The findings strongly support Hypothesis 1. There is essentially no vote-buying (dark bars) targeted at people who voted in 2007 but abstained in 2011, while the list experiment

<sup>12</sup> See Online appendix B for descriptive statistics.

<sup>13</sup> See Online appendix C for further details about the distribution of gifts and favors.

<sup>14</sup> Our design does not allow us to know whether individuals received both carrots and sticks. While this is possible, it is not what we would expect strategic brokers to do. Our theory assumes brokers see vote-buying as mobilizing, and intimidation as demobilizing.



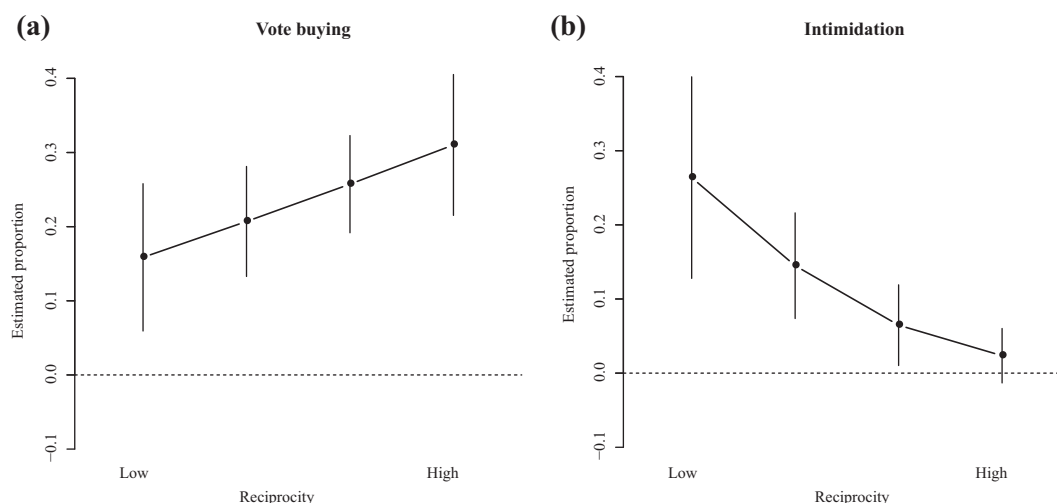


Figure 3. Predicted probabilities of vote-buying and intimidation at different levels of reciprocity

finds that a sizable portion of 2007 abstainers report vote-buying (24% of those who abstained in 2007 and voted in 2011 are estimated to have received a gift). In stark contrast, voter intimidation (light bars) is not targeted at 2007 abstainers at all. All of the intimidation efforts seem to be focused on people who voted in 2007. Among these 2007 voters, over 60% of people who abstained in 2011 reported through the list experiment experiencing intimidation, thus suggesting that intimidation is an effective demobilization tactic. This staggering number suggests not only how voter intimidation is targeted, but also that it can be consequential during an election.

In order to evaluate the remaining hypotheses about the distinct targeting dynamics behind vote-buying and intimidation and include covariates in the analysis, we use the maximum likelihood algorithm proposed by Imai (2011) and Blair & Imai (2012). In what follows, we discuss the results using graphs of predicted probabilities for ease of interpretation, but the full regression results can be found in Table B2 in Online appendix B.<sup>15</sup>

Figure 3 reports the predicted probability of vote-buying and intimidation at different levels of reciprocity,

holding other variables at their mean values. Results strongly support Hypothesis 2, indicating that those who value reciprocity are more likely targets of vote buying. According to panel (a), the proportion of vote-buying recipients increases from 16% of respondents at low levels of reciprocity to 31% among those who show strong reciprocity attitudes. In contrast, panel (b) shows that intimidation follows a different logic with respect to individuals' levels of reciprocity. While the predicted probabilities of receiving sticks reaches 26% for respondents reporting low reciprocity attitudes, it is only 2% for those with strong feelings of reciprocity.

