

Electoral Malpractice: Typology and Trends

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A typology of electoral malpractice

- The manipulation of rules
- The manipulation of voters
- The manipulation of voting

The manipulation of rules

- Includes efforts to alter electoral laws and other administrative regulations to partisan or group advantage.
- E.g.: suffrage restrictions, party/candidate entry restrictions, gerrymandering, malapportionment, any other rule designed to undermine the level playing field of elections

Examples: The manipulation of rules

- The United States: Gerrymandering
- Malaysia and Bahrain: malapportionment
- Ukraine and Cote d'Ivoire: restrictions on candidacy
- South Africa: de facto restrictions on the franchise (until 1994)
- Soviet Union: de facto ban (until 1990) on alternative political parties

The manipulation of voters

Includes:

- The manipulation of *genuine* voter preferences via systematic media bias and deceptive political communication during election campaigns
- The manipulation of *expressed* voter preferences via (a) vote-buying/clientelism and/or (b) intimidation and/or violence

Examples: The manipulation of voters

- Almost everywhere: Disinformation (‘fake news’)
- Turkey since 2016: Restrictions on opposition-supporting media outlets
- Honduras (regularly): The allocation of food, jobs, health care, building materials and state benefits to supporters of the party in power
- India (regularly): violent clashes between the supporters of rival political parties

The manipulation of voting

- Includes illicit alterations to the implementation of the procedures governing elections so as to bias the outcome
- E.g.: ballot-box stuffing, mistabulation and other forms of fraud
- Tends to take place on election day, but often also takes place before (e.g. manipulation of the electoral register)

Examples: Manipulating of voting

- France in the 1990s (and many other countries): electoral register stuffing ('dead souls')
- UK in the 19th century: personation ('vote early, vote often')
- Costa Rica in the 19th century: ballot-box stuffing
- Russia since 1991: altering vote totals during vote tabulation

Choice of strategy

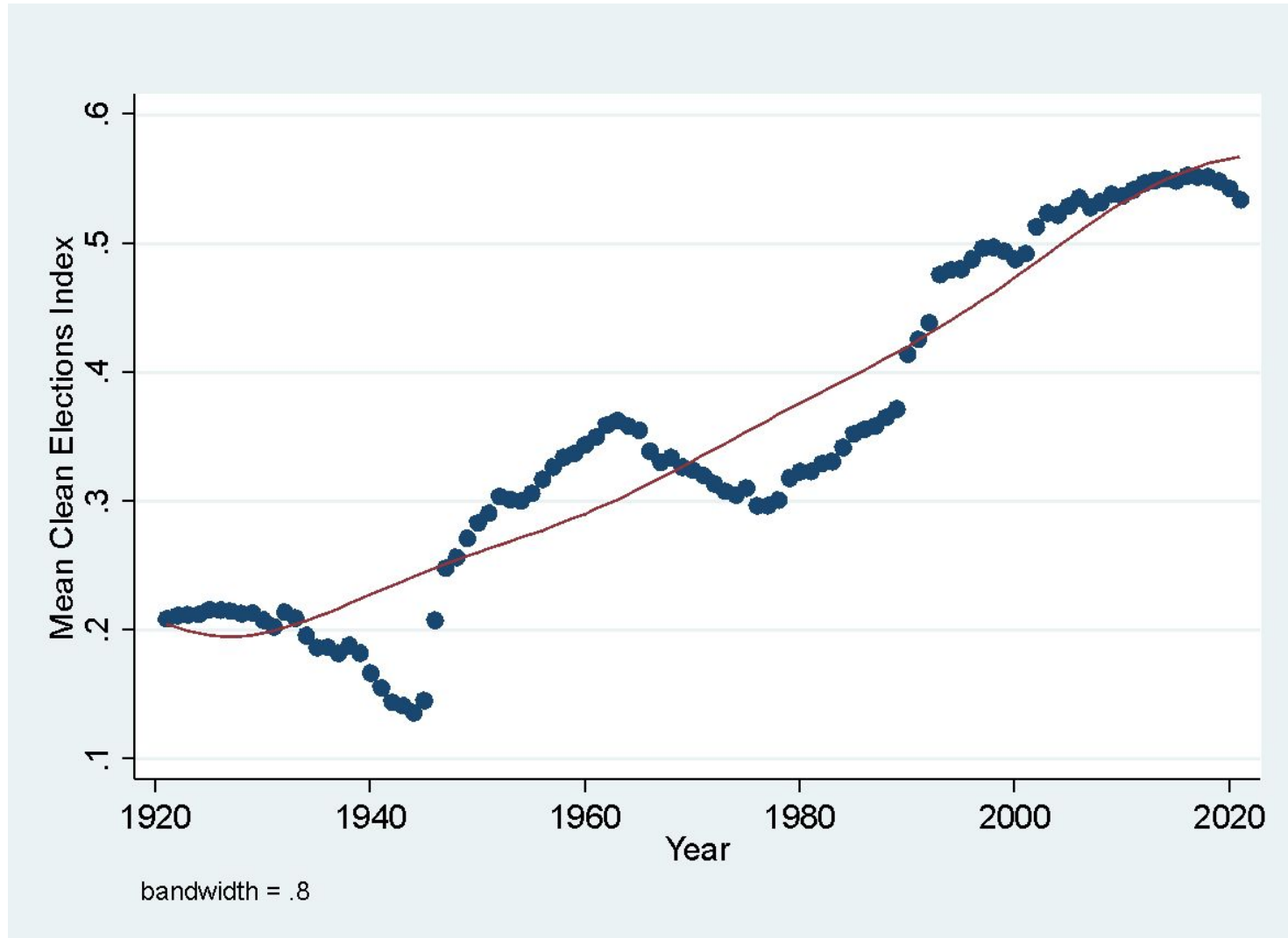
- **The manipulation of electoral rules:** tends to preserve legitimacy and minimise cost – an attractive option **and the most common form of electoral manipulation, when politically feasible**
- **The manipulation of voters:** can preserve legitimacy if it involves vote-buying and the manipulation of information, but less so if it involves coercion; still **relatively common**
- **The manipulation of voting:** high-risk to legitimacy (domestic and international) and *least common form of electoral manipulation*

