

PRIME MINISTERS
AND
DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS

ELECTORAL BEHAVIOUR AND
PRIME MINISTERIAL ACCOUNTABILITY
IN PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEMS

by

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“Finally, among these smaller committees there will be a general-purpose committee [...] called cabinet or government, possibly with a general secretary or *scapegoat* at its head, a so-called prime minister.”

(Schumpeter, *Capitalism, socialism and democracy*, 2003 [1950]: p. 251; *emphasis added*)

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Chapter 1

Introduction

THAT voters use parliamentary elections to hold ruling parties accountable is a crucial assumption for the working of representative democracy. If the re-election of ruling parties by voters does not depend on their performance in office, then why should parties respond to voters' concerns and act responsibly and ultimately serve the interests of their voters and the public? If they needn't worry about their re-election prospects, because re-election is independent of performance in office, political parties and their politicians could simply pursue their personal interests. Yet, an extensive literature on economic and performance voting shows that voters hold governing parties accountable and punish or reward them for their economic and policy performance. However, the ongoing presidentialisation¹ of parliamentary elections that fosters an increasing influence of prime ministers (PMs) and other leaders calls into question the continuation of this mechanism of punishment and reward. As PMs and other leaders become more important in swaying vote choices among the electorate, voters may base their decision at the ballot box to a decreasing extent on the past performance of the ruling party and to a larger extent on their feelings towards and perception of the PM.

Does the fact that voters increasingly base their vote choice on their perception of the PM weaken the accountability mechanism of parliamentary elections? In parliamentary systems PMs hold a singular position. They are the agenda-setter of democratically elected governments and frequently combine this important position with formal leadership of their party. Therefore, they embody the government and

¹The two concepts *personalisation* and *presidentialisation* are sometimes falsely used as interchangeable terms. In the introduction and conclusion of this thesis I refer to the concept of *presidentialisation* and discuss the difference between the two concepts on page 8. However, some of the individual articles re-produced within this thesis use the term *personalisation* when referring to phenomena that also fall under electoral presidentialisation.

their party. Consequently, PMs are likely to affect the performance of their government. Does this mean that the electorate also holds PMs personally responsible for government performance during the PM's tenure? How does the decreasing media freedom and increasing governmental control over the media in some European countries like Hungary or Poland affect the electoral influence of PMs? Does the concept of presidentialisation refine our understanding of differences in prime ministerial strength across European countries? In this thesis I provide answers to these questions and develop the concept of *presidentialised prime ministerial accountability* to address the issue of electoral accountability in presidentialised parliamentary elections. I argue that an increasing presidentialisation of parliamentary elections does not weaken the electoral accountability mechanism, because voters assign a personal accountability for government performance to PMs and update their perception of them accordingly.

This cumulative dissertation is divided into six chapters. The first chapter elaborates on the logic of inquiry and spells out the accountability question that arises in presidentialised parliamentary elections in detail. I also discuss the joint theoretical foundation of the several articles and develop my concept of presidentialised prime ministerial accountability. Afterwards, the four articles of this cumulative thesis are re-produced in individual chapters in the form in which they were accepted for publication and in once case in the form in which the article is currently under revision & resubmission. In the last chapter I provide a conclusion of my findings and discuss their limitations, as well as my contributions to the literature which open new avenues for research.

1.1 Electoral Accountability and the Challenge of Presidentialisation

The influence of leading candidates,² re-running PMs and even of presidential candidates on individual voting behaviour in elections has been historically met with a sceptical response, chiefly on two grounds: first, that their influence on the electorate is limited to very specific contexts or that their effect on vote choice

²It is important to note that leading candidates, sometimes also called prime ministerial candidates or party leaders, which run on the top of the party list and therefore represent their party in a parliamentary election, are not necessarily the formal head of their respective party. I use the term leading candidates predominantly, but also refer to 'party leaders' or 'leaders' for stylistic relief.

is negligible. Second, that voting behaviour influenced by the personality and personal characteristics of candidates are irrational.

In this section I start by defining parliamentary systems and the democratic functions of parliamentary elections, before I address the objection that PMs and leading candidates have no significant electoral influence in these systems. I then consider the electoral accountability problems raised by the objection that voters' choices, which are based on their perception of leading candidates are irrational or less rational than other causes of voting behaviour.

Accountability in Parliamentary Systems

How can parliamentary systems be defined and distinguished from other institutional arrangements like presidential systems? Political systems around the world are made up by varying institutional arrangements in which specific rules are rarely identical. However, these varying arrangements have been classified into general patterns that describe how power is transferred from the people to the executive. Therefore, a presidential system is characterized by the popular, direct election of the head of the executive, usually called *president* (Elgie, 2011; Ganghof, 2012; Strøm, 2000). In contrast, a parliamentary system is characterised by the indirect transfer of power from the people to the executive via an assembly, meaning that voters first elect an assembly which then has to provide continued confidence to a selected executive (Strøm, 2000, 2003). This definition of parliamentarism is blind with regard to the exact selection mechanism of the executive. In fact, parliamentary systems are characterised by various forms through which the executive is selected.

For example, in the United Kingdom the PM is selected and invested by the monarch, the head of state, who by constitutional convention considers the majority in parliament when making their choice. In contrast, in Germany the PM is selected by the head of state, but also has to pass a majority vote in parliament before being invested. Although the selection processes in these examples differ, both PMs have to rely on the ongoing confidence of their parliament to govern, because each parliament has the ability to deselect the PM in a vote of no confidence. These different relationships between the people who elect members of the legislature, the legislature and the executive can be expressed in principle-agent theory with multiple principals and agents (Strøm, 2000, 2003). In the following paragraphs I focus my discussion of this framework on the key differences between the principal-

agent relationships in presidential and parliamentary systems to introduce the concept of presidentialisation.

Parliamentary systems are characterised by a clear line of accountability that has been conceptualised by Strøm (2000) in the principal-agent framework (cf. Miller, 2005, for an overview of principal-agent theory in political science). In short, principle-agent theory conceptualises relationships between actors by designating one actor as the *principal*, who transfers authority and tasks to the *agent* that the agent is to fulfil independently. A number of methods to control the fulfilment of these tasks are available to the principal, who can also take back said authority. Applying this conceptual framework to parliamentary systems, voters can be designated as principals of their agent, the elected representatives that sit in parliament, because voters elect the parliament, transferring their authority as ultimately sovereign principal. Simultaneously, no parliament is elected forever and voters have the opportunity to act as principals and hold elected politician to account by voting for different politicians in the next election; optimally casting a vote that depends on the performance of elected members of parliament. I will discuss the definition and assumptions of this electoral accountability behaviour in greater detail at the end of this section.

In turn, the elected representatives that constitute parliament are not only agents: they are also principals to the executive and more specifically to the PM, who needs their continued confidence to lead the government.³ PMs also receive tasks from their principal, the parliament: they are tasked with selecting and leading the cabinet, coordinating policies and representing, as well as negotiating for, the country on the international level. Lastly, at the very end of the chain of accountability PMs are once again principals themselves. In their function as principal they choose ministers to head individual executive departments and these cabinet ministers rely on the PM's support to serve in the executive.⁴

The accountability chain described above is shown in Figure 1.1. Starting with the voters as principal and ending with individual cabinet ministers as agents

³At minimum PMs rely on the absence of a formal declaration of no confidence, a vote of no confidence in parliament, which parties will sometimes temporarily withhold for strategic purposes (e.g. to influence the timing of the parliamentary election).

⁴Strøm (2000) formulates a further step in the chain of accountability in parliamentary systems that runs from cabinet ministers to the members in the individual executive departments that cabinet ministers lead. For the purpose of this thesis this last step is not of relevance and is therefore not discussed.



Figure 1.1: Formal constitutional chain of accountability in parliamentary systems as conceptualised by Strøm (2000).

of the PM. This depiction makes clear that in parliamentary systems executive authority stems from the authority of the legislature and consequently the executive is responsible to the legislature (Lijphart, 1984, 1992; Strøm, 2000), because any majority of parliamentary members can choose to vote the PM and their cabinet out of office. Ideally parliamentary systems adhere to this chain of non-competing principals and this *singularity principle* sets them apart from presidential systems which feature competing principals (Strøm, 2000, p. 269).

Parliamentary government is furthermore characterised by the joint accountability of the cabinet (Blondel and Müller-Rommel, 1993). The PM and their cabinet ministers reach collective decisions and are jointly accountable to parliament. However, in most parliamentary systems the PM enjoys considerable powers to set the agenda of their government and is responsible for the general direction of government business. This contrasts with presidential systems in which the president is solely responsible to the electorate for government actions and acts as principal of their chosen secretaries. Other agents of voters in presidential systems, such as members of upper and lower legislative chambers, control and confirm various actors like the executive secretaries selected by the president. However, the members of these legislative bodies are not the principal of the president – this role is reserved for voters.

Scholars have also provided more detailed classifications of political systems that deviate from the pure types of parliamentary and presidential democracy described above. These semi-types are achieved by either splitting the executive into two parts or by installing two legislative assemblies of which only one has to provide confidence to the executive. Dividing the executive leads to a semi-presidential systems in which executive power is shared among a direct, popularly elected president and a PM (Elgie, 2011). Therefore, only a part of the executive is dependent on the confidence of the legislature. Within semi-presidential systems one may further distinguish between premier-presidential and president-parliamentary variants (Shugart and Carey, 1992). In president-parliamentary variants the PM and cabinet are collectively responsible to the legislature, as well as the president.

In contrast, premier-presidential variants feature collective responsibility of the PM and their cabinet solely to the legislature.

The most recent addition to the classification of political systems has been provided by Ganghof (2012, 2018) with the definition of semi-parliamentary systems as a distinct type of parliamentarism. In semi-parliamentary systems two separate assemblies, directly elected by the people, share legislative powers, but only one of the two assemblies supplies confidence to the prime ministerial executive and can dismiss the PM. As Ganghof (2018) argues this division of labour between the two assemblies can benefit political systems if the assembly who supplies confidence to the PM provides stable government options via a majoritarian electoral system, while the other assembly can be elected by a proportional formula to better represent the interests of the people in policy-making.

With regard to this thesis I do not differentiate between pure parliamentary systems and semi-parliamentary systems. This is because, as I will set out in the following Section 1.2, I am interested in the chain of accountability from the voter via the confidence supplying assembly to the executive that exists in pure parliamentary as well as semi-parliamentary systems. Nevertheless, this heterogeneity of institutional settings may be leveraged to shed additional light on the mechanisms of prime ministerial accountability, by studying voting behaviour in these different variants. I will therefore return to semi-parliamentary systems in my conclusion. In addition, this thesis does not focus on parliamentary elections in semi-presidential systems. First, the necessary survey data is scarce, because in semi-presidential systems many election surveys focus on presidential elections. Second, the clarity of accountability and agenda-setting powers are vaguer in divided executives (Elgie, 2018a) than in the unitary executives of parliamentary systems where responsibility is more clear cut even under coalition governments (Angelova, König and Proksch, 2016; Duch and Stevenson, 2013).

Presidentialisation of Parliamentary Systems

While one may clearly define political systems by their formal institutional arrangements, the actual political reality of the power of executives and the behaviour of voters may very well differ from the one we would expect given the institutional setting. One conceptual example of such informal deviation from the institutional arrangement of political systems set out above is the concept of *presidentialisation*. In their seminal work Poguntke and Webb (2005) describe how parliamentary,

semi-presidential and presidential systems may vary in their degree of presidentialised government – as opposed to partified government – depending on the power resources and autonomy of the head of government and the presidentialisation of the electoral process that determines the head of government (Webb and Poguntke, 2013; Poguntke and Webb, 2018). Poguntke and Webb (2005, p. 6f) argue that executive power and autonomy varies between the three regime types (parliamentary, semi-presidential and presidential) due to their formal institutional setting, but also due to changes in society and political context. According to the authors four changes in the societal and political context lead to an increase in presidentialised government across developed democracies:

1. The internationalisation of politics, especially in European democracies where political decision making is increasingly coordinated in the European Union (EU), as well as the necessity for coordination between nations at the global level to combat issues such as climate change or piracy on international trade routes.
2. The growing complexity of the state in which legislation has to match increasingly individualistic societies and intertwined relations between states in a global economy.
3. Changes in mass communication, especially the advent of television as the main source of political information; compared to a stronger reliance on newspapers and radio in the first half of the 20th century.
4. The erosion of societal cleavages, causing an ongoing dealignment of voters from political parties and, in turn, also causing less stable electoral behaviour.

These four drivers of presidentialisation affect different levels of democratic systems which Poguntke and Webb describe as the faces of presidentialisation:

1. Within the executive leaders gain increased autonomy, because political decisions are progressively reached on the international level, for example at international summits where the head of the executive represents and negotiates personally for the country. Furthermore, the increasing complexity of the state demands more expertise and executive staff for the head of government to coordinate policy making within the state. Lastly, television fosters the ability of executive leaders to bypass other members of the executive

especially in the context of collective decision making in prime ministerial cabinets.

2. Within their political party the executive leader may also gain autonomy as television will emphasise symbolism and personalities when presenting and discussing political issues, instead of focusing on abstract entities (e.g. political parties). This means that the head of government can easily bypass other party elites and communicate directly with the electorate to pursue their policies even against intra-party opposition.
3. Executive leaders exert increasing influence over electoral behaviour, as campaigns frequently centre around the capabilities and individual characteristics of the competing leading candidates from the various political parties. A clear indication of this process is provided by the televised debates among top candidates, which have become a staple even in parliamentary election campaigns.

The concept of presidentialisation further posits an inter-connection between the three faces of presidentialisation so that an increased influence of leader in one of the three faces can logically impact on the autonomy of the leader in another face. For example a PM with large autonomy within their party may increase the presidentialisation of the upcoming election, as the PM can direct the electoral strategy of their party to their liking. In turn a PM with strong influence in the electorate could very well be able to also strengthen intra-executive presidentialisation, because opposition from cabinet ministers can be made costly, for example by directing voters' sentiment against those ministers. In short, presidentialisation at one of the three faces is likely to result in presidentialisation in the other faces.

Two of the underlying causes of presidentialisation, changes in mass communication and weakening of societal cleavages, are shared by the concept of *personalisation* (Poguntke and Webb, 2018, p. 194) which posits an increase in importance of individual political actors (e.g. PMs) compared to collective political actors (e.g. political parties) (Rahat and Sheaffer, 2007). This theoretical overlap has sometimes led to a conflation of both concepts as interchangeable concepts (e.g. Garzia, 2011, p. 698). However, although the presidentialisation of a political system can also be vaguely described with terms from the concept of personalisation (an increased weight of the PM compared to the party and cabinet as collective actors), the

concept of presidentialisation offers a specific focus on the status of executive heads in political systems.⁵ As Poguntke and Webb highlight: “*The concept of presidentialization is not just about the increased weight of individuals at the expense of collective bodies. It is, in the first instance, concerned with the effects of this increased weight on the working mode of political systems.*” (Poguntke and Webb, 2018, p. 193).

The concept of presidentialisation permits a clear identification of the relevant levels in which leaders’ gain in power and how their increase in autonomy changes political processes in parliamentary systems. Therefore, presidentialisation also consider underlying causes like the internationalization of politics that are particularly relevant to heads of government in political systems, but would be irrelevant for an analysis of the personalisation of party lists. Furthermore, scholars of personalisation argue that personalisation will not always lead to a centralisation of power in the hands of a small number of individual top-level politicians, like PMs, but can also lead to a decentralisation of power (Balmas et al., 2014) among many politicians – a hypothesis that is not postulated by the presidentialisation thesis.