The targeting of clientelistic tactics and intimidation also follows distinct logics with respect to beliefs about ballot secrecy (Hypothesis 3). Figure 4 presents the predicted probabilities of vote-buying and intimidation at different levels of ballot secrecy perceptions. Results in panel (a) indicate that respondents who think that parties can find out for whom they voted tend to have higher levels of vote-buying (36%) as opposed to respondents that think their vote is secret (20%).<sup>16</sup> By contrast, intimidation seems to be directed towards those who do not believe parties can monitor the vote. This finding supports earlier work that suggests intimidation is more

<sup>15</sup> The model also tested the extent to which the targeting varies by respondents' attitudes towards the incumbent. Individuals who favor incumbent-backed UNE were more likely to be targeted with vote buying. However, the coefficient is not statistically significant. By contrast, the predicted probability of intimidation for respondents who strongly oppose the incumbent is significantly higher (18%) than it is for those who favor UNE (5%). This supports the view that intimidation is mainly a demobilizing tactic used against oppositions.

<sup>16</sup> This analysis cannot tell us whether beliefs about ballot secrecy (or reciprocity) are independent from prior experiences with vote-buying, or whether they are a function of these experiences. In any case, our point is that brokers are keen to make clientelism self-enforcing. As a result, they are likely to target voters known to have doubts about the secrecy of the ballot or high reciprocity values. Such targeting decisions are informed by past interactions with voters and may also reinforce attitudes. See Online appendix D.

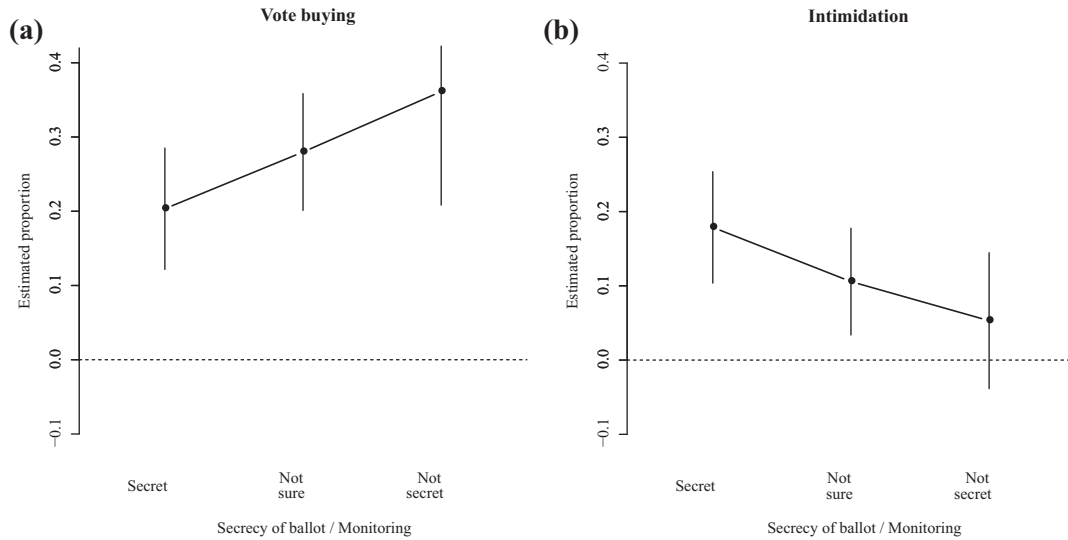


Figure 4. Predicted probabilities of vote-buying and intimidation at different levels of ballot secrecy perceptions