Trends in electoral integrity

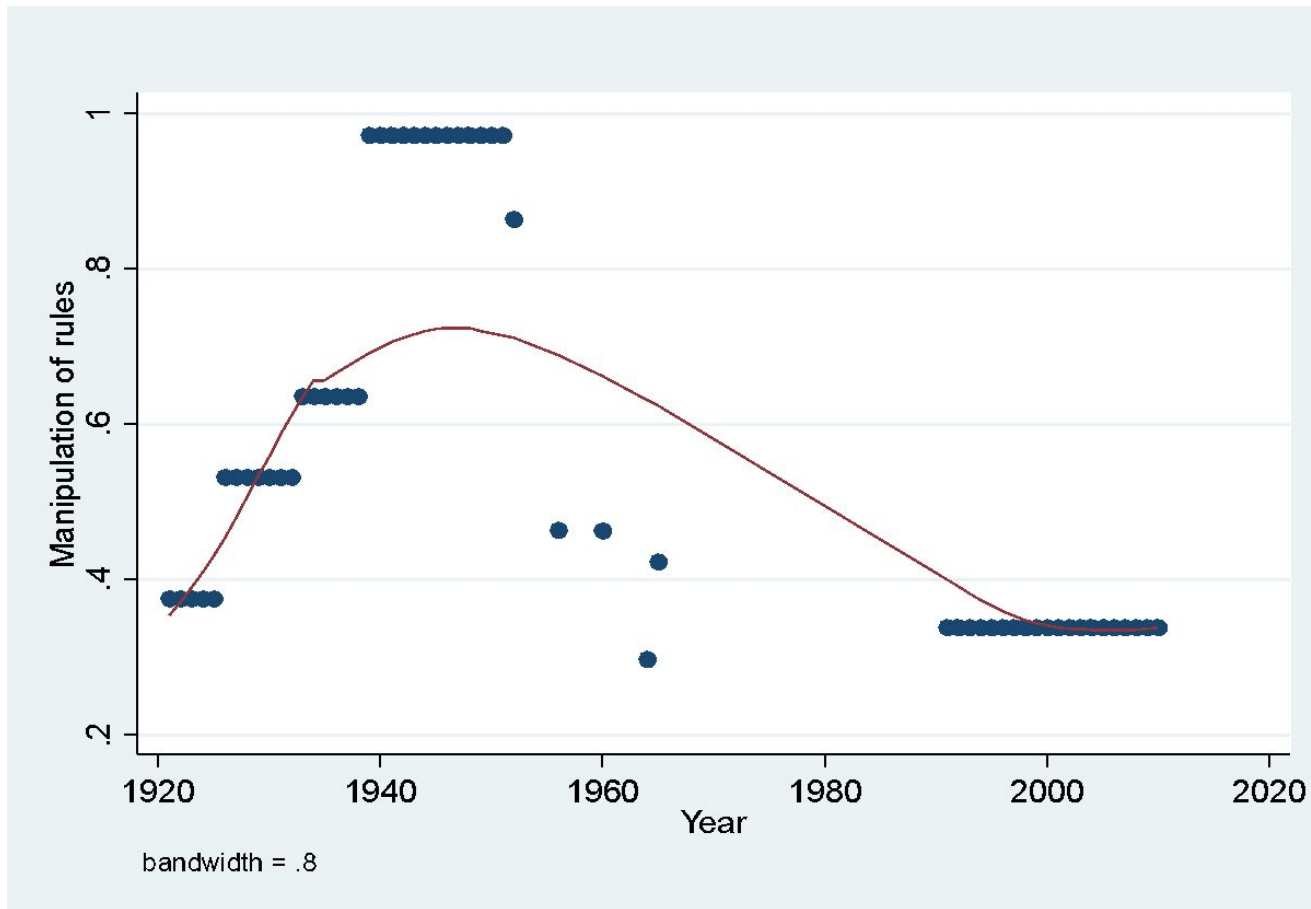
The Varieties of Democracy dataset (v 12) provides good measures for:

- Overall electoral integrity (*v2xel_frefair* inverted)
 - The manipulation of electoral rules (*v2x_suffr* inverted + *v3elmalalc* inverted + *e_polcomp* inverted / 3)
 - Some aspects of the manipulation of voters: the manipulation of information (*v2xme_altinf* inverted), vote-buying (*v2elvotbuy* inverted) and electoral violence & intimidation (*v2elintim* + *v2elpeace*/2 inverted)
 - The manipulation of voting (*v2elirreg* inverted)
- (All indicators are normalised)

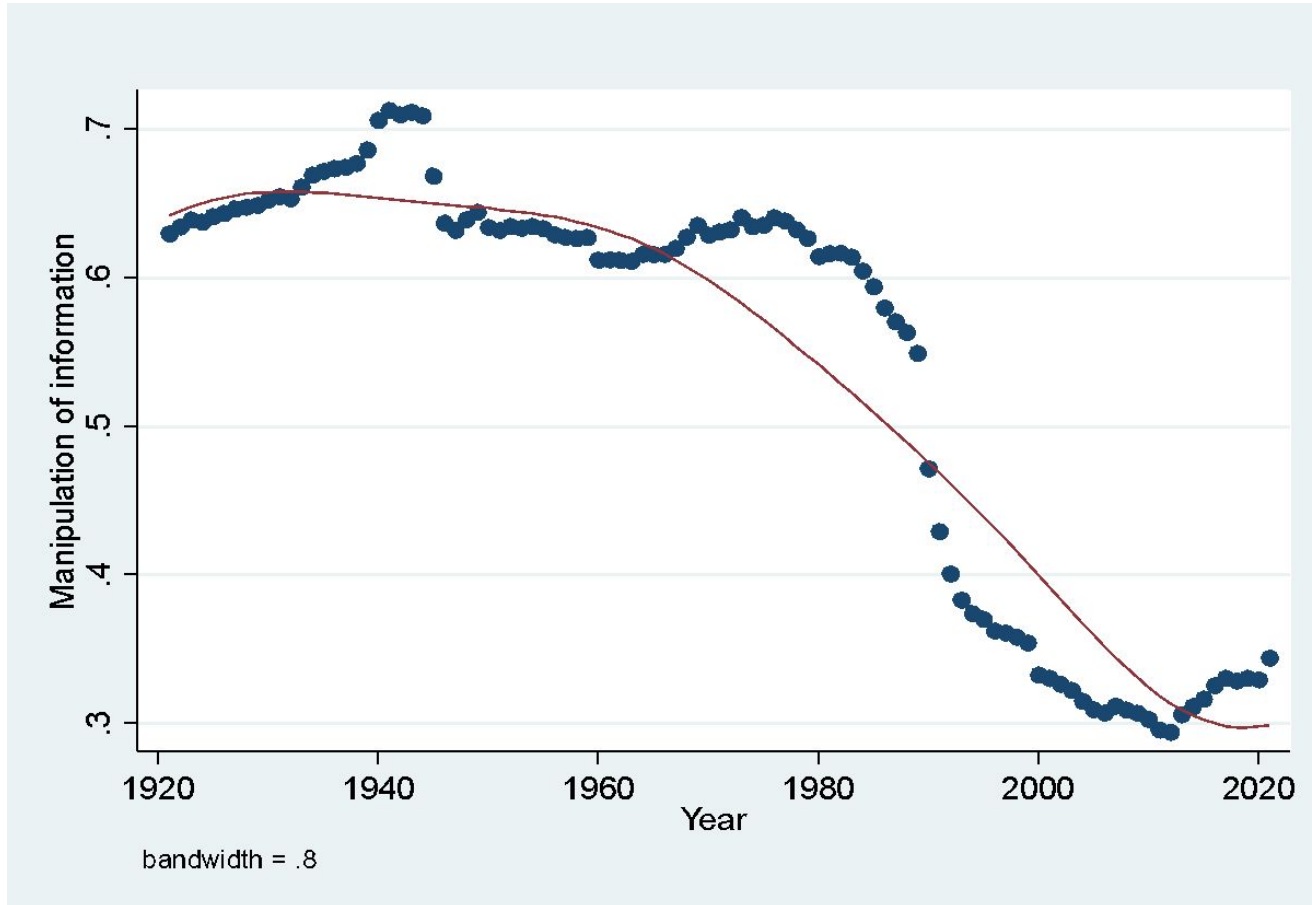
Trends : Overall electoral integrity



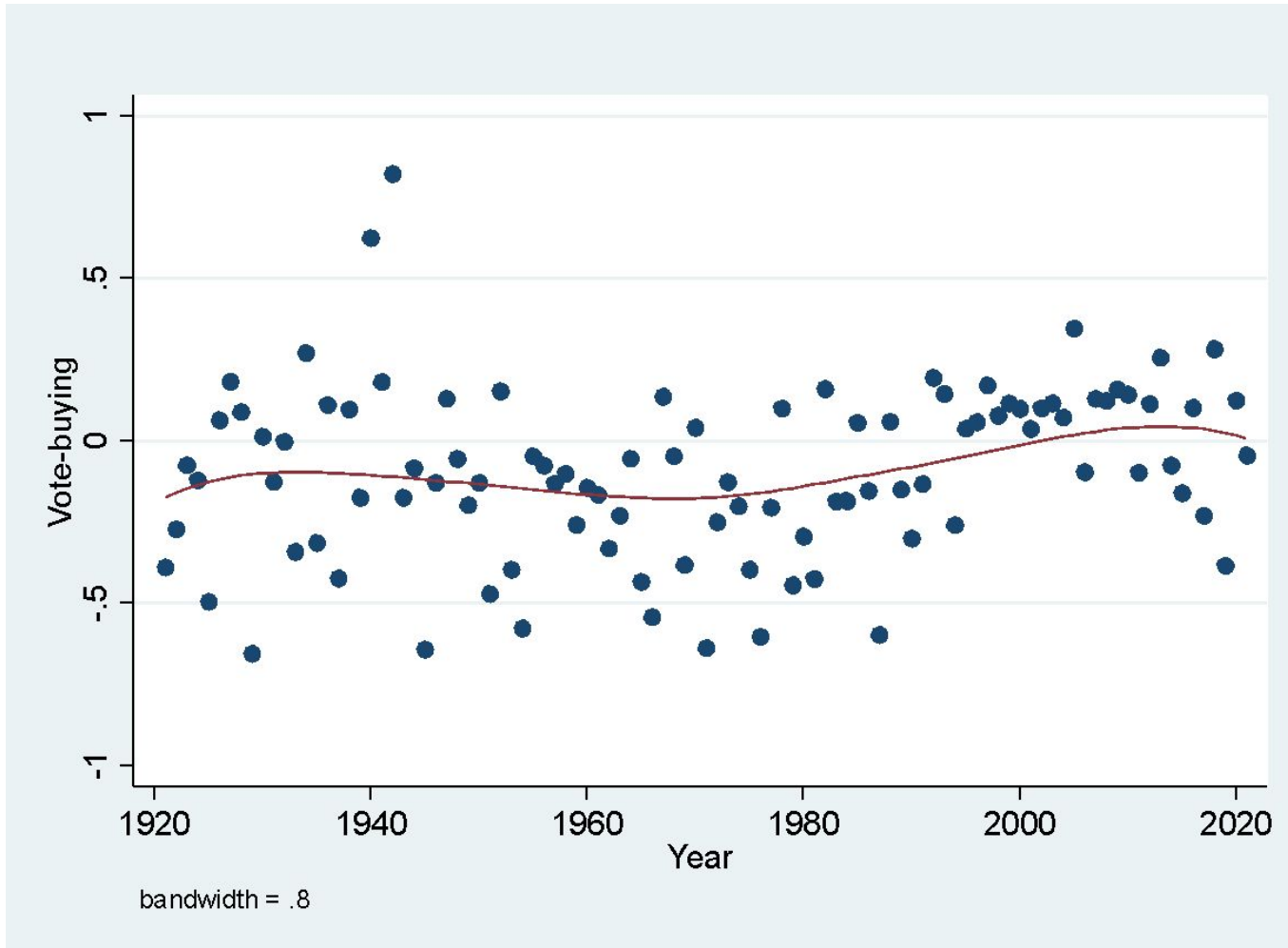