The Challenge to Electoral Accountability

Having defined the formal constitutional core of parliamentary systems and the concept of presidentialisation that leads to changes in the behavioural logic of these systems, in the following paragraphs I describe the accountability issue that arises from the presidentialisation of parliamentary systems, and more specifically from presidentialised parliamentary elections.

As described in the previous section parliamentary and presidential systems each follow their own logic. While presidents are basically autonomous in their handling of the executive, parliamentary government is based on joint decision making within the cabinet. Members of the cabinet (PM and cabinet ministers) are collectively accountable and their governance is conditional on the support of parliament. The difference in power and autonomy of the two types of executive

⁵The concept of personalisation has its own advantage, stemming from its broad definition that can encompass various political entities and contexts. One may therefore study the personalisation of preference votes on party lists (Wauters et al., 2018) using the same concept as intra-party personalisation (Rahat and Kenig, 2018) or the influence of leading candidates in parliamentary elections (Garzia, 2014).

leaders is also underpinned by a difference in the electoral mandate of these leaders. Presidents have a direct connection to the electorate and receive direct legitimation, because they are chosen by the voters themselves. In contrast, PMs are chosen by the legislative representatives of voters and therefore voters only indirectly elect the PM.⁶ It is therefore a cause for concern if PMs are becoming more autonomous in parliamentary democracies, without a more direct mandate by the people. Unlike the heads of government in presidential systems, PMs are not limited by fixed terms, therefore allowing PMs to potentially stay in office for a very long time and dominate political decision making if they are able to maintain a supporting majority within parliament. However, the presidentialisation of parliamentary systems also leads to another concern over accountability, the issue of electoral accountability, which will be the focus of this thesis.

The electoral presidentialisation concept posits that in parliamentary elections leading candidates have grown more important over the course of the last decades. This hypothesis does not only argue for a trend in voters' behaviour over time, but also makes the underlying assumption that the leading candidates of parliamentary parties influence the vote choice of citizens, even if those citizens can not vote for them directly. Therefore, I first evaluate the merit of the underlying assumption, before making a judgement about whether electoral behaviour in parliamentary elections has indeed presidentialised.

For a considerable time, the underlying assumption of electoral presidentialisation has been viewed with scepticism. Compared to presidential elections, the electoral influence of leading candidates has been described as negligible (Bartle and Crewe, 2002; King, 2002a). It is worth noting that the debate over the best explanation for voting behaviour in presidential elections – policy issues, voters' social class, emotional attachment to political parties, or the characteristics and personality of presidential candidates – is a foundational debate in the American voting literature (Miller, Wattenberg and Malanchuk, 1986). In this debate, Stokes (1966) argued for the importance of candidate's characteristics, (e.g. religion, appearance) and personality therefore putting significantly more emphasis on the competing candidates than in the funnel of causality of the socio-psychological

⁶Here we abstract from existing varieties of parliamentary government again, because in some instance like in the UK a PM can be invested into office without a vote in parliament. However, even in this situation the PM governance rests on the continued support by the elected representatives of the people in parliament and the selection of the PM reflects the majority in parliament.

model of voting by Campbell et al. (1966) which placed candidates and issues at the end of their funnel of causality with a smaller short-term impact on vote choice.

In contrast, ‘The People’s Choice’ one of the earliest study of voting behaviour explains the direct popular election of the president with voters’ social background and voters’ self-ascribed social class (Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet, 1944). Neither do presidential candidates and their character feature prominently in the seminal work by Downs (1957) on spatial and rational choice voting. It is therefore not surprising that for a long time scholars have ascribed a negligible effect to leading candidates in parliamentary elections, because unlike in direct presidential elections the electorate can not even vote for them directly.⁷ The threshold for a leader’s personality and personal characteristics to matter is therefore plausibly higher than for candidates in presidential elections in which the whole electorate can mark the leader’s name on the ballot paper. And while leaders are usually well known among the electorate, they may not differ much from each other in terms of personal qualities and which could therefore be outweighed by more significant factors like voters’ ideology (King, 2002*a*, 10–13).

Yet, a long list of empirical research shows that leaders do matter for individual voting behaviour in parliamentary elections (Aarts, Blais and Schmitt, 2011; Bittner, 2018*a,b*; Costa and Ferreira da Silva, 2015; Curtice and Lisi, 2014; Garzia, 2012, 2014, 2017*a,b*, 2014; Garzia and De Angelis, 2016; Lobo, 2008; Lobo and Curtice, 2014; Van der Brug and Mughan, 2007). Voters who hold positive feelings towards a leading candidate are considerably more likely to also vote for the party of the respective candidate, and this effect also exists when one observes not only voters’ overall feelings towards leading candidates, but also their evaluation of concrete characteristics of top candidates (e.g. trustworthiness, competence) (Bittner, 2018*b*; Ferreira da Silva and Costa, 2019; Garzia, 2017*b*). In addition, there is evidence that leading candidates mobilize voters to turn out and cast their vote in parliamentary elections (Ferreira da Silva, 2018; Ferreira da Silva and Costa, 2019). The mobilizing effect of leading candidates seems to be particularly relevant to re-activate disconnected voters who did not participate in the prior parliamentary election, meaning that leading candidates can act as a visible signal to dealigned voters and voters who are detached from the main tool of political participation. This cumulative evidence has resulted in a recent summary that: *“attention has switched from an initial concern with establishing that leaders do indeed matter to*

⁷There is, of course, one exception in majoritarian or mixed electoral systems, namely the very small portion of the electorate who live in the electoral district of a leading candidate.

one of determining the conditions that influence the degree to which they matter.” Mughan (2015, p. 28f).

A commonly articulated sceptical response to the influence of presidential and prime ministerial candidates is the view that vote choices which are based on the charisma, personality or other characteristics of these candidates are less rational than vote choices based on issues or party identification (Miller, Wattenberg and Malanchuk, 1986, p. 522). Similarly, Curtice and Hunjan (2011) posit that presidentialisation could turn parliamentary elections into ‘beauty contests’ in which voters are more influenced by the appearance and personality of the leading candidates than by the political program and track record of parties. Aaldering (2018) and Ahler et al. (2017) provide similar arguments for the worrisome effect of candidate appearance on electoral behaviour.

If this is the case voters might no longer hold parties accountable for their behaviour and performance in office, but rather rely on their feelings towards leading candidates when casting their vote – while these feelings are in their foundation apolitical. Gullible voters may uncritically accept the media’s persona of the PM and other leading candidates created in modern parliamentary election campaigns. Therefore, voters might be distracted from the actual performance of these individuals and their parties in office and fail to de-select actors who do not represent their interest. Such a behaviour would endanger a fundamental basis of representative democracy, because politicians could simply pursue their own self-interests. In contrast, if voters elect conditional on past performance rational politicians will choose to act anticipatory, and follow the interest of the electorate, in order to get re-elected,⁸ therefore, by virtue of their sanctioning mechanism elections secure that the interests of the electorate are enacted (Downs, 1957; Fiorina, 1981; Key and Cummings, 1966; Mansbridge, 2003). Such electoral behaviour will also ensure promissory representation (Mansbridge, 2003, p. 516) which means that elected politicians do not break those promises that were made during the last election campaign and that are still valued by the electorate.

It might of course be possible that politicians act in the best interest of the people and their constituents even if there is no electoral accountability mechanism (Fearon, 1999); for example because the self-interest of politicians matches the

⁸This rationale necessarily assumes that politicians, at least most politicians, want to get re-elected and prefer office-holding over the alternatives (Manin, Przeworski and Stokes, 1999). Which is reasonable as many politicians pursue a professional political career until their retirement.

will of the electorate. However, from the chain of accountability in parliamentary systems we would demand more than a lucky convergence of self-interests between the principal and the agent, we would expect that parliament acts on behalf of the electorate and that if this is not the case voters would make use of their possibility to sanction politicians in parliament. The fact that voters have only one formal tool,⁹ the parliamentary election, to sanction their agents in parliament is a fundamental issue of electoral accountability (Manin, Przeworski and Stokes, 1999). After all voters might want to pursue other goals when casting their vote at the ballot. Fearon (1999) argues that voters are more likely to use their vote for a prospective action and to select a competent politician to represent them in the upcoming parliament for the coming years, rather than to punish the current politicians for their behaviour in office.¹⁰ Such a prospective rationale of voting would also be affected by an increasing beauty or charisma contest in presidentialised elections in which voters are more and more influenced by the personality and character of leading candidates. Furthermore, voters are likely to apply both types of logic to their voting behaviour, pursuing two goals with one action. Since rational voters will refrain from re-electing a politician who did not serve the interest of the people, but rather elect a competent politician for the next term, they will ultimately pursue accountability even if their election rationale is based on a prospective selection rather than a retrospective punishment. Voters might also vary in their behaviour over time and depending on the context of the election the punishment mechanism might be particularly strong. For instance Dassonneville and Lewis-Beck (2014) find that negative economic performance has the strongest effect on vote choice. For example under the context of economic crises, when voters have one of the clearest signal of a negative service to the public interest. In such times voters' motivation to punish the incumbent party could be strengthened, while their motivation to select the most competent politician

⁹Naturally, there are other tools of political participation with which citizens can try to hold the government and elected politicians accountable or ensure that their interests are represented. Among those are conventional tools like petitions to parliament or unconventional tools like public protests. Some parliamentary democracies have elements of direct democracies (e.g. referenda) which complement representation in parliament. However, parliamentary elections remain the basis of political representation in representative democracies, because even with the possibility of referenda most policies will be enacted by parliament and protests carry no legal obligation or immediate consequences for politicians.

¹⁰Optimally, prior monitoring of the competences of aspiring parliamentary candidates and their commitment to the interest of the citizens which they represent, should already be a goal of democratic parties in representative democracies who make the prior selection of the candidates that voters can later choose to elect (Dalton, Farrell and McAllister, 2011).

becomes secondary.

While electoral accountability is an important feature of representative democracies, the quality of representation will also depend on other features, for example on an adequate degree of descriptive representation of social groups Pitkin (1967), because citizens may be better represented by politicians with the same socio-demographic background. Several empirical studies show that an increase in voters descriptive representation benefits policy outcomes (Bratton and Ray, 2002; Preuhs, 2006), but also voters attitudes towards the political systems (Alexander, 2012). However, even if one identifies descriptive representation as the most desirable feature of representative democracy electoral accountability will be beneficial, because not all candidates will represent their social group equally well. For instance because some candidates will be less competent than others, or since some candidates will be swayed by lobby interests while others will not. Descriptive representation can even enhance electoral accountability as formerly under represented groups become more engaged with politics. Jones (2014) shows that female voters hold female politicians more to account than male politicians. Furthermore, electoral accountability will remain important because not all policy issues are aligned with specific socio-demographic groups, for instance valence issues (Stone and Simas, 2010).

This discussion already makes it clear that electoral accountability will not perfectly secure the interests of the electorate. For instance government parties who did not represent the interest of voters might not actually lose office, since a coalition partner could help them secure another term in office. In addition, voters will never have perfect information about the performance and actions of the parties they elected. This is partly because voters pay only a limited amount of attention to politics, and partly because incumbent parties will try to limit information on their failures and misbehaviour. Voters will therefore sometimes fail to hold parties accountable for misbehaviour and those parties will sometimes be able to cling on even if they performed poorly.

In consequence, I employ a behavioural definition of electoral accountability, namely that the probability of voters to vote for an incumbent party decreases if voters are unsatisfied with the performance of the party in office. Naturally, this should also decrease the probability of the incumbent party to remain in office. In addition, electoral accountability is also present if voters reward parties

for good performance and are more likely to vote for them. Whether electoral accountability exists therefore does not depend on a dichotomous measurement of government replacement, but on the behavioural mechanism employed by voters; where perceptions of government performance can also vary within the electorate. One might therefore say that electoral accountability only fosters the representation of voters' interests, it makes representation more probable, rather than ensuring the representation of voters' interests (Manin, Przeworski and Stokes, 1999). However, this arrangement of representative democracy is certainly more beneficial to citizens' interests than alternative non-democratic regimes.

It is clear that an increasing influence of the personality and charisma of leading candidates in parliamentary elections could therefore put electoral accountability at risk. If voters' perceptions of PMs and leading candidates is progressively determined by factors such as charisma and therefore increasingly dominates voting behaviour, then voters might fail to punish or reward parties for their behaviour in office. However, have parliamentary elections actually presidentialised over time? In the following paragraphs I review the evidence for this claim.

Evidence for Electoral Presidentialisation

Whether the influence of leading candidates in parliamentary elections has indeed increased over time has been a point of long-standing discussion (Wattenberg, 1991). Kriesi (2012) finds some evidence for an increased media focus on PMs in parliamentary election campaigns, but no general increase in focus on leading candidates during campaigns. Similarly, Curtice and Lisi (2014) find no evidence for an increasing impact of leading candidates in parliamentary elections comparable to presidential elections.

In contrast, Schulz and Zeh (2005) find some rising focus on leading candidates in German television reporting between 1990–2002 which they mainly attribute to the commercialization of the television market. Bittner (2018*a*) shows that in case of Canadian parliamentary elections leaders already mattered in 1984 and that their influence has not increased. On the other hand Garzia, Ferreira da Silva and De Angelis (2018), using a larger time frame (starting from 1961) and larger number of countries, find an increasing *relative* influence of leaders over time in Western European democracies. The authors show that the influence of leaders itself does not increase over time, but that the relative importance of leaders in comparison to voters' party identification increased over time. Garzia, Ferreira da

Silva and De Angelis (2018) convincingly argue that electoral presidentialisation also occurs when the relative importance of electoral factors shifts in favour of leaders, following the argument of personalisation by Rahat and Sheafer (2007) as a process:

“in which the political weight of the individual actor in the political process increases over time, while the centrality of the political group (i.e., political party) declines.” (Rahat and Sheafer, 2007, p. 65).

Therefore, the results by Bittner (2018a) and Garzia, Ferreira da Silva and De Angelis (2018) are not necessarily contradictory as the relative influence of leading candidates might have also increased in Canadian elections.

To conclude, the existing scientific evidence suggests a general change in electoral behaviour across established parliamentary democracies, as these democracies are becoming less and less aligned with the existing political parties (Dalton, 1984; Dalton and Flanagan, 2017; Dalton, McAllister and Wattenberg, 2000; Mughan, 2009; Sarlvik and Crewe, 1983). PMs and leading candidates increasingly matter to voters at the ballot box and their influence will likely continue to grow as dealignment intensifies. Voters who mainly rely on television as source of political information also appear to be especially susceptible to the influence of leading candidates (Garzia, 2017a). More concisely, PMs are becoming increasingly autonomous in their governance of parliamentary systems, while at the same time voters' behaviour at the ballot box is also more and more determined by their perceptions of PMs. This development is worrisome and suggests that PMs and their parties can avoid electoral accountability for their time in government by using the PM's personal appeal with the electorate.