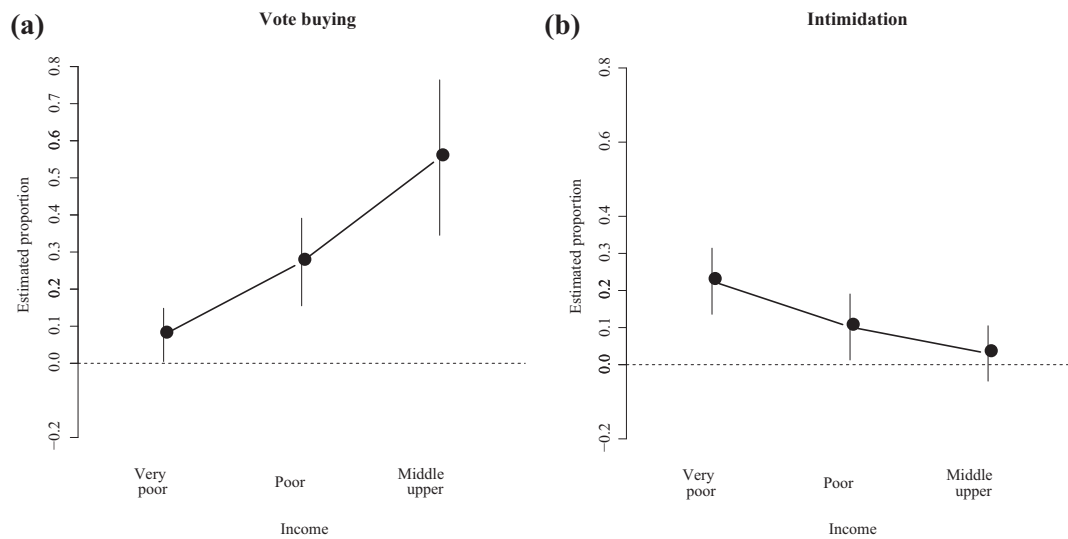


Figure 5. Predicted probabilities of vote-buying and intimidation at different levels of income

prevalent when mechanisms that increase the cost of monitoring, such as the secret ballot, are absent (Mares, 2015). Panel (b) shows that the predicted probability of intimidation for respondents who believe in ballot secrecy reaches 18%, while the probability is only 5% for those who think their vote can be monitored.

Regarding socio-economic status, the analysis provides interesting findings. In contrast to conventional wisdom, results suggest that vote-buying goes to middle and upper income respondents (for similar findings see Gonzalez-Ocantos et al., 2012; Gonzalez-Ocantos, Kiewiet de Jonge & Nickerson, 2015). According to panel

(a) in Figure 5, the model predicts that only 8% of people at the bottom of the socio-economic status scale received material benefits. In contrast, the predicted probability of vote-buying reaches 55% of respondents in the middle/upper sectors. This result is consistent with Hypothesis 4, indicating that vote-buying is targeted at voters who are relatively better off. Also in line with Hypothesis 4, the predicted probabilities of intimidation presented in panel (b) depict an opposite rationale for the use of violence. According to the results, 23% of the population in the lowest income group suffered intimidation during the campaign while only 3% of those in

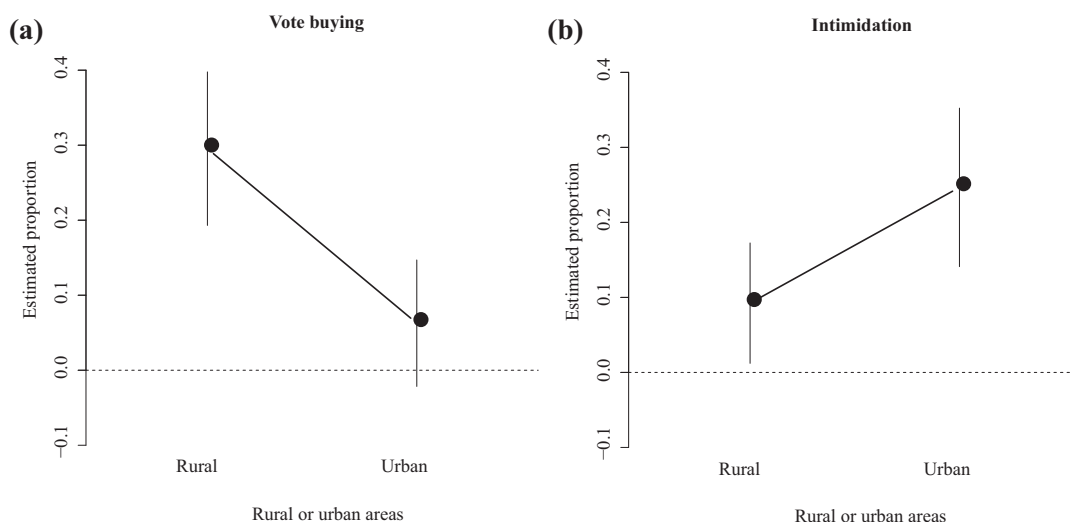


Figure 6. Predicted probabilities of vote-buying and intimidation in rural and urban areas