Trends: Manipulation of rules



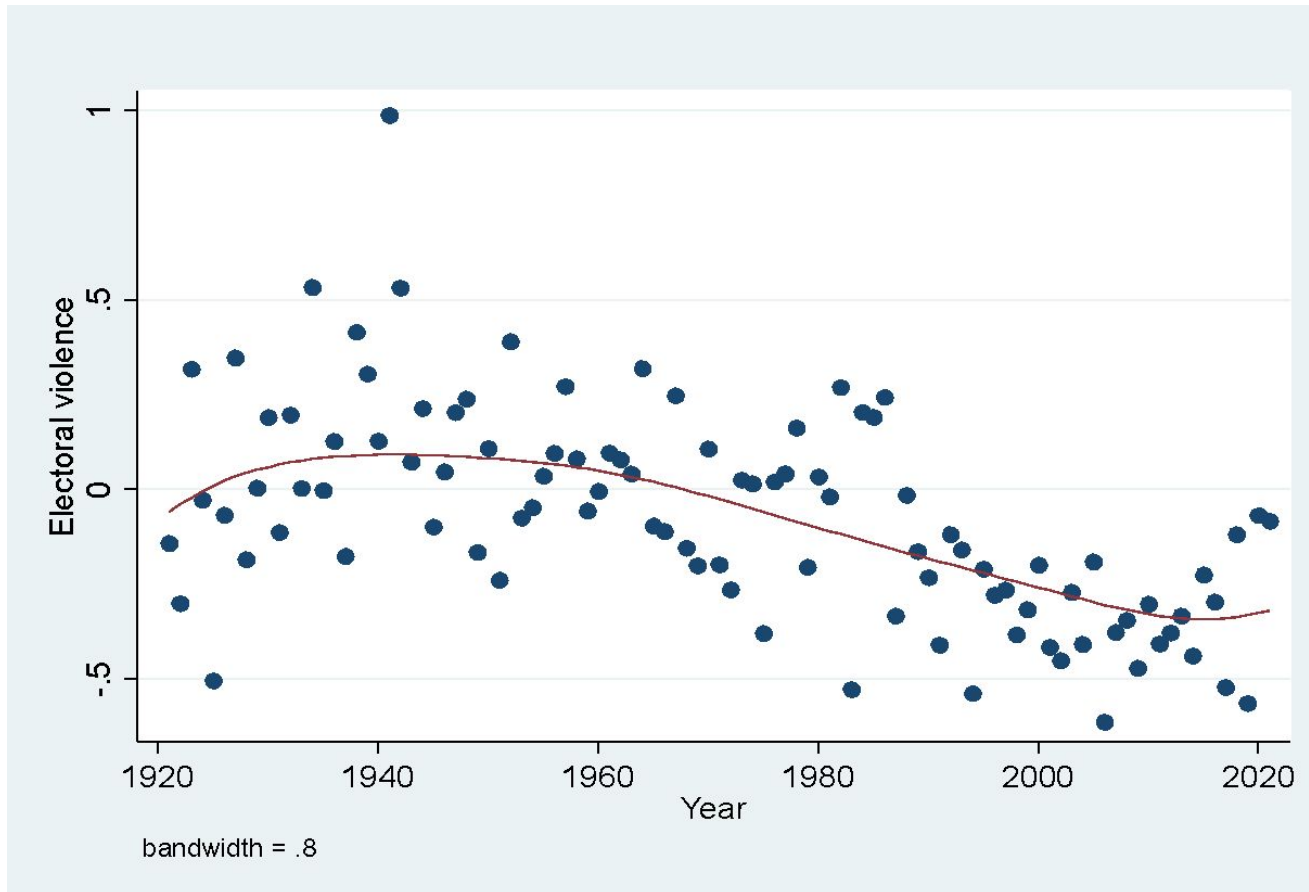
Trends: Manipulation of information



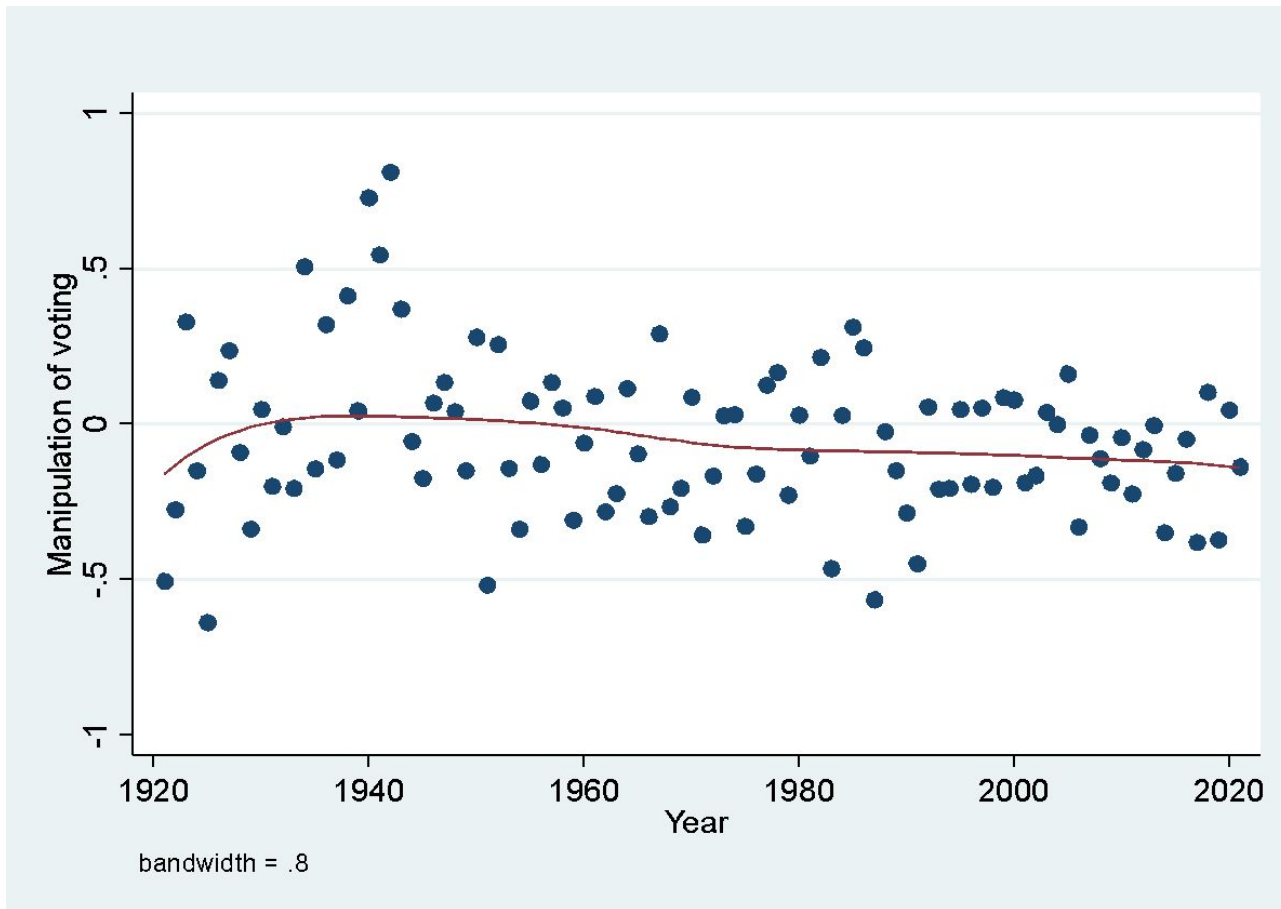
Trends: Vote-buying



Trends: Electoral violence and intimidation



Trends: The manipulation of voting



Conclusions

- Electoral integrity has generally increased over the past century
- However, recent years have witnessed worrying increases in the manipulation of information and in electoral violence
- The custodians of electoral integrity need to be sensitive to the complexity of this phenomenon and the myriad ways it can be undermined