What would make this change in voting behaviour less worrisome for the functioning of representative democracy and electoral accountability? I propose that voters who base their decision at the ballot box on their perception of and feeling towards PMs and other leading candidates are acting quite rationally and that the increasing power and autonomy of PMs will also lead voters to adapt the way in which they assign accountability in parliamentary systems. If parliamentary systems presidentialise, assignment of accountability for government performance might likewise presidentialise. The following section makes the argument for a rational conception of voting based on leading candidates, which leads voters to hold PMs personally accountable for government performance.

1.2 Presidentialised Prime Ministerial Accountability in Parliamentary Systems

In this section I develop the theoretical foundation of *presidentialised prime ministerial accountability*. Building on the seminal conception of accountability in parliamentary systems by (Strøm, 2000) I posit the existence of a transitive behavioural element in the formal constitutional chain of accountability, which I describe as presidentialised prime ministerial accountability. In short, I propose that voters will hold PMs personally accountable for the performance of the government that the PM leads. I start by discussing key findings of reward and punishment voting behaviour, as well as the literature on the clarity of responsibility – especially under coalition governments. Thereafter, I argue that voters' perceptions of PMs will be rationally motivated and I elaborate why PMs will be held accountable for the overall performance under joint-decision making in cabinet.

Why should voters hold PMs personally accountable for the performance of the government that the PM leads? To answer this question, I first review whether voters hold incumbent parties accountable for performance in government, before discussing whether PMs are held accountable. If voters already do not hold the governing party to account in parliamentary elections, then it seems unlikely that they will assign accountability towards PMs who they can not vote for directly.

The accumulated literature on rational choice voting behaviour, in which incumbents are held accountable for their economic or policy performance, is quite extensive (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2000, 2009). Of major importance to the study of rational voting behaviour are the contributions of American scholars like (Fair, 1996; Fiorina, 1978, 1981; Key and Cummings, 1966; Powell Jr and Whitten, 1993), which are still foundational for modern studies. Inspired by the theoretical elaborations of Downs (1957), Kramer (1971) wrote one of the earliest empirical works on economic voting, using measures of individual income, consumer prices and unemployment rates. Kramer concludes that:

“election outcomes are in substantial part responsive to objective changes occurring under the incumbent party; they are not ‘irrational’, or random, or solely the product of past loyalties and habits, or of campaign rhetoric and merchandising.” (Kramer, 1971, p. 140).

These findings have sparked extensive studies on economic voting in democracies

around the world, which show that the vote share of incumbent parties is affected by the development of the economy under the incumbent party (Anderson, 2000; Chappell Jr and Veiga, 2000; Dassonneville and Lewis-Beck, 2017; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2000; Nannestad and Paldam, 1997; Whitten and Palmer, 1999). Accordingly, Hernández and Kriesi (2016) find considerable losses of incumbent parties during the economic recessions after the start of the financial crisis in 2007 and recent research also emphasises that economic voting occurs across European democracies regardless of differences in electoral institutions (Dassonneville and Lewis-Beck, 2017), meaning that economic voting is a general mechanism of electoral behaviour that is, for example, not influenced by whether voters can vote directly for the head of the executive.

In addition, economic voting does not seem to be purely motivated by egoistic self-interest, as most studies find greater effects of the national economy on voting behaviour and smaller effects for individual economic conditions (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2013). Therefore, economic voting appears to be mainly motivated by sociotropic perception – the state of the overall economy – instead of ecotropic or pocketbook concerns that reflect voters individual economic situation. The reason why sociotropic voting might be dominant, is that voters receive frequent information on the economic conditions of their environment and care about these conditions:

“They see how their neighbors are doing, hear about local plant closings and read of the nation’s prosperity in the paper.” (Lewis-Beck, 1990, p. 37).

The reward and punishment logic of economic voting is not simply limited to economic conditions like changes in the gross domestic product or unemployment rates, but also applies to parties’ fulfilment of economic policies (Talving, 2017), as well as the fulfilment of non-economic policies (Shabad and Slomczynski, 2011). Similarly, the provision of public goods – or the lack thereof – can serve as a driving force for voters to punish incumbents. For instance Harding (2015) finds that the condition of public roads affects the vote for incumbent parties in Ghana. It is therefore suitable to speak more generally of *performance voting* (Stiers, 2018) when describing electoral accountability: following good performance voters re-elect the incumbent and under bad performance select a competing political party. Naturally, not every voter will put the same emphasis on certain policies when judging the performance of the incumbent. While climate change might be a salient issue for a part of the electorate, others will care more about taxation or foreign

policy. Therefore, voters' overall perception of the incumbent's performance will overwhelmingly depend on the incumbent's performance on the issues that are salient in the electorate (Fournier et al., 2003; Green and Jennings, 2012).

While scholars have frequently focused on the accountability of the government parties (e.g. Anderson, 2000; Debus et al., 2014; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2009; Tilley and Hobolt, 2011), Plescia and Kritzinger (2017) and Stiers (2018) show that electoral accountability, based on performance in the last legislative turn, even works on the level of opposition parties. Like government parties, opposition parties are punished or rewarded depending on how voters perceive their work in the opposition. This further underlines that reward and punishment is a general behavioural logic applied by voters – regardless of incumbency status.

Although voters sanction incumbent parties regardless of economic rules, scholars have argued that the targeted parties and the strength of reward and punishment does vary depending on the contextual setting. This concept of the *clarity of accountability* was famously introduced by Powell Jr and Whitten (1993) who show that in parliamentary systems coalition and minority governments are punished to a lesser degree for economic conditions than single-party governments, because under coalition and minority governments accountability is blurred. After all parliamentary government depends on joint-decision making in cabinet. This makes it more difficult for voters to assign responsibility for political outcomes when multiple parties participate in decision making. Further studies have supported these findings (Anderson, 2000; Duch, May and Armstrong, 2010) and identified the cohesiveness of government (whether a single-party governs) as central element (Hobolt, Tilley and Banducci, 2013). However, a number of more recent studies (Angelova, König and Proksch, 2016; Debus et al., 2014; Duch and Stevenson, 2013; Duch, Przepiorka and Stevenson, 2015; Plescia and Kritzinger, 2017; Williams, Stegmaier and Debus, 2017) strongly suggest that voters deal with blurred accountability under coalition governments by holding the *agenda-setter* with control over *decision making* accountable for performance, this means that voters will focus on the party who holds the position of PM when assigning accountability. Voters therefore seem to reduce the complexity of many parliamentary governments to make easier decision with lower cognitive costs for themselves. Naturally, this opens up the possibility for imperfect assignment of accountability. Voters might shift too much blame or too much reward on the PM's party, why failing to accurately punish or reward the other coalition parties. However, voters may assume that the

party who holds the office of PM is generally responsible since they spearhead the executive and should veto policies from their coalition partners when they would lead to bad performance. It certainly would be normatively desirable for electoral accountability if voters would perfectly assign accountability to the responsible actors in the executive. Nevertheless, if the factual structure of parliamentary governments requires voters to make parsimonious judgements, then this is probably preferable over the absence of a reward and punishment mechanism.

Most recently Achen and Bartels (2017) have famously argued that electoral accountability does not work, because voters will hold the government accountable for events outside of the government's control. For example while governments do not cause floods or other natural disasters, voters will as general behaviour punish governments under which such events occur. This appears to indicate irrational electoral behaviour on parts of voters. However, while it may be possible that voters assign too much accountability to some actors, the fact that voters hold governments accountable for events for which the government is not responsible is not itself irrational. Even if a government did not cause an economic crisis, rational voters will still use the performance of the government in dealing with the economic crisis to infer their capability to shield citizens from the effects of such undesirable events and therefore learn about the governing capabilities of the government (Gasper and Reeves, 2011). Therefore, natural disasters like the Elbe flooding prior to the 2002 German federal election can also provide PMs and their government with the opportunity to highlight their capability and increase their vote share (Bechtel and Hainmueller, 2011).

Not all voters will assess the performance of the government in the same way. Most importantly voters who identify with a government party will differ in their assessment and most likely hold better evaluations of the government (Anderson, 2007; Tilley and Hobolt, 2011). In their assessment of accountability partisans will also be likely to shift blame for bad performance to other parties. Most recently Bailey (2019) shows that partisans and non-partisans update their perception about the state of the economy dependent on actual growth – but at different non-parallel rates. Fortunately, the perception of partisans and non-partisans converges under adverse economic conditions like negative growth in gross domestic product (GDP). In addition, the negative effect of partisanship on electoral accountability is limited by the fact that only a small portion of the electorate will be government partisans and if the trend of voters dealignment in established democracies continues this portion of partisans will get even smaller.

In summary, that voters punish or reward incumbent parties for retrospective performance on policies and economic dimensions when casting their vote is a well established finding; and most recent evidence indicates that reward or punishment will be directed towards the PM's party. Can one make the same claim of electoral accountability when it comes to the PM herself? Will voters also hold PMs personally accountable for government performance, similar to presidents who are held accountable for their government's performance (Fair, 1996; Key and Cummings, 1966; Ostrom and Simon, 1985)? After all voting behaviour based on leading candidates has been described with quite different terms.

Presidentialised Voting Behaviour

Electoral presidentialisation has for instance been described as change in the preference of the electorate from ideal leaders to leaders who are identifiable everyday people to whom voters can relate and whose personality closely matches the personality of voters (Caprara and Zimbardo, 2004; Garzia, 2011); a process fostered by the television media. Garzia (2011) argues that voters' perceptions of leading candidates will be formed by the congruence between voters' personality and the personality of the leading candidate. A further conception of leading candidates influence on the electorate follows Weber's definition of charisma as relationship between a leader and her followers that inspires faith and virtue within the followers based on the leader's personal exceptional merits that are not connected to their competence (Weber, 2005, p. 734f). Similarly, Willner (1985) states that charismatic leaders reach voters through feelings, opposed to rational consideration. The idea that such a charismatic relationship is quite effectual is often connected to the rise of radical right or populist parties (Van der Brug and Mughan, 2007), which by journalistic accounts often have leaders that are well versed in moving the electorate by charismatic means. Lastly, Curtice and Hunjan (2011) speak of a potential 'beauty contest' and there is some evidence, although not on the level of leading candidates in parliamentary elections, that a candidate's appearance has electoral effects (Ahler et al., 2017; Lenz and Lawson, 2011).

One may concede that not all of the reasons mentioned above are necessarily irrational from the perspective of voters, in the sense that voters might use personality or appearance to select a leader who will benefit them and the country the most. Voters may use the appearance of candidates as informational cue for quick judgements, possibly equating good looks with competence (Ahler et al., 2017;

Ditonto, 2018) – although voters would be misguided as ample research on the topic yields no causal connection between the two (Hamermesh, 2011). Likewise, voters may choose to select a leading candidate with similar personality to represent and lead them and who seems connected to everyday people. This could follow the logic that those leading candidates who are similar to voters in personality and in their behaviour closer to peoples average behaviour in public can better represent the interests of voters; essentially similar to the logic of descriptive likeness (Pitkin, 1967).

However, personality, charisma or appearance fail to satisfy electoral accountability as central element of democratic representation, because they will not lead to behaviour that selects leading candidates and parties conditional on their actions in office. Concepts of personality like the Big Five taxonomy of traits are meant to be long-term stable personal characteristics (Gerber et al., 2011; McAdams and Pals, 2006), which will not change over the time of a PM’s term in office. Yet, if neither the personality of voters, nor the personality of PMs changes over the time frame of a government term, then PMs will not be held to account. Voters’ perception of the PM will remain static and the PM will neither be rewarded nor punished for performance in office. Similarly, appearance or charisma are not sufficient mechanisms to lead to electoral accountability, unless one postulates that the charismatic connection between voters and leading candidates is based on whether a leading candidates performed well and actually represented the interests of the electorate. Such a broad definition of charisma falls outside of Weber’s (2005) definition and offers no explanatory benefits over theories of performance voting. Furthermore, if the main reasons why leading candidates influence voters decisions in parliamentary elections is their later influence in the executive, voters will have better information about their possible performance than personality or charisma – especially for PMs who seek re-election.

The electoral literature agrees that voters judge leading candidates overwhelmingly based on a set of criteria that broadly fall into two dimensions: competence (which entails for example intelligence and leadership) and character (which includes for example trustworthiness and integrity) (Bittner, 2018*b*; Garzia, 2017*b*; Miller, Wattenberg and Malanchuk, 1986). This reduction of character evaluation can be plausibly explained if leading candidates influence voters in their choice, because of their later role in the executive:

“candidate assessments actually concentrate on instrumental concerns about the manner in which a candidate would conduct governmental affairs” (Miller,

Wattenberg and Malanchuk, 1986, p. 536).

Voters have to consider that a vote for the party list or for individual party candidates is also a vote for the leading candidate of said party, who has the support of the party's candidates and would become PM to lead the country, or may as second prize sit as cabinet minister in the next government. Therefore, it can be perfectly rational for voters to consider the leaders in a parliamentary election as they also have to make a decision on who should lead the country. Curtice and Lisi (2014) provide supporting empirical evidence for these arguments by showing that leading candidates of parties who are more likely to hold the office of PM after the election have a stronger effect on voters' decision. Especially in Westminster systems of parliamentary government PMs are described as influential leaders who determine governmental success (Hermann et al., 2001; Heffernan, 2005; Dowding, 2013).

If leading candidates are of such importance for the decision of voters, how then can voters best assess which leading candidate has the best capability to govern? I argue that this assessment will be much better informed by the actual behaviour and performance of candidates once they held the office of PM than by appearance, charisma or personality congruence alone. Such a retrospective assessment (Downs, 1957) does not necessarily demands more political attention from voters than evaluation based on appearance or charisma. One can plausibly assume that the general development of the economy alone will already provide voters with a low-cost signal whether the PM in office conducted governmental affairs well. I argue that voters will use their evaluation of government performance on the economy and on non-economic policies to inform and update their assessment of PMs to help their vote choice. I therefore do not disagree with the existing literature on the personal characteristics of candidates, which states that these characteristics are important for voters' assessment of leading candidates. I also do not disagree with the literature that identifies conduct in governmental office as the reason why voters care about leading candidates. Yet, I challenge the conception of how voters' perceptions of these personal characteristics like competence and trustworthiness comes to pass. In their evaluation of leading candidates voters will rather be influenced by what leaders actually do in office than by a personality congruence between leader and voter, leaders' appearance or charismatic relationship to members of the electorate.

Furthermore, I argue that one should carefully distinguish between the time-invariant personality of leading candidates, like openness or agreeableness, and

their personal characteristics, like competence or trustworthiness. This is especially important if one measures the personal characteristics of leading candidates as they are perceived by voters.¹¹ Perceived personal characteristics of candidates might quickly change over time, for example when a corruption scandal makes clear that a leading candidate is not actually trustworthy.¹² In all likelihood voters will also assign personal characteristics conditionally to specific tasks and offices. In example, voters might agree that a politician is a quite competent member of parliament, but assess that the same politician lacks the necessary skill-set to hold an executive office like the office of PM.

It becomes clear that presidentialised electoral behaviour can actually be well integrated into the framework of rational choice voting if one includes theories of valence into the consideration. In the early sixties Stokes (1963) introduced the concept of *valence* to electoral research to address shortcomings of the spatial model of voting introduced by (Downs, 1957). He observed that many voters are moved by issues on which parties hold identical positions and that sometimes candidates are elected who are farther away from the median voter than their opponent. Stokes argues that frequently large portions of the electorate are not moved by position-issues, “*those that involve advocacy of government actions from a set of alternatives over which a distribution of voter preferences is defined*” (Stokes, 1963, p. 373), but by valence issues. Valence issues are “*those that merely involve the linking of the parties with some condition that is positively or negatively valued by the electorate.*” (Stokes, 1963, p. 373).