the middle or upper sectors were victims of threats. These findings portray a grim picture in which the poorest sectors of the population do not even get spoils of the election and are more likely to suffer harassment. This is consistent with the view that concerns about exposure, and subsequent legitimacy costs, lead brokers to use intimidation against those with limited ability to denounce the practice.

Finally, Figure 6 presents the proportion of vote-buying and intimidation in rural vs. urban areas. Results in panel (a) show that the predicted probability of vote-buying targeting is 30% for urban dwellers and only 6% for the rural population. As predicted by Hypothesis 5, higher voter density and the availability of distribution networks might facilitate the delivery of vote-buying in cities. In contrast, panel (b) reveals that the use of intimidation is more widespread in rural settings. According to the results, about 25% of the rural population experienced intimidation during the campaign (vs. only 9% of those living in cities). Due to the reputational costs associated with electoral violence, political actors might be more inclined to rely on this tactic in remote and isolated areas where targets are less able to denounce them. These findings reinforce the interpretation that the most vulnerable sectors of the population are marginalized from the material goods delivered during the campaign and exposed to violence.

### Weak parties and electoral manipulation: A roundtable discussion with politicians

The quantitative evidence largely supports our argument about the different targeting logics behind vote-buying

and intimidation. In order to further analyze how Guatemalan politicians plan their campaign operations, and explore some of the assumptions about the preferences of party bosses and brokers underlying our theory, we organized a roundtable discussion with 21 mid-level officers from various political parties.

Getting politicians to talk about these issues is usually a major challenge. This was particularly concerning in our case for two reasons. First, the roundtable was a one-time event, which hardly gave us the opportunity to build trust in the same way as ethnographers do with their informants. Second, it was organized jointly with the National Democratic Institute, whose mission is to promote clean and fair elections. In order to trigger a productive conversation and overcome politicians' hesitation to openly discuss vote-buying and intimidation, we began by showing the results of the survey. Much to our surprise, participants thought our findings were plausible. In fact, the consensus was that although our survey produced good national estimates of the extent of both forms of electoral manipulation, it *underestimated* intimidation in the northern region of the country. In addition to providing expert validation for the results, their candid reaction was an excellent starting point to gather valuable testimonies about the workings of electoral machines in Guatemala.

Intimidation was more prevalent than vote-buying during the 2011 elections. This result would seem to contradict our argument about the restraining effect of legitimacy and reputational concerns on the use of sticks. Although a single case study provides limited leverage to analyze variation in the extent of vote-buying relative to

intimidation, the interviewees offered valuable clues as to why, despite its costs, intimidation was so widely used. In particular, sources emphasized the role of party weakness. One of our theoretical assumptions is that brokers' use of intimidation is a function of their employer's ability to monitor their behavior. As monitoring capacity declines, brokers should feel less constrained by their bosses' preference for less violent campaigning, and more inclined to deploy electoral strategies that allow them to extract rents. In this sense, various testimonies emphasized that in Guatemala parties are franchise organizations with limited central monitoring. The marked disconnect between national elites and the rank and file in charge of deploying campaign appeals leads to a general lack of accountability of brokers. For example, a member of Congress highlighted her inability to monitor the behavior of her campaign staff. In line with our argument, she also emphasized the rural nature of her constituency as a factor that hampers effective oversight:

Political parties are highly centralized in the capital. I represent a small town in the interior and I try to travel to the countryside as much as possible, but it is difficult to maintain permanent communication with my base. For my re-election I had to hire a new campaign team and I do not know many of its members very well. I cannot guarantee their ethical behavior. (Member of Congress, CREO)