Examples of such valence issues are corruption, of which people in general prefer less, or the unemployment rate, of which the electorate universally seeks low rates. While parties and leading candidates may highlight their differing strategies of how to reach a low unemployment rate during their campaign, they do not have the option to propose higher unemployment if they want to have a chance of winning the election. Valence issues will be of particular importance for electoral behaviour if ideological differences between parties are minor, because parties will only marginally differ on position-issues. This also makes the theory of valence

¹¹Naturally, competence and integrity are factual characteristics of candidates and not determined by voters’ perceptions of them. However, for the vote choice that voters make it matters not whether a politician is factually competent, but rather whether voters perceive the politician to be competent. Electoral accountability and government outcomes will certainly benefit if a politician’s factual competence and the competence perceived by voters are highly correlated.

¹²Even the actual competence of leading candidates might change over time, as they acquire new skills and experiences over the course of their political career.

voting particularly relevant in progressively dealigned democracies, in which voters are not strongly attached to the ideological world view of certain political parties. Unlike with positional issues, on valence issues leading candidates can only compete with their capability to deliver on said issues. Electoral competition will therefore focus on the competence and trustworthiness of candidates and their parties (Clarke et al., 2004, 2009, 2011).

In addition to valence issues, electoral behaviour of voters will be influenced by two types of valence attributes connected to candidates: campaign valence and character valence (Stone and Simas, 2010; Nyhuis, 2016). Campaign valence attributes are electoral advantages connected to a candidate that help them to campaign effectively. A strong and typical example of such a valence attribute is a candidate's incumbency status that will usually provide them with larger funds and a better recognition among voters, compared to their opponents. The chancellor bonus in German federal elections (Norpoth and Gschwend, 2003) is another example of campaign valence attributable to the PM party. In contrast to campaign valence attributes, character valence attributes are those "*qualities and skills that relate to character and job performance*" (Stone and Simas, 2010, p. 373). Character valence attributes are those that will be sought after by voters:

"Thus, integrity, competence, and dedication to public service are examples of qualities that define the character and abilities of candidates. Voters value these qualities in their leaders and in government, and they may facilitate voters' trust in leaders' ability to advocate constituency interests. In contrast, name recognition and campaign funds, while necessary to mounting a successful campaign, are not of intrinsic interest to voters." (Stone and Simas, 2010, p. 373).

While campaign valence attributes of leading candidates might also be beneficial for the election of leading candidates into office, their character valence attributes are important for electoral accountability, because these attributes will affect conduct in government, and are also those factors that should change in the eyes of voters, if voters hold leading candidates in the office of PM accountable.

In the case of this thesis I will focus on character valence aspects since all PMs are incumbents by definition and recognition benefits are certainly likely to be smaller among leading candidates of national party than among backbench candidates who compete in electoral districts or on party lists. The main interest of this thesis will be whether voters change their perception of character valence of PMs and whether these changes depend on their performance in office. Furthermore, I argue that

both evaluations of PMs and government performance will affect the vote choice of citizens – which makes government performance a confounding variable. If this is the case voters' decisions will satisfy the condition of electoral accountability, even if their decision would be solely influenced by their perception of the PM. In addition, it will be interesting to study if the changes in the perceptions of PMs among the electorate are driven by different causes, than the perception of other leading candidates. If the outlined relationship between character perception and government performance is correct, then only the perception of PMs should be updated based on government performance, while the perception of other leaders should remain unaffected.

Voters will assess the PM and other leading candidates on their governing capabilities and seek to select the best person to lead the country. Fortunately, in the case of PMs running for another term in office, they can be assessed on their actual performance in office. I argue that for this performance assessment voters will not try to delve into the specific contribution of PMs to the overall government performance – something that would be quite difficult to assess for any citizen – and rather hold PMs to account for overall government performance, in example the development of the economy. PMs are broadly responsible for joint-decision making in cabinet and influence government decisions in all policy fields (Blondel and Müller-Rommel, 1993). Therefore, the performance of departments under the control of cabinet ministers will also provide voters with information on the capabilities of the current PM as the head of the executive and the principal of cabinet ministers.

These theoretical arguments have important implications for the measurement of leading candidate's influence on the vote choice, also termed their *leader effect*. Famously, King (2002a) distinguished between two types of leader effects. The indirect effect of leading candidates on vote choice which is not:

“a result of anything he or she is, but as a result of things that he or she does [...] while [...] by direct effects is meant the influence that a leader or candidate exerts on voters by virtue of who he or she is, how he or she appears and how he or she publicly comports him or herself” (King, 2002a, p. 4).

Generally, we are interested in the direct leader effect of leading candidates, since it can be solely attributed to them and their charismatic relationship with the electorate. However, the valence and retrospective voting literature make clear that a good portion of the perception of those leading candidates who are PM will

depend on their actions in office. To then accurately measure the direct leader effect of those candidates one will need to account for their performance in office. This will also yield a closer estimate of the true direct effect of the persona of leading candidates, their personality, appearance, charismatic relationship with the electorate, on vote choice.

This rational choice conception of leading candidates and their influence on the electorate does not exclude the fact that a candidate's charismatic relationship to the electorate, their appearance and their personality, might partly explain the perceptions citizens have of leading candidates. However, in this thesis I focus on another perspective towards the main reasons for voters' perceptions of leading candidates, which has not found much attention in the literature on electoral presidentialisation. If leading candidates influence the electorate in their vote choice mainly because voters use it to infer future behaviour in office, then voters will use the behaviour and performance of leaders in office to update how they perceive characteristics like competence. What better evidence could voters gather that a leading candidate has the necessary competence to be PM and lead the executive than their performance in that exact position? This perspective on party leaders not only fits well with the outlined mechanism of reward and punishment voting, it also fits well with the existing literature on valence aspects of electoral behaviour: like with governing parties, voters update their view of governing leaders based on their actual performance once elected.

To summarize the discussion in the previous paragraphs: the presidentialisation of voting behaviour in parliamentary elections can be rationalised and integrated into the framework of performance and valence voting and therefore can also satisfy electoral accountability. Voters' perceptions of the ability of leading candidates to make good on their promises and govern successfully is an important aspect of voting behaviour, because leading candidates will in all likelihood obtain executive office after the election. Furthermore, voters' perceptions of a leader's capabilities will not be static. Rational voters will update them depending on real performance once leaders hold office. Voters will sanction PMs at the next election and select a different prime ministerial candidate who will be perceived to be better adept to govern. Therefore, voters will hold PMs accountable by selecting a party that will either re-elect the PM for an additional term or select a different party.

Presidentialised Prime Ministerial Accountability

If voters seek to hold PMs personally accountable for government performance, and adjust their vote choice in parliamentary election accordingly, then their behaviour partly resembles the behaviour of voters in a presidential system in which they can hold the president directly accountable at the next presidential election. I therefore conceptualize the described electoral behaviour as presidentialisation of prime ministerial accountability in parliamentary systems.

Figure 1.2 depicts the essence of my theoretical arguments. While the chain of accountability in parliamentary systems is typically characterized by the principle of *singularity* (Strøm, 2000, p. 269), this singularity may only hold on the formal constitutional level (solid lines). In fact, I argue that the discussion of voters' electoral behaviour in the previous section posits the existence of a *transitive* behavioural element of accountability in parliamentary systems. Here I borrow from the mathematical definition of transitivity.

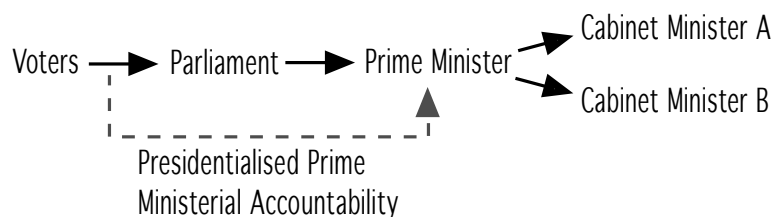


Figure 1.2: Formal constitutional (solid lines) and informal behavioural (dashed line) prime ministerial accountability in parliamentary systems.

Transitivity states that given the following condition: $a \rightarrow b \rightarrow c$ the path $a \rightarrow c$ exists as well (Hazewinkel, 2016). The *presidentialised prime ministerial accountability* path ($Voters \rightarrow Prime Minister$) depicted in dashed lines in Figure 1.2 is not formal, it is not enshrined in the institutional rules of parliamentary systems. Unlike in a presidential system voters are not able to hold PMs directly accountable for the performance of their government. However, presidentialised prime ministerial accountability describes a behavioural link created by voters by virtue of their electoral behaviour. When voters make their decision to elect parliament and punish or reward the government party ($Voters \rightarrow Parliament$), voters can already anticipate the consequence of their action for the subsequent accountability link ($Parliament \rightarrow Prime Minister$). Voting for the PM's party will mean to re-elect the PM, while voting for an opposing party will lead to another

prime minister (should the majority of voters also choose this behaviour).¹³ Since voters are influenced by PMs in their vote choice, but will also use the performance of PMs in office as a tool to assess whether to elect a party that will re-elect the PM as head of the executive they create a behavioural accountability path towards the PM.

This behavioural element substantially changes and expands our understanding of parliamentary systems. While the formal constitutional setting of parliamentary systems leaves voters with only one option to hold governing parties to account, the behaviour of voters within this legal framework may well be motivated in a different way than intended. In case of a progressing presidentialisation of parliamentary elections voters will not simply stick to their intended constitutional task of holding their representatives in parliament, or the governing parties, accountable – voters will also want to ensure that PMs are punished for bad governance. If this is the case, the presidentialisation of parliamentary elections would, to some degree, be matched by a presidentialisation of accountability – a welcome finding for their democratic function as sanctioning instrument.

To test the hypothesised element of presidentialised prime ministerial accountability in parliamentary elections and refine our understanding of prime ministerial accountability in parliamentary systems I present four articles who each provide distinct contributions to the overall thesis.

First, I study the causes of voters' perceptions of PMs and other leaders. If voters hold PMs accountable, then they will necessarily change their opinion of PMs once they receive information on the performance of PMs in office. Public opinion of PMs will necessarily follow their performance and PM's policy stances as signal of future behaviour in office. Article 1 evaluates these hypotheses using a large set of panel data from the *British Election Study*. I employ multilevel growth models in a within-between-person specification to test time-varying effects and control for unobserved between-person characteristics.

Second, in my next article I extend the findings on voters' changes in their

¹³Voters will not always be able to perfectly anticipate for all political parties whether they will choose to re-elect the PM. Especially after a coalition government not all smaller parties might decide to re-enter a coalition at the next election and re-elect the PM. However, parties often signal their intention to re-enter a coalition government during the election campaign, therefore, voters have at least some degree of certainty. In many established democracies parties have regular modes of co-operation based on their ideological closeness from which voters can anticipate whether parties will choose to re-elect the PM of another party. Furthermore, at least with regard to the PM's own party voters can be quite certain that they will intent to re-elect their PM.

perceptions of PMs presented in Article 1 by investigating changes in voters' perceptions over a broader set of prime ministerial character attributes, e.g. sympathy and trustworthiness, as well as by analysing changes over an even longer long time span (14 years) than in the first article. In addition, Article 2 focuses on changes within groups of party identifiers, because party identifications frequently distort perceptions of leading candidates, as well as government performance. In order to achieve a long time-frame I study changes in perceptions of Angela Merkel as the longest serving PM in Europe. Using aggregate, as well as individual-level, survey data I compare the effects of government performance, left-right-ideology and attitudes towards immigration on the perception of Angela Merkel.

Third, I connect the relationship between perceptions of PMs and their government's performance, established in the previous two articles, to vote choice in parliamentary elections. Because government performance will affect vote choice, as well as perceptions of PMs, government performance confounds the effect of voters' perception of PMs on vote choice, and the extent of this confounding reveals the degree of presidentialisation of prime ministerial accountability. I study confounding by means of a mediation analysis with data from thirteen national elections in Britain, Denmark and Germany. I further ensure that the causal direction moves from government performance to the perception of PMs with a natural experiment at the German state level. Furthermore, this article theorises how the degree of presidentialisation of prime ministerial accountability may vary by prime ministerial powers.

Fourth, I provide a broad comparison of the electoral influence of PMs by comparing differences across 22 European countries with multiple waves of survey data from the *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems*. In this fourth article I hypothesise that the lower degree of party system institutionalisation, as well as lower alignment of voters, and the stronger control of PMs over channels of mass communication in CEE provides PMs with an electoral advantage. The article employs logistic multilevel models to test whether PMs have more influence on vote choice in Central Eastern Europe than PMs in Western Europe. Therefore, this article investigates a central assumption of the electoral presidentialisation thesis, that dealignment leads to a stronger influence of leading candidates and explores the negative consequences of decline in media freedom. With this article I furthermore contribute to the long-standing discussion on differences in prime ministerial strength across European regions.

The four outlined articles are reproduced in the next four chapters.

Chapter 2

Article 1: The Effect of Voters' Economic Perception, Brexit and Campaigns on the Evaluation of Party Leaders over Time

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Abstract: When and why do voters change their evaluation of party leaders? Voters' evaluations of party leaders are an increasingly important determinant of electoral behaviour. Which factors influence these evaluations of party leaders? Do voters evaluate party leaders who hold the office of prime minister differently from other party leaders, and do electoral campaigns and issues change these evaluations? I use a multilevel growth model with panel data from the United Kingdom to analyse effects over time. I find that campaigns play a significant role and that voters' stance on Brexit has a considerable time-varying effect. In addition, voters use economic performance as a valence signal for party leaders holding the office of prime minister and therefore hold them accountable for bad economic performance, especially during election campaigns. These findings show that the personalisation of politics may endanger the democratic function of elections to a lesser extent than is commonly feared.

2.1 Introduction

Why do voters change their evaluation of party leaders? The electoral impact of voters' evaluations of party leaders in parliamentary elections has been extensively covered (Aarts, Blais and Schmitt, 2011; Bittner, 2011, 2018*b*; Costa and Ferreira da Silva, 2015; Ferreira da Silva, 2018; Garzia, 2014, 2017*b*; Lobo and Curtice, 2014; Mughan, 2015) and the influence of party leaders in elections may further increase as established democracies tend to become more and more personalized (Kriesi, 2012; Poguntke and Webb, 2005; Rahat and Sheaffer, 2007; Rahat and Kenig, 2018; Wattenberg, 1991). Although it has also been argued that party leaders have always had an electoral impact (Bittner, 2018*a*). Scholars argue that such a personalisation of parliamentary democracies may endanger democracy. Voters may no longer hold parties accountable for their behaviour in office, but rather rely on their feelings towards party leaders (Curtice and Hunjan, 2011; Huber, 2014). These concerns would be less pressing if voters' changes in these feelings are caused by political issues and if party leaders in government positions are held to account. In this study I address these concerns by analysing voters' evaluations of party leaders over time. Until now electoral studies have mainly focused on the between-person-effect of party identification (PID) (King, 2002*a*; Oscarsson and Holmberg, 2011) to explain differences in voters' feelings towards party leaders. These studies argue that voters who identify with a party are also more likely to evaluate the leader of that party more positively. In contrast the within-person-effect of changes in PID on the evaluation of party leaders has received less attention. In addition, many electoral studies have focused on the evaluation of party leaders at the time of parliamentary elections and only provide a cross-sectional view on the evaluation of party leaders by the electorate. A longitudinal analysis will foster our understanding of how voters form their evaluation of party leaders.

In addition, this study also explains campaign dynamics in the recent 2017 British General Election. Mellon et al. (2018) have shown that the 2017 General Election campaign was characterized by considerable changes in voters' perception of the two party leaders, Theresa May and Jerney Corbyn. A longitudinal analysis will be able to explain these dynamics. In electoral campaigns parties seek to present their party leaders in the best way possible (Milazzo and Hammond, 2017). Do these campaigns persuade voters to change their evaluation of party leaders? In this study I analyse the effect of several factors on voters' evaluations of party leaders: the effect of campaigns as well as the within- and between-person-effects

of voters' PID, and their stance on Brexit. I furthermore analyse if voters use economic performance as a valence signal for party leaders who hold the office of prime minister and in consequence hold them directly accountable.

The findings show that the attachment of voters to parties and voters' stance on Brexit have a significant impact on their evaluation of party leaders. The effect of Brexit furthermore increases over time as the issue itself becomes more salient. The two party leaders who held the office of prime minister (Theresa May and David Cameron) are held accountable for economic performance. In contrast, the effect of voters' economic perception is negligible for other party leaders.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows: Firstly, I discuss potential causes of voters' evaluations toward party leaders. Secondly, a descriptive analysis on how voters' evaluations of the party leaders under study developed over time is provided. Following this analysis relevant events are identified and the specification of each party leaders multilevel growth model is discussed. Thirdly, I review my findings, their robustness and how further studies may depart from the presented evidence.

2.2 Causes of Party Leaders Evaluations

What causes voters to evaluate some party leaders more positively than others? In this section I discuss why party leaders matter to voters and subsequently identify potential causes behind voters' evaluation of them.

A frequent argument levelled against the electoral impact of party leaders is the hypothesis that voter's evaluation of party leaders heavily depends on their feelings towards the party as a whole (Oscarsson and Holmberg, 2011). The dominance of parties in parliamentary systems has led to the argument that party leaders should only influence voting behaviour in very specific electoral circumstances (King, 2002*a*). In contrast, party attachments of voters are perceived as relevant because they serve as heuristic for vote choices and evaluation of other political objects like candidates (Campbell et al., 1966; Clarke et al., 2004; Downs, 1957). For example a candidate's party affiliation already provides voters with information on policies the candidate is likely to support. However, an increasing number of electoral studies show that party leaders influence voting behaviour in parliamentary elections independently from political parties (Bittner, 2011, 2018*a*; Garzia, 2017*b*; Lobo and Curtice, 2014; Mughan, 2015). I argue that party leaders matter to voters, because they serve as additional heuristics in the decision-making processes of voters (Clarke et al., 2004). Knowledge about party leaders is widespread and

they are highly visible during electoral campaigns, therefore, party leaders can serve as very low cost election-specific information short-cut for voters. The further European political systems become dealigned (Berglund et al., 2005; Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000; Dalton and Flanagan, 2017; Sarlvik and Crewe, 1983) the more likely party leaders will replace PID as key heuristic, since fewer voters form stable PIDs.

In addition, voters will also hold the view that the party's performance in government depends on the capability of the party leader, since party leaders vie for top executive positions like the position of prime minister (Clarke et al., 2004, 2011). Curtice and Lisi (2014) further support the argument that party leaders matter due to their later position in the executive by showing that party leaders who are more likely to become prime minister have a larger effect on voters' decision. The importance voters attach to party leaders may have further increased in recent decades due to the internationalisation of politics and increasing autonomy of prime ministers (Poguntke and Webb, 2005). Consequently, voters should view party leaders who exhibit valence attributes like competence and integrity positively, because these party leaders are more likely to perform well in government (Campbell et al., 2016; Clarke et al., 2009, 2011; Green and Hobolt, 2008; Miller, Wattenberg and Malanchuk, 1986; Stokes, 1963; Stone and Simas, 2010). Bittner (2011, 2018*b*) shows that voters evaluate party leaders along two dimensions that include valence attributes: competence (intelligence, leadership) and character (trustworthiness, integrity).

In short, party leaders function as a short-term heuristic for voters' decision on who will perform well in government after the election. It follows, that voters may change their perception of party leaders through changes in other heuristics like their PID, when voters or party leaders change their position on a salient issue and through signals of party leader valence. Similar to PID, party leader evaluations present a running-tally of leader's past actions and performance. Hypotheses on each of these factors are formulated in the following paragraphs.

Although voters will use party leaders as additional heuristic to PID, their evaluation of party leaders might be influenced by an existing identification with the party leader's party. Following the socio-psychological conception of PID voters who identify with a party will tend to also evaluate the respective party leader positively (Campbell et al., 1966; Oscarsson and Holmberg, 2011). However, a revisionist conception of PID as evaluative running tally of party actions which could be influenced by actions of party leaders (Fiorina, 1981; Popkin et al., 1976)

and further studies (Garzia, 2011, 2012, 2013; Garzia and De Angelis, 2016; Page and Jones, 1979; Rapoport, 1997; Whiteley et al., 2016) strongly question the stability of PID as unmoved mover of party leader evaluations.

In contrast, Johnston (2006) provides evidence for rather stable PIDs and analysing voters open-ended explanations for their PID Mayer (2019) finds that a majority of party adherents hold their attachment to a parties due to ideological reasons. While only a minority of voters give evaluative reasons or explain their PID with historic party leaders (Mayer, 2019). Ideology- or class-based PIDs are not completely at odds with the revisionist conception, because in theory voters could have formed their identification during socialisation in early life (Clarke, Stewart and Whiteley, 1998; Fiorina, 1981) and update them afterwards.

In summary, the present evidence on the relationship between voters' PID and their evaluation of party leaders supports a running-tally conception and, in turn, a dynamic relationship.¹ Including PIDs could overestimate their effect on party leader evaluations. However, omitting PIDs as a key heuristic may lead to biased results when analysing other causes of party leader evaluations. In addition, parties overwhelmingly exist for longer periods than politicians lead those parties. PIDs will capture crucial information on past party performance and performance associated with the party brand in general that may influence what voters expect of the party leader. Therefore, I formulate the following hypothesis:

H1: Voters who identify with a party evaluate a party leader of said party more positively.

In addition to PID, voters may also change their evaluation of party leaders depending on salient position issues on which, in contrast to valence issues, voters' preferences differ (Clarke et al., 2004; Stokes, 1963). King (2002a) has argued that party leaders may be particularly relevant to voters if the stance of a party leader on issues differs from the stance of the respective party. Consequently, voters who agree with party leaders on a position issue (for example Brexit) should evaluate the party leader more positively than voters who disagree on the issue (Downs, 1957; Stokes, 1963):

¹Figure 2.6 in the online appendix shows the correlation between PID and leader evaluation in the UK. Values of new party leaders like Theresa May and Jeremy Corbyn are lower than that of longer sitting party leaders like David Cameron, but increase over time. Correlations range between moderate (0.3) and strong (0.7).

H2: Voters who hold the same issue position as a party leader evaluate the party leader more positively.

Voters may then change their evaluation of party leaders if they themselves or the party leaders change their position on an issue. Furthermore, the effect of issue position congruence on party leader evaluation will depend on the salience of the issue. If a positional issue becomes more salient (Budge and Farlie, 1983, p. 21ff), position congruences between voters and party leaders should have larger effects. Similar to parties, party leaders should also be able to emphasis or de-emphasis certain positional issues to try and make them more or less salient (Hart, 2016). For the present study the United Kingdom's referendum on leaving the European Union (EU) provides a highly visible position issue to test H2 over time and in situations in which party leader positions differ from other positions in their party and for which time-varying effects can be easily tested.

Lastly, voters will not only consider party leader's issue stances or party affiliation, but also evaluate their capability to perform successfully in government (Clarke et al., 2004) and deliver on position and valence issues. Therefore, voters may change their evaluation of party leaders when their perception of the leader's capability change. I argue that good economic performance may serve as a valence signal (Campbell et al., 2016) to voters that the party leaders posses attributes like competence and leadership strength that foster performance capability. The economy is a clear valence issue (Clarke et al., 2004, 2011; Stokes, 1963; Whiteley, 1984), delivering on this issue will matter for party leaders who are responsible for the economy, since rational voters should update their evaluation of the party leader to reflect future expectations of performance in office (Downs, 1957; Fiorina, 1981). However, while economic performance can serve as valence signal for party leaders who hold the office of prime minister and can broadly influence government decisions (Blondel and Müller-Rommel, 1993), economic performance does not signal valence attributes of party leaders who are not head of government. Consequently, my hypotheses on the valence signal of economic performance entails a mechanism of accountability that focuses on the prime minister:

H3: Party leaders who hold the office of prime minister are evaluated more positively if voters perceive the state of the economy to be good.

It may still be possible for opposition party leaders to gain a comparative

advantage over the prime minister when evaluations of the prime minister decrease under bad economic conditions, while opposition leader remain unaffected, but economic performance will not serve as direct signal for their valence attributes. Any effects of voters' economic perception on other party leaders should therefore be negligible or minor.

While voters are likely to constantly evaluate the state of the economy and hold a party leader in the position of prime minister accountable, this effect may be especially pronounced during electoral campaigns. During electoral campaigns economic issues usually become more salient (Hart, 2016; Johnston, Partheymüller and Schmitt-Beck, 2014). Consequently, voters will rely more heavily on past economic performance to infer candidate valence. Electoral campaigns may therefore moderate the effect of voters' perception of the economy:

H4: The effect of voters' perception of the economy on the evaluation of party leaders is larger during election campaigns.

Economic perceptions may also follow a grievance behaviour, meaning that a negative development of the economy has greater weight for voters than a positive economic development. Previous studies (Dassonneville and Lewis-Beck, 2014; Nannestad and Paldam, 1997; Soroka, 2006) have provided evidence for the existence of such an asymmetric effect on the individual- and aggregate-level. Although in their review Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier (2013) also discuss studies who fail to support the grievance proposition. Nevertheless, one can expect that voters might interpret negative economic performance as the clearest signal of a leader's lack in governing ability:

H5: Negative perceptions of the state of the economy have a greater impact on the evaluation of leaders who hold the office of prime minister than neutral or positive perceptions.

Lastly, the importance of major political events should not be neglected. The decision to call a snap election may influence voters' expectations of a government's future performance (Smith, 2004) or could affect voters' perception of the prime minister's capabilities. Election campaigns seek to highlight candidates valence attributes and may influence the evaluation of party leaders by voters in general. I will therefore include election campaigns, as well as resignations into my analysis;

the descriptive analysis in the next section discusses the necessity to include such events to model the change in voters' evaluations over time. In addition, voters' socio-economic characteristics: age, gender and educational attainment may also influence their evaluation of party leaders.

The reviewed causes of party leader evaluations may not be exhaustive. For example voters' perception of party leader charisma could plausibly affect their evaluation of party leaders capabilities, but such a factor is difficult to observe. It is therefore likely that a good portion of unexplained variance will remain. Nevertheless, voters' PID, salient issues and perceptions of the economy are likely to be major causes.

2.3 Research Design & Model Specification

I use panel data from the British Election Study (Fieldhouse et al., 2017) to study voters' evaluations of party leaders over time.² Britain provides a favourable setting since over the four years under study two parliamentary elections and a referendum on the withdrawal of Britain from the EU took place, which allows this study to observe the influence of campaigning and of a highly visible issue on voters' evaluations over time. The analysis is limited to the party leaders of the major national parties Labour, Conservatives and Liberal Democrats; leading to a total of six party leaders over the period of the study.

Since increases in salience over time and differences in effects during and between times of electoral campaigns are of substantial interest multilevel growth models, as described by Singer and Willett (2003), are employed for each party leader. These models estimate the latent trajectory of leader evaluations' over time with the underlying trajectories of individual voters (i). In this longitudinal approach voters are allowed to vary in their initial evaluation of leaders and in their slopes in change over time (j), therefore, the multilevel growth model estimates an underlying development of leader evaluation across all time points of every single voter. By comparison a traditional fixed effects panel approach (FE) would estimate voters' leader evaluation at a given time point dependent on their level at the previous time point across all voters (Bollen and Curran, 2006, p. 3). The multilevel growth

²The politicians under study are formal heads of their respective parties. The exception being Theresa May before 11 June 2016. However this study is concerned with party leaders not only because they are formal heads of their respective parties, but because they are individual actors who have considerable weight in political processes.

model has several benefits over FE: Firstly, the model allows to include the exact elapsed time between respondents' answers, instead of using differences between waves that are homogeneous across respondents and irrespective of the date at which respondents' attitudes are actually measured. Secondly, the models allows for a flexible modification of linear change that can include political events which could change respondents' evaluation of party leaders immediately or events that change the fortunes of party leaders (alter the direction of change) over time. Such a longitudinal model requires at least three points of observation (waves). The requirement is exceeded for all party leaders under study.³

However, such a random effects model (RE) makes stronger exogeneity assumptions than FE models, which may not be met when one considers the multi-faceted causes of leader evaluations and the various effects of partisanship. Therefore, I use the within-between formulation proposed by Bafumi and Gelman (2006), as well as Bell and Jones (2015), to fit a within-between random effects model (REWB) that makes exogeneity assumptions on within-person effects that are equal to a FE model. The REWB formulation includes a time-invariant person mean (\bar{X}) for every person-mean centred time-varying covariate in the covariate matrix (X) alongside other time-invariant covariates (W), therefore, the model obtains the same within effects as in a FE approach:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Evaluation}_{ij} &= \pi_{0i} + \pi_{1i} \text{TIME}_{ij} + \pi_{2i} X_{ij} + \varepsilon_{ij} \\ \pi_{0i} &= \gamma_{01} + \pi_{3i} W_i + \pi_{4i} \bar{X}_i + \zeta_{0i} \\ \pi_{1i} &= \gamma_{10} + \zeta_{1i} \\ \text{where } \varepsilon_{ij} &\sim N(0, \sigma_\varepsilon^2), \zeta_{0i} \sim N(0, \sigma_0^2) \text{ and } \zeta_{1i} \sim N(0, \sigma_1^2) \\ &\text{as well as the covariance } \rho\sigma_0\sigma_1 \end{aligned}$$

This REWB approach also incorporates the Hausmann test for differences in between- and within-effects (Bell, Fairbrother and Jones, 2018, p. 7). Results in Figure 2.2 (p. 44) show that a Hausmann test will advise against an RE and in favour of a FE or REWB approach, because within- and between-effects differ. While REWB solves the exogeneity issue, the distinct benefits and drawbacks of FE, RE and REWB are a matter of ongoing research (Dieleman and Templin, 2014; Kaufman, 2013; Schempf and Kaufman, 2012). Given the substantive interests of

³The model requirements for number of waves are met by the models for Theresa May with five and in case of David Cameron with nine waves. Models for Jeremy Corbyn and Tim Farron include seven waves each. The models for Ed Miliband and Nick Clegg cover six waves each.

this paper in salience increases over time and varying effects at the time of elections and between elections, I choose the REWB approach for a direct modelling of time while still incorporating the benefits of FE.