In addition to the lack of vertically integrated party organizations, another feature of weakly institutionalized systems is electoral volatility. As the above testimony indicates, fledgling personalistic parties are highly dependent on hastily arranged contracts between congressional candidates and mercenary local agents capable of mobilizing voters. As a result, brokers are less concerned about the long-term reputation of their circumstantial bosses. They use this to their advantage since in these contexts the threat of not being hired for future elections if they engage in damaging behavior loses credibility. After all, the candidates they work for might not even be around during the next cycle. This perverse incentive structure coupled with the lack of internal accountability mechanisms was a recurrent topic during the meeting with party leaders. One of them mentioned the problems faced by new organizations when putting together campaign teams:

I belong to a new political organization and it is difficult for us to put together an electoral machine in six months. To do so we have to hire local politicians capable of mobilizing voters in our favor. How do they do

that? Probably through clientelism and harassment. To be honest, I'm not sure. It is not that the national party orders them to behave this way, but we cannot control them. (Party operative, LIDER)

Similarly, a member of UNE, the party founded by former president Colom, explained:

Practicing politics in Guatemala is very difficult. Parties rise and fall every other election. As a result, it is impossible to keep political operators loyal to one flag. If national legislators switch parties, local leaders do too. They are very pragmatic. If they need to intimidate voters to succeed in local politics, they will. What can we do? (Member of Congress, UNE)

Finally, another politician mentioned party weakness as the key to understand brokers' ability to disregard legitimacy concerns:

The politicians in Guatemala [City] are the only ones that are committed to a party. We are the face [sic] of parties on TV and in newspapers. Political operators in the interior are like swallows: they migrate from party to party. That's why they can commit electoral crimes without concern about the consequences of their actions. (Party operative, LIDER)

These testimonies lend credibility to some of the assumptions that guide our theoretical framework. They also support one of the main findings in the literature on intimidation, namely that it is a strategy primarily deployed by weak parties (Collier & Vicente, 2008, 2012; Fjelde, 2020). Intimidation appeals to weak parties not only because of their desperation, but also because it requires relatively less sophisticated organizations. But the interview data are counter-intuitive from the perspective of the mainstream literature on clientelism. Scholars that analyze the intermediary role brokers play in clientelistic practices tend to describe them as part of ingrained political machines that respond to party mandates. By contrast, our findings indicate that relatively disjointed party structures not only can engage in electoral manipulation, but most importantly, generate incentives for the widespread use of intimidation due to the absence of intraparty accountability mechanisms. These incentives are even greater where accountability is more elusive: in poor, rural areas with minimal state presence, an unfortunate tradition of impunity, and a legacy of political violence. One of our interviewees referred to this problem as follows:

Violence is a structural problem in Guatemala. Is it possible to think that politics would be different? I do not think so. Legacies from the civil war are still out there and because of this electoral mobilization is violent as well. It's not our fault; this is the context we inherited.

(Party operative, FRG)

Although the discussion with party leaders was illuminating, we still lack direct evidence to substantiate some of our assumptions about brokers' calculations when deciding how to allocate resources, and how party weakness influences their decisions. In particular, future work should explore the role of brokers in intimidation campaigns. We have plenty of ethnographic work about who activates clientelistic networks and how, but we lack equivalent data on the use of violence. It is important to explore how the absence/presence of accountability mechanisms vis-à-vis national leaders, or the ability of voters to denounce electoral malpractice, affects brokers' strategies. In addition, due to the plausible incentives of national-level politicians to deflect blame towards local-level brokers, interviews with the rank and file are necessary for validating the claims of national-level political actors.

## Conclusion

This article contributes to the literature on electoral manipulation in the developing world by bringing together the worlds of vote-buying and intimidation. Filling this gap is important for two reasons. First, it gives a more comprehensive portrayal of parties' campaign strategies. A lot of work on vote-buying studies democratic elections and ignores the issue of voter intimidation, but there is no reason to assume that in democracies politicians refrain from violence. In this respect, exploring whether sticks exist alongside carrots, and how they are used jointly to enhance their effectiveness, can give us the means to evaluate an important aspect of democratic quality. In Guatemala, we find that gift dispensation and intimidation are both extensively used by parties during elections. What is somewhat disturbing is that the party operatives that we interviewed agreed that these two practices were pervasive throughout the country and felt there was nothing they could do to curb them.