Are such longitudinal models necessary? Before I discuss my data in greater detail, I give a descriptive assessment on how much leader evaluations actually changed over the course of this study. Previous studies have shown the possibility of considerable movement of party leader perceptions over the time (Clarke et al., 2011; Mellon et al., 2018).

Figure 2.1 shows how the evaluation of British party leaders changed over the course of the four years under analysis: Voters' evaluations of party leaders change considerably over time. The evaluations of May, Corbyn and Clegg show the greatest volatility. For the period under study May reaches the highest aggregated evaluation of all party leaders. Followed by Corbyn whose evaluation becomes more favourable during the 2017 general election campaign. Voters also developed more positive feelings toward May after she was elected prime minister, while voters' evaluations of Corbyn become more negative until the 2017 general election campaign. I scrutinize randomly selected samples of respondents' evaluation over time and confirm that some voters change their evaluation by several points over the time of the study.⁴ In contrast, some voters do not alter their evaluation throughout the panel study. Reviewing patterns of individual voters reveal that most strong changes in party leader evaluation, and especially changes in slope, seem to be associated with electoral campaigns which tend to focus on the competing party leaders. Figure 2.1 leads me to conclude that the evaluation of party leaders changes over time, which makes a growth model appropriate.⁵ More information on the portion of within-person change and between-person differences is provided later in this section and in the supplementary Tables 2.8 & 2.9 in the online repository.

I use voters' evaluations of party leaders assessed on an eleven-point thermometer scale (0 strongly dislike, 10 strongly like) as dependent variable in the aforementioned growth models. Thermometer scales have been used frequently in studies of party leaders (Bittner, 2018*b*; Garzia, 2017*b*) and as measure of voters'

⁴Examples of such individual level change over time are presented in the supplementary section, Figure 2.9 & 2.10.

⁵Figure 2.8 in the supplementary material shows the aggregated level of voters' evaluations of the respective political parties over time.

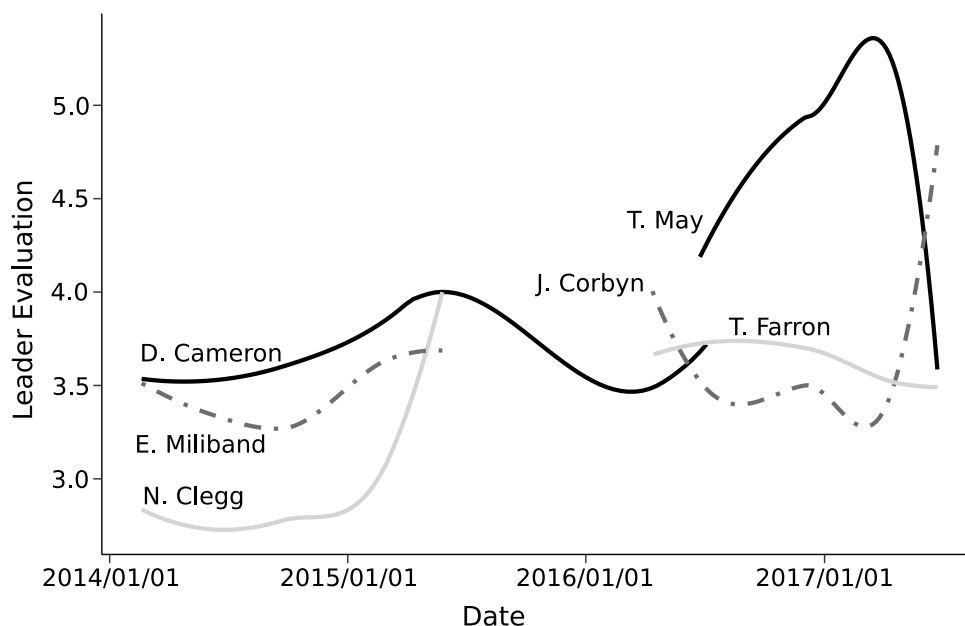


Figure 2.1: Voters' evaluations of British party leaders, locally weighted scatter-plot smoothing (0 strongly dislike, 10 strongly like). Data: BES (Fieldhouse et al., 2017).

expectation of their performance in government (Clarke et al., 2004). Clarke et al. (2011) show that these thermometer scales are closely tracked by competence evaluations. As control variables the age of respondents at the time of entry to the panel, their gender and education level (0 no qualifications, 5 Postgraduate) is included. The valence signal of economic performance is measured with respondents' retrospective general economic perception (1 very dissatisfied, 5 very satisfied).⁶ I also include a variable that measures if respondents identified with a party leader's party⁷ and how strong they identify with the party (1 not very strong, 3 very strong).

I furthermore control for a dichotomous time-varying variable that captures how respondents would vote in a referendum to exit the EU, and how they actually voted at the referendum, to track the influence of Brexit as a highly visible issue. On this issue, the party leaders under study significantly differ in their position. While

⁶Respondents' retrospective perception of the economy was not included in waves five and nine of the BES. I use respondents lagged economic perception from the respective previous wave to fill these gaps. I apply the same solution on a variable measuring how respondents would vote in a referendum on leaving the EU which was not included in wave five.

⁷The variable is missing in wave five of the BES. I impute missing values with the following strategy: For respondents with identical values in wave four and wave six the same value was imputed for wave five. For respondents which changed their PID between wave four and six I randomly impute their previous value from wave four to carry forward with a 50% probability.

Cameron campaigned for Britain to remain in the EU, May became prime minister to deliver on the result of the referendum and leave the EU's single market (hard Brexit). In contrast Farron, and his party wanted to remain in the single market (soft Brexit), and sought a second referendum on Britain's final deal with the EU (Hobolt, 2018). Corbyn's position on Brexit matches the ambiguous (Hobolt, 2018) position of Labour during the 2017 general election. While Corbyn stated before the 2016 referendum that Labour wanted to remain in the EU, his previous eurosceptic positions signalled some uncertainty. In addition, members of his party criticized him for lack of engagement in the referendum. He also did not share the remain platform with Tony Blair and Ed Miliband during the referendum. Even after the recent general election, Corbyn's ambiguity on Brexit has been mentioned in political commentaries (Menon, 2018; Malik, 2018). Although Corbyn's position on Brexit is not as clear as the position of other party leaders, he at least offered some sort of 'softer' alternative which should appeal to remainers. A softer Brexit should be positionally closer to voters who want to remain in the EU, and should be preferred over a harder Brexit.

Lastly, time as a central variable that measures the real time between the start of the panel and the date respondents' interviews is included. The variable is a ratio on which the value one represents the passing of six months.⁸

I fit unconditional means models to quantify the amount of interpersonal differences in the evaluation of party leaders and find that between 61–84% of the variation could be explained by such differences. Unconditional growth models with linear change over time show that 3–21% of variation in voters' evaluations of party leaders could be explained by linear change.⁹ This would only be a meaningful amount of change for some leaders. However, the graphical analysis of voters' evaluations of party leaders over time in Figure 2.1 has shown that the changes in evaluations are not strictly linear. Upon further inspection of individual-level variation over time I conclude that the change in voters' evaluations of party leaders can be approximated in a linear form if the models allow for changes in slope and elevation determined by political events. One included event is Cameron's resignation as prime minister as a possible elevation in voters growth curves. In addition two variables which identify the time period of election campaigns are

⁸It would be desirable to measure time as a ratio of three-month-units, to match the definition of campaign length. However, measuring time in six-month-units avoids convergence issues, due to gaps between waves, in some of the models.

⁹For more information on these unconditional means and growth models see supplementary Tables 2.8 & 2.9.

included. Firstly, a dichotomous measure that spans the two months before a general election and the month immediately after the general election. Secondly, a variable that measures the elapsed time from two months before the election. I also consider that the importance of Brexit as an issue has gained salience over time and therefore interact it with measures of time. All variables which measure time in addition to the general time variable allow for a change in voters' trajectories of change. Lastly, a possible change in slope for voters' evaluations of Cameron after he announced the results of his negotiations with the EU and that a referendum would be held in the following year is included.

2.4 Findings

In this section I present and debate the findings of my statistical models. Main results are displayed graphically and detailed regression results are provided in the online appendix (Tables 2.1–2.7).

Figure 2.2 shows the effect of voters' PID, their stance on Brexit and the retrospective perception of the economy on the evaluation of the party leaders under study. I find that between-person effects are considerably larger than the within-person effects, which are not biased by unobserved heterogeneity. PID shows the largest effect on the evaluation of party leaders. Those voters whose identification with their party weakens, also evaluate the party leader less favourably. The respective effect sizes of within- and between-person effects are quite similar for all party leaders. In comparison with voters' PID, their stance on Brexit and their perception of the economy have smaller effects on party leader evaluation. All effects work in the hypothesized directions. Voters who support Brexit hold a higher evaluation of May, while their evaluation of other party leaders decreases. It is notable that the difference from between- to within-person effect of Brexit is the smallest for Cameron and that the direction of the effect changes direction. In the between-person-effect remainers evaluate Cameron less favourably, while the within-person-effect shows the opposite. The within-person effect of voters' economic perception works in the hypothesized direction as well. Voters who perceive the economy to be in a better state also evaluate both party leaders who hold the office of prime minister more positively. There is no effect of economic perceptions on the evaluation of Corbyn and Miliband, while I find a minor effect of economic perceptions for Clegg and Farron. The effects for the Lib Dem leaders work in opposite directions, but coincide with differences in government incumbency.

The effect of economic perception on the evaluation of Clegg who held the office of deputy prime minister is positive, while the effect on the evaluation of Farron as part of the opposition is negative.

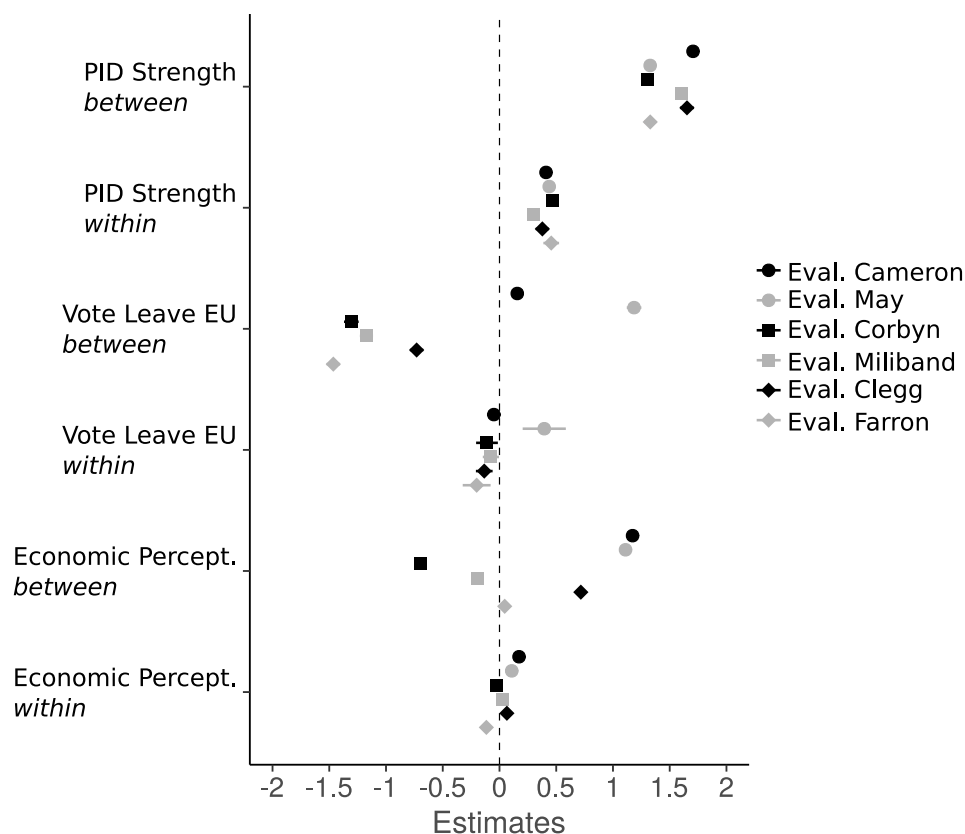


Figure 2.2: Within- and between-person effect of voters' PID, stance on Brexit and economic perception on the evaluation of party leaders (95 % confidence-intervals, approximation with Wald-statistics). Other covariates not shown.

The presented findings support H1, H2 and H3. In addition, I also find that the effect of voters' economic perception and stance on Brexit are not constant over time. Time variation in economic perception and Brexit effects are shown in Figure 2.3 and 2.4.

I have theorized that the salience of Brexit as an issue is likely to have increased over time. Interactions of the within-effect of voters' stance on Brexit with time measuring variables test this hypothesis. These interactions are omitted in the models for Miliband and Clegg since it is unlikely that the salience of Brexit significantly increased before the general election in 2015.

Figure 2.3 shows the interaction between respondents' stance on Brexit with elapsed time on the evaluation of party leaders. The first upper-left plot shows

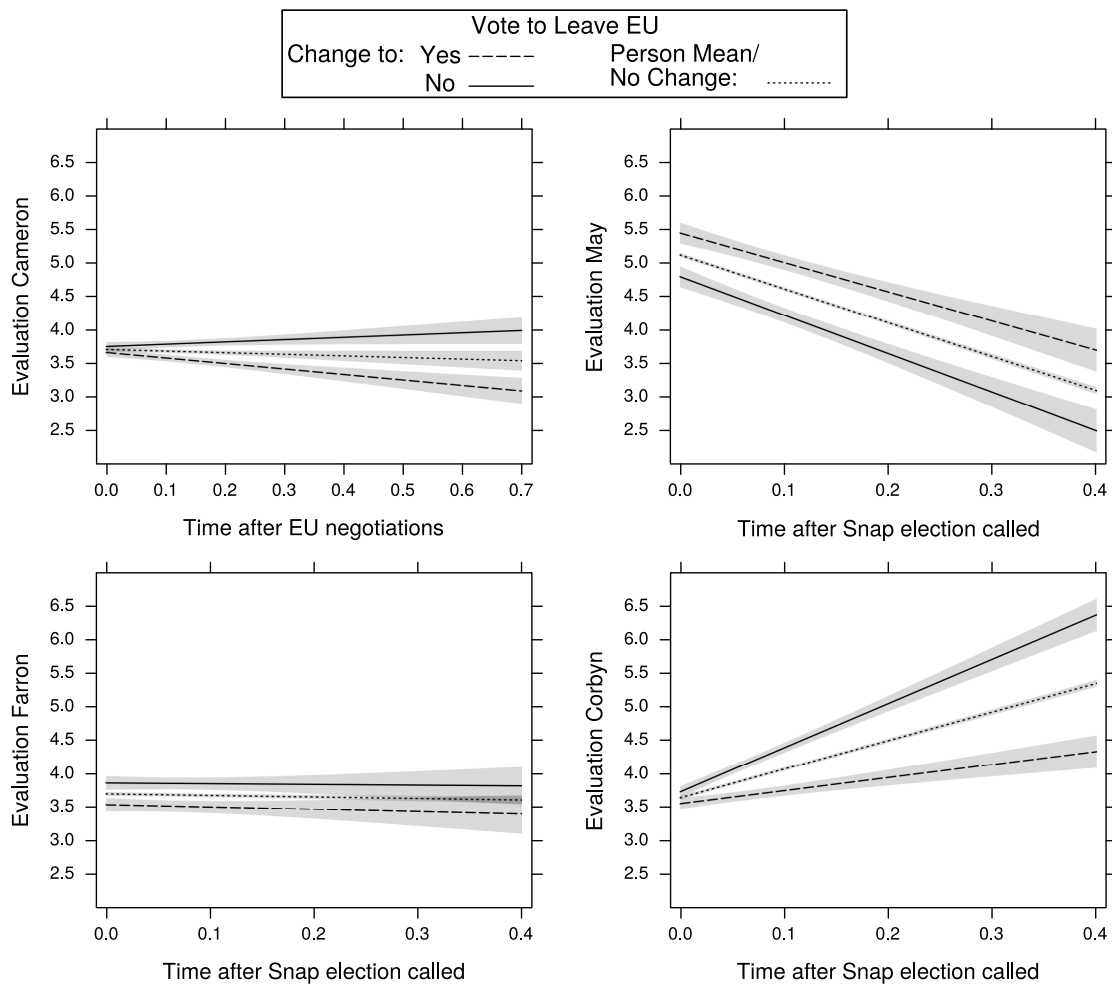


Figure 2.3: Interaction effect plots (predicted values) of respondents' stance on Brexit and time on the evaluation of party leaders (95 % confidence-intervals). The figure displays values for respondents who held a clear leave- or remain-position over time in order to facilitate graphical clarity. A figure which included values for respondents whose stance on Brexit was mixed is provided in supplementary Figure 2.11.

that respondents' stance on Brexit had no significant influence on their evaluation of Cameron before his negotiations with the EU finished. After these negotiations, as the referendum drew closer, Cameron's stance on Brexit became more influential for voters' evaluation of him. Over time, respondents who shared Cameron's stance and who answered that they would not vote for Britain to leave the EU viewed him increasingly positively compared to voters who wanted to leave the EU. The other plots show the interaction between voters' stance on Brexit and elapsed time after May had called a snap election in 2017. The referendum on Brexit had already taken place, negotiations between the UK and the EU had started and May sought to fortify her party's majority in parliament. At this point in time

Brexit already was a salient issue, as is visible in its significant effect on voters feelings towards May and Farron. However, in contrast to Cameron, there is no significant interaction between Brexit and time for May and Farron.

In comparison, the effect of Brexit on voters' feelings towards Corbyn is negligible before May called a snap election. After the announcement of the snap election, however, the effect of voters' Brexit stance on the evaluation of Corbyn shows a pattern similar to that of Cameron. Over time voters who wanted to remain in the EU held more and more positive feelings towards Corbyn compared to voters who wanted to leave. This development further supports the conclusion that campaign dynamics may lead voters to re-evaluate party leaders who increasingly engage with a salient position issue.

Voters' stance on Brexit is not the only effect that might vary over time. I have hypothesized that the effect of voters' perception of the economy may be larger around elections. Figure 2.4 tests this hypothesis and shows the interaction between economic perception and a dichotomous campaign measure. The bottom axis of the plots depicts respondents' retrospective economic perception from 'worse' to 'better' while the plot-lines show the effect during and between electoral campaigns. These results re-emphasise that economic perception matters for party leaders who hold the office of prime minister, but not for other party leaders. The results also show that the effect of voters' economic perception on the evaluation of May and Cameron is larger around the two general elections. This change in effect is most pronounced for May where it is three times larger. In case of other party leaders, the effects stay similar between and around elections. The effect of economic perception becomes significant during elections in case of Miliband and the effect size decreases in case of Farron. There are no significant changes in the effect for Clegg or Corbyn. These findings support the hypotheses that the valence signal of economic performance becomes stronger during parliamentary elections (H4).

Lastly, Figure 2.5 shows the result of two piecewise regressions (full results are presented in Table 2.7 in the online appendix) that test H5: Whether negative economic perceptions have a larger effect on the evaluation of leaders in the position of prime minister than neutral or positive perceptions of the economy (grievance effect). That neutral and positive perceptions matter less than negative perceptions is tested by the covariate Δ *Non-negative Economic perceptions* which measures the unit change in economic perceptions for non-negative values, and therefore measures the change in slope for non-negative perceptions. The results provide mixed support for H5. On the one hand negative perceptions of the economy have

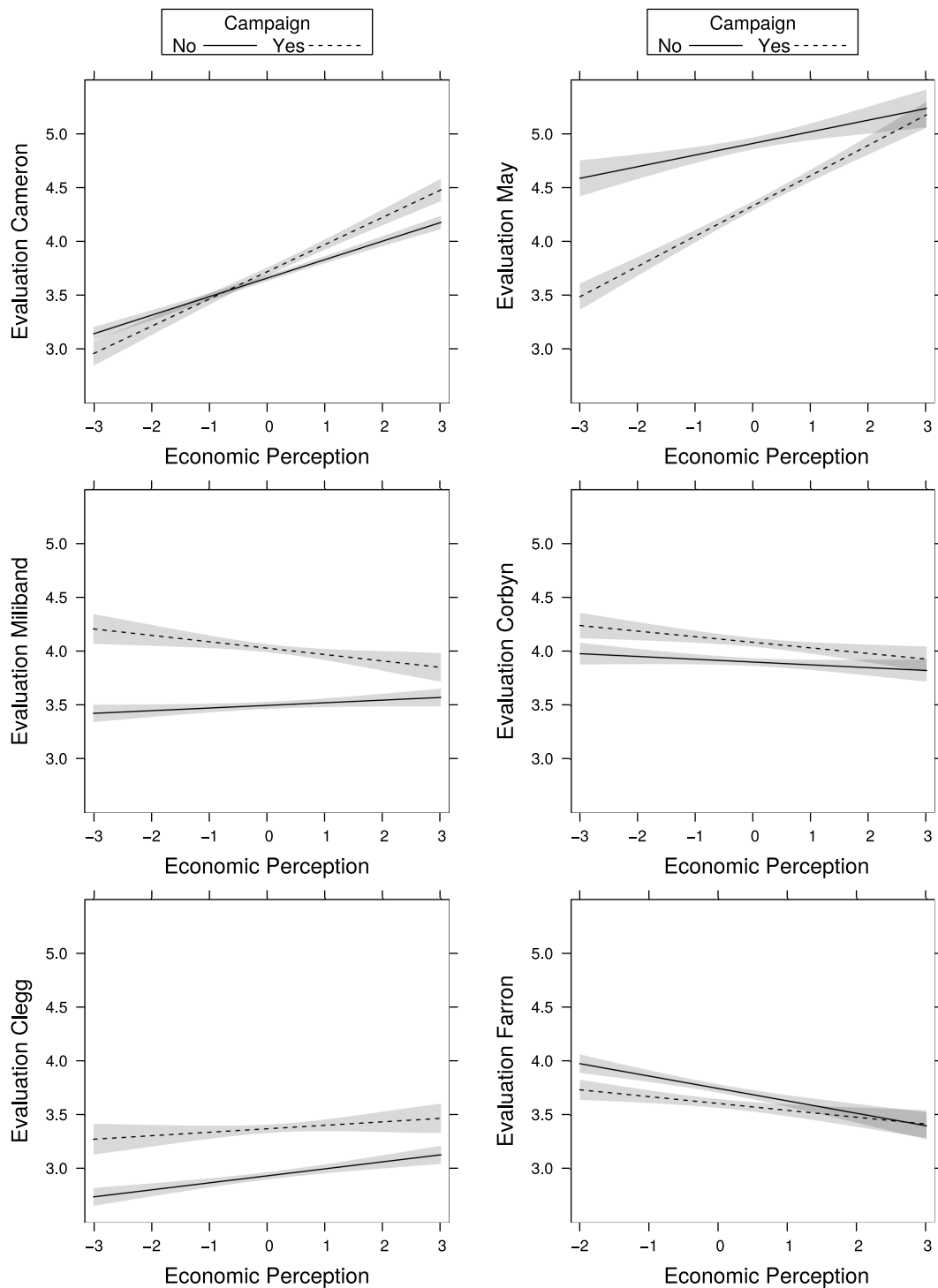


Figure 2.4: Interaction effect plots (predicted values) of respondents' retrospective perception of the UK's economy during and between election campaigns on the evaluation of party leaders (95% confidence-intervals).

a larger within-person-effect on the evaluation of May (0.09 points), but on the other hand the opposite holds true for the evaluation of Cameron. Non-negative economic perceptions have a larger within-person-effect on voters' evaluation of Cameron (0.07 points). The between-person change in slope is negative for both prime ministers, but does not exclude zero in case of Cameron. Negative economic perceptions have a particular strong between-person-effect on the evaluation of May, which is about twice as large as the effect of non-negative evaluations.

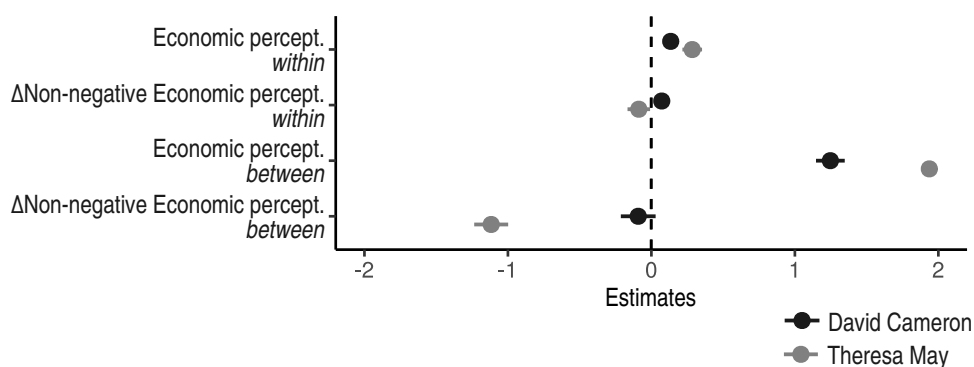


Figure 2.5: Within- and between-person effect of economic perception on the evaluation of party leaders and change in slope of non-negative economic perceptions (95% confidence-intervals, approximation with Wald-statistics). Other covariates not shown.

In conclusion, stances on Brexit, PID, and economic perception do matter for voters' evaluation of party leaders. The same holds true for election campaigns. Not only does the effect of Brexit and the effect of economic perception vary over time. I also find considerable effects of elapsed campaign time on the evaluation of May, Corbyn and Clegg. These time-effects likely point toward changes in voters' evaluation of party leaders that are not explained by voters' changes in economic perception, PID and position on Brexit, as the mere passing of time should not significantly affect voters' feelings towards party leaders. It may therefore be worthwhile to explore additional salient issues. Electoral campaigns may also provide voters with more frequent information on the valence attributes of party leaders.

Overall, the empirical findings match the hypothesized relationships. Established factors of electoral behaviour, like issues, economic perception and PID are able to explain why voters change their evaluations of party leaders. Electoral campaigns and time moderate some of these effects.

Robustness Checks

To test the robustness of the presented findings models for H1–H4 are re-estimated with two alternative specifications. These models are shown in Tables 2.1 to 2.6 in the online appendix. In a first step an additional model tests whether differences in the effect of economic perception during election campaigns are caused by differences in political attention. Voters' may simply pay more attention to signals of party leader valence attributes during election campaigns. Changes in the effect of economic perception may therefore be driven by changes in voters' general attention and not because the economy becomes a more salient issue. Furthermore, increases in political attention, which is measured on a scale from 0 (no attention) to 10 (a great deal of attention), could be masked by the dichotomous campaign period measure.

I find that the overall level of political attention does not vary over time and is therefore not masked by the campaign period measure (see Figure 2.7 in the online appendix). However, to further ensure that the interactions between economic perception and campaigns are not driven by certain voters who change their political attention Tables 2.1–2.6 also control for a possible interaction between political attention and economic perception. These additional models do not show any significant interaction between political attention and the effect of economic perception and do not negate the interaction of interest.

In a second robustness check, voters' PID is replaced with their thermometer evaluation of the party leader's party (0 strongly dislike, 10 strongly like). This measure captures a wider range of voters' perception of political parties than PID. On the downside the causal relationship between voters' thermometer evaluation of parties and party leaders is less clear than for PID. Although Figure 2.8 indicates that thermometer evaluations of parties are more stable than leader evaluations. The inclusion of party thermometers reduces the effects of economic perception and stances on Brexit, but the presented findings remain robust. Voters' thermometer feelings also considerably reduce the difference in between- and within-person effects. This suggests that PID may indeed not sufficiently describe voters' assessment of the political parties.

These tests show that the presented findings remain robust to alternative specification and additional explanatory variables. Nevertheless, the results are limited by covering party leaders from one country only. Empirical findings on economic factors in voting behaviour have been shown to be consistent across

electoral systems (Dassonneville and Lewis-Beck, 2017), therefore, the presented relation between economic perception on the evaluation of party leaders is likely to be stable across countries. However, since the institutional setting and power of prime ministers differs between countries, the valence signal of economic perception for party leaders who hold the office of prime minister could still systematically differ between countries. With these limitations in mind, I draw my conclusion and discuss how future studies may depart from the presented findings.

2.5 Conclusion

When and why do voters change their evaluation of party leaders? In this article I provided answers to both of those questions. Firstly, voters change their evaluation of party leaders at any point in time, but most strong changes and changes in trajectory are associated with parliamentary election campaigns. Secondly, I find a large effects on voters' evaluations of party leaders in established factors of electoral behaviour: perceptions of the economy as valence signal, PIDs and Brexit as a salient position issue. Parliamentary elections may have become more personalized over the past decades. Yet, the presented findings suggest that voters' evaluation towards party leaders do not simply reflect a 'beauty contest' (Curtice and Hunjan, 2011). Insofar the personalisation of elections may endanger the democratic function of elections to a lesser extent than is commonly feared.

With regard to electoral campaigns the results suggest that campaigns may be crucial for party leaders to change the electorate's perception of them. Additional studies should explore the role of electoral campaigns further. Hart (2016) has shown that candidates can deactivate the salience of economic issues by means of campaign strategy. It may also be possible for party leaders to deactivate the presented effect of voters' economic perception. This could be a strategic interest of party leaders in the position of prime minister under bad economic performance. Furthermore, comparisons between a larger number of prime ministers may resolve the mixed findings on economic grievances. It might be the case that voters' evaluations of a newly appointed prime minister like Theresa May are more strongly affected by negative economic perceptions than voters' evaluations of a leader with an established track record as head of the executive like David Cameron.

The fact that voters punish or reward party leaders who hold the office of prime minister for the state of the economy is a welcome finding. Yet, the other party leaders under study do not seem to be able to benefit directly from voters'

dissatisfaction with the economy and can only benefit indirectly if the prime minister's evaluations decrease under a bad economy. This asymmetry in behaviour can lead to situations in which prime ministers or their opponents hold comparative advantages. While the state of the economy provides no direct valence signal for leaders other than the prime minister, future research may focus on the direct avenues through which other party leaders can signal their personal governing capability to voters.

Furthermore, the presented findings support the conclusion of Mellon et al. (2018). Who find that the 2017 general election was dominated by voters' attitudes towards Brexit, as the issue also explains changes in voters' assessment of Theresa May and Jeremy Corbyn.