Second, by studying both clientelism and intimidation it is possible to analyze whether these electoral tactics respond to different strategic considerations. Our findings suggest they do: the targeting logic in the case of vote-buying is diametrically opposed to that of

intimidation. Vote-buying is oriented toward individuals who are responsive to inexpensive gifts and favors, and whose values and beliefs make clientelism self-enforcing. Intimidation, on the other hand, is directed at the most vulnerable sectors of society, particularly against individuals who are not responsive to vote-buying and who are unlikely to hold their end of the bargain. Moreover, whereas vote-buying is used to mobilize certain constituencies, intimidation is used to demobilize voters. We also have evidence to suggest that brokers refrain from intimidating in places where the practice can be easily reported. It is precisely in those places where vote-buying is more pervasive.

These findings are relevant because they show the widespread use of voter intimidation in one democracy. If the same is true in other developing countries, this constitutes a major gap in the literature. While other Latin American countries do not have the same bloody history as Guatemala, they also face serious problems stemming from the presence of drug trafficking organizations and gangs. It is conceivable that these actors help brokers camouflage violence and directly provide them with the infrastructure to similarly engage in intimidation. In addition to painting a fuller picture of violence amidst democracy, future comparative work is essential to explore the role that institutional variation plays in exacerbating or moderating the use of sticks alongside clientelism. For example, one implication of our argument that is supported by the qualitative evidence is that the absence of local machines that are vertically integrated into national parties, together with the proliferation of ephemeral parties, makes violence relatively appealing to brokers. This is because it limits considerations about the legitimacy costs of intimidation. Another implication is that the presence of more severe institutions dedicated to organizing and regulating elections should heighten legitimacy concerns. If this is correct, we may possibly find different combinations of carrots and sticks in contexts where parties are more institutionalized or where the official sanctioning of violence is more effective. Under such conditions, intimidation could be much lower. Furthermore, the distinctions we predict in the use of carrots and sticks between voters in rural and urban areas, or between voters with different attitudes and beliefs, may be more pronounced simply because brokers are in greater need to ensure they are not discovered when they violate basic democratic norms, or that their bosses are not sanctioned.

Finally, our findings have implications for the literature on clientelism and elections. First, they can help refine political economy theories of distributive politics:



we show that who is targeted with carrots is a function of who is available to be effectively targeted with sticks. In other words, vote-buying strategies are based not only on calculations about the utility differentials generated by the distribution of gifts and favors, as most models imply, but also on the substitutability of the practice by other available electoral strategies. These insights need to be incorporated into future models of distributive politics, and the empirical strategies designed to test them must acknowledge the possibility that intimidation tactics are implemented alongside clientelistic ones. Second, the fact that these practices are oriented towards different groups suggests that clientelistic relations, although colored by status and power differentials, are not inextricably linked to the overt use of force. This finding is important for the ongoing debate about the merits and demerits of the practice.

### Replication data

The dataset, codebook, and do-files for the empirical analysis in this article, as well as the Online appendix, can be found at <http://www.prio.org/jpr/datasets>.

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### ORCID iD

Ezequiel Gonzalez Ocantos  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9617-478X>

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- EZEQUIEL GONZALEZ-OCANTOS, b. 1984, PhD in Political Science (University of Notre Dame, 2012); Associate Professor, University of Oxford.
- CHAD KIEWIET DE JONGE, b. 1985, PhD in Political Science (University of Notre Dame, 2013); Affiliated Researcher, Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas.
- CARLOS MELÉNDEZ, b. 1977, PhD in Political Science (University of Notre Dame, 2015); Post-Doctoral Fellow, Universidad Diego Portales.
- DAVID NICKERSON, b. 1974, PhD in Political Science (Yale University, 2005); Associate Professor, Temple University.
- JAVIER OSORIO, b. 1979, PhD in Political Science (University of Notre Dame, 2013); Assistant Professor, University of Arizona.