In this study I have extended established findings on party leaders by performing a longitudinal analysis of voters' evaluations of them. Party leader evaluations by voters vary considerably over time. A cross-sectional view on party leader evaluations may overestimate their stability and underestimate the impact of electoral campaigns on these evaluations. Overall voters seem to include rational considerations in their evaluation of party leaders and apply personal accountability for the economy to prime ministers.

2.6 Appendix to Article 1

Table 2.1: Evaluation Cameron – nine waves

	Main Model	Attention Model	Party-like Model
<i>Fixed effects</i>			
(Intercept)	-0.64 (0.05)	0.11 (0.06)	0.30 (0.04)
Time	0.10 (0.01)	0.10 (0.01)	0.02 (0.02)
Time after EU negot.	-0.24 (0.13)	-0.23 (0.13)	-0.45 (0.11)
Time election campaign	-0.19 (0.04)	-0.19 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.04)
Election campaign	0.06 (0.02)	0.06 (0.02)	0.07 (0.03)
Resignation	0.42 (0.04)	0.42 (0.04)	0.44 (0.03)
<i>Within</i>			
Vote leave EU	-0.05 (0.03)	-0.05 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.04)
Economic percept.	0.17 (0.01)	0.17 (0.01)	0.11 (0.01)
PID strength	0.41 (0.01)	0.41 (0.01)	
Pol. attention		0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Eval. Conservatives			0.50 (0.01)
<i>Between</i>			
Vote leave EU	0.16 (0.03)	0.12 (0.03)	-0.42 (0.02)
Economic percept.	1.17 (0.01)	1.16 (0.01)	0.22 (0.01)
PID strength	1.71 (0.02)	1.73 (0.02)	
Eval. Conservatives			0.83 (0.00)
Male	-0.30 (0.02)	-0.21 (0.02)	-0.09 (0.02)
Age	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Education level	-0.04 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)
Pol. attention		-0.11 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.00)
<i>Interactions</i>			
Election campaign x economic percept.	0.08 (0.02)	0.08 (0.02)	0.02 (0.03)
Time after EU negot. x vote leave EU	-0.64 (0.13)	-0.64 (0.13)	-0.54 (0.14)
Economic percept. x pol. attention		-0.02 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
<i>Random effects</i>			
Var: id (Intercept)	3.49	3.46	0.75
Var: id Time	0.07	0.07	0.04
Cov: id (Intercept) Time	-0.13	-0.14	-0.06
Var: Residual	1.41	1.41	1.19
AIC	383198.03	382917.63	211281.51
BIC	383397.79	383145.93	211498.35
Log Likelihood	-191578.02	-191434.82	-105616.75
Num. obs.	99936	99936	62020
Num. groups: id	28259	28259	24372

Standard errors in parentheses

Table 2.2: Evaluation May – five waves

	Main Model	Attention Model	Party-like Model
<i>Fixed effects</i>			
(Intercept)	-0.20 (0.06)	0.32 (0.08)	0.17 (0.06)
Time	1.06 (0.04)	1.04 (0.04)	0.61 (0.04)
Time election campaign	-5.07 (0.08)	-5.06 (0.08)	-3.93 (0.07)
Election campaign	-0.58 (0.04)	-0.56 (0.04)	-0.32 (0.04)
<i>Within</i>			
Economic percept.	0.11 (0.03)	0.11 (0.03)	0.06 (0.03)
PID strength	0.44 (0.02)	0.44 (0.02)	
Vote leave EU	0.39 (0.10)	0.40 (0.10)	0.37 (0.09)
Pol. attention		-0.01 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)
Eval. Conservatives			0.51 (0.01)
<i>Between</i>			
Economic percept.	1.11 (0.02)	1.10 (0.02)	0.29 (0.01)
PID strength	1.33 (0.02)	1.35 (0.02)	
Vote leave EU	1.19 (0.03)	1.17 (0.03)	0.58 (0.02)
Pol. attention		-0.08 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.00)
Eval. Conservatives			0.75 (0.00)
Male	-0.49 (0.03)	-0.43 (0.03)	-0.30 (0.02)
Age	0.02 (0.00)	0.02 (0.00)	0.01 (0.00)
Education level	-0.06 (0.01)	-0.04 (0.01)	-0.03 (0.01)
<i>Interactions</i>			
Election campaign x economic percept.	0.17 (0.04)	0.17 (0.04)	0.16 (0.03)
Time election campaign x vote leave EU	0.94 (0.65)	0.87 (0.65)	-0.38 (0.53)
Economic percept. x pol. attention		0.01 (0.03)	0.01 (0.02)
<i>Random effects</i>			
Var: id (Intercept)	5.01	5.02	3.56
Var: id Time	1.03	1.03	0.81
Cov: id (Intercept) Time	-1.27	-1.28	-1.44
Var: Residual	1.69	1.69	1.46
AIC	214237.92	214133.83	188564.32
BIC	214405.69	214328.09	188758.37
Log Likelihood	-107099.96	-107044.92	-94260.16
Num. obs.	50495	50495	50036
Num. groups: id	24038	24038	23841

Standard errors in parentheses

Table 2.3: Evaluation Corbyn – seven waves

	Main Model	Attention Model	Party-like Model
<i>Fixed effects</i>			
(Intercept)	6.33 (0.06)	5.99 (0.07)	1.63 (0.06)
Time	-0.41 (0.02)	-0.40 (0.02)	-0.37 (0.01)
Time election campaign	4.27 (0.07)	4.28 (0.07)	3.43 (0.06)
Election campaign	0.18 (0.03)	0.17 (0.03)	0.13 (0.02)
<i>Within</i>			
Economic percept.	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)
PID strength	0.47 (0.02)	0.47 (0.02)	
Vote leave EU	-0.11 (0.05)	-0.11 (0.05)	-0.04 (0.05)
Pol. attention		0.05 (0.01)	0.03 (0.01)
Eval. Labour			0.47 (0.01)
<i>Between</i>			
Economic percept.	-0.70 (0.02)	-0.70 (0.02)	-0.37 (0.01)
PID strength	1.31 (0.02)	1.29 (0.02)	
Vote leave EU	-1.31 (0.03)	-1.31 (0.03)	-0.35 (0.03)
Pol. attention		0.05 (0.01)	0.07 (0.01)
Eval. Labour			0.76 (0.00)
Male	-0.23 (0.03)	-0.27 (0.03)	-0.09 (0.02)
Age	-0.03 (0.00)	-0.03 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.00)
Education level	0.08 (0.01)	0.07 (0.01)	0.05 (0.01)
<i>Interactions</i>			
Election campaign x economic percept.	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.02)
Time election campaign x vote leave EU	-2.91 (0.43)	-2.87 (0.43)	-1.93 (0.38)
Economic percept. x pol. attention		-0.02 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)
<i>Random effects</i>			
Var: id (Intercept)	4.54	4.53	2.71
Var: id Time	0.19	0.19	0.09
Cov: id (Intercept) Time	-0.11	-0.11	-0.20
Var: Residual	1.97	1.97	1.73
AIC	306513.39	306441.58	282134.84
BIC	306687.75	306643.47	282336.57
Log Likelihood	-153237.70	-153198.79	-141045.42
Num. obs.	71459	71459	70942
Num. groups: id	28568	28568	28385

Standard errors in parentheses

Table 2.4: Evaluation Miliband – six waves

	Main Model	Attention Model	Party-like Model
<i>Fixed effects</i>			
(Intercept)	4.05 (0.05)	4.03 (0.07)	0.39 (0.06)
Time	-0.18 (0.01)	-0.19 (0.01)	-0.17 (0.02)
Time election campaign	-2.91 (0.62)	-2.82 (0.62)	-2.79 (0.80)
Election campaign	0.53 (0.02)	0.53 (0.02)	0.42 (0.03)
<i>Within</i>			
Vote leave EU	-0.08 (0.04)	-0.07 (0.04)	-0.06 (0.05)
Economic percept.	0.02 (0.01)	0.12 (0.04)	0.03 (0.06)
PID strength	0.30 (0.02)	0.30 (0.02)	
Pol. attention		0.03 (0.01)	0.03 (0.01)
Eval. Labour			0.42 (0.01)
<i>Between</i>			
Vote leave EU	-1.17 (0.03)	-1.17 (0.03)	-0.29 (0.03)
Economic percept.	-0.20 (0.01)	-0.20 (0.01)	-0.09 (0.01)
PID strength	1.60 (0.01)	1.60 (0.01)	
Pol. attention		0.00 (0.01)	0.05 (0.01)
Eval. Labour			0.78 (0.00)
Male	-0.20 (0.03)	-0.21 (0.03)	-0.08 (0.02)
Age	-0.01 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Education level	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
<i>Interactions</i>			
Election campaign x economic percept.	-0.08 (0.03)	-0.09 (0.03)	-0.05 (0.04)
Economic percept. x pol. attention		-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
<i>Random effects</i>			
Var: id (Intercept)	3.30	3.30	1.19
Var: id Time	0.20	0.20	0.11
Cov: id (Intercept) Time	-0.17	-0.17	-0.13
Var: Residual	1.50	1.50	1.32
AIC	292801.12	292800.39	132086.36
BIC	292967.08	292994.01	132265.26
Log Likelihood	-146382.56	-146379.20	-66022.18
Num. obs.	74609	74609	37005
Num. groups: id	23132	23132	14833

Standard errors in parentheses

Table 2.5: Evaluation Clegg – six waves

	Main Model	Attention Model	Party-like Model
<i>Fixed effects</i>			
(Intercept)	1.22 (0.05)	1.84 (0.07)	-0.37 (0.05)
Time	0.04 (0.01)	0.04 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.02)
Time election campaign	7.47 (0.64)	7.52 (0.64)	4.58 (0.81)
Election campaign	0.44 (0.02)	0.43 (0.02)	0.20 (0.03)
<i>Within</i>			
Vote leave EU	-0.13 (0.04)	-0.13 (0.04)	-0.06 (0.05)
Economic percept.	0.07 (0.01)	0.07 (0.01)	0.01 (0.02)
PID strength	0.38 (0.03)	0.38 (0.03)	
Pol. attention		0.02 (0.01)	0.03 (0.01)
Eval. Lib Dems			0.45 (0.01)
<i>Between</i>			
Vote leave EU	-0.73 (0.03)	-0.77 (0.03)	0.09 (0.02)
Economic percept.	0.72 (0.01)	0.72 (0.01)	0.22 (0.01)
PID strength	1.65 (0.03)	1.65 (0.03)	
Pol. attention		-0.09 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)
Eval. Lib Dems			0.85 (0.00)
Male	-0.49 (0.03)	-0.41 (0.03)	-0.08 (0.02)
Age	-0.01 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Education level	0.01 (0.01)	0.03 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.01)
<i>Interactions</i>			
Election campaign x economic percept.	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.03)	0.06 (0.04)
Economic percept. x pol. attention			0.01 (0.02)
<i>Random effects</i>			
Var: id (Intercept)	3.53	3.48	0.83
Var: id Time	0.20	0.20	0.10
Cov: id (Intercept) Time	-0.14	-0.13	-0.10
Var: Residual	1.62	1.62	1.36
AIC	298405.65	298247.66	129594.62
BIC	298571.62	298432.07	129773.48
Log Likelihood	-149184.82	-149103.83	-64776.31
Num. obs.	74670	74670	36941
Num. groups: id	23143	23143	14812

Standard errors in parentheses

Table 2.6: Evaluation Farron – seven waves

	Main Model	Attention Model	Party-like Model
<i>Fixed effects</i>			
(Intercept)	4.45 (0.05)	4.31 (0.07)	1.09 (0.05)
Time	-0.04 (0.02)	-0.04 (0.02)	-0.12 (0.02)
Time election campaign	-0.23 (0.08)	-0.23 (0.08)	-0.02 (0.07)
Election campaign	-0.14 (0.03)	-0.14 (0.03)	-0.11 (0.03)
<i>Within</i>			
Vote leave EU	-0.20 (0.06)	-0.20 (0.06)	-0.05 (0.06)
Economic percept.	-0.12 (0.02)	-0.12 (0.02)	-0.10 (0.02)
PID strength	0.46 (0.04)	0.46 (0.04)	
Pol. attention		0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)
Eval. Lib Dems			0.46 (0.01)
<i>Between</i>			
Vote leave EU	-1.46 (0.03)	-1.46 (0.03)	-0.24 (0.02)
Economic percept.	0.05 (0.02)	0.05 (0.02)	0.00 (0.01)
PID strength	1.33 (0.03)	1.33 (0.03)	
Pol. attention		0.02 (0.01)	0.03 (0.00)
Eval. Lib Dems			0.70 (0.00)
Male	-0.29 (0.03)	-0.30 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.02)
Age	-0.01 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Education level	0.06 (0.01)	0.06 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.01)
<i>Interactions</i>			
Election campaign x economic percept.	0.05 (0.03)	0.05 (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)
Time election campaign x vote leave EU	-0.16 (0.51)	-0.15 (0.51)	-0.27 (0.45)
Economic percept. x pol. attention		0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)
<i>Random effects</i>			
Var: id (Intercept)	3.28	3.28	1.44
Var: id Time	0.42	0.42	0.23
Cov: id (Intercept) Time	-0.46	-0.46	-0.32
Var: Residual	2.07	2.07	1.91
AIC	243305.28	243323.21	220939.37
BIC	243475.48	243520.27	221136.28
Log Likelihood	-121633.64	-121639.60	-110447.68
Num. obs.	57388	57388	56983
Num. groups: id	24514	24514	24335

Standard errors in parentheses

Table 2.7: Economic grievance models - piecewise regressions with marginal variable

	David Cameron	Theresa May
<i>Fixed effects</i>		
(Intercept)	-1.07 (0.09)	-2.09 (0.10)
Time	0.10 (0.01)	1.08 (0.04)
Time election campaign	-0.19 (0.04)	-5.15 (0.08)
Election campaign2	0.07 (0.02)	-0.59 (0.04)
Time after EU negot.	-0.25 (0.13)	
Resignation	0.42 (0.04)	
<i>Within</i>		
Economic percept.	0.13 (0.02)	0.29 (0.03)
Δ non-negative Economic percept.	0.07 (0.03)	-0.09 (0.04)
Vote leave EU	-0.05 (0.03)	0.39 (0.10)
PID strength	0.41 (0.01)	0.44 (0.02)
<i>Between</i>		
Economic percept.	1.25 (0.05)	1.94 (0.05)
Δ non-negative Economic percept.	-0.09 (0.06)	-1.11 (0.06)
Vote leave EU	0.16 (0.03)	1.22 (0.03)
PID strength	1.71 (0.02)	1.35 (0.02)
Male	0.30 (0.02)	0.47 (0.03)
Age	-0.01 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)
Education level	-0.04 (0.01)	-0.06 (0.01)
<i>Interactions</i>		
Time after EU negot. x vote leave EU	-0.64 (0.13)	
Time election campaign x vote leave EU		0.99 (0.65)
<i>Random effects</i>		
Var: id (Intercept)	3.50	4.91
Var: id Time	0.07	1.02
Cov: id (Intercept) Time	-0.13	-1.26
Var: Residual	1.41	1.69
AIC	383207.49	213923.98
BIC	383416.76	214100.57
Log Likelihood	-191581.74	-106941.99
Num. obs.	99936	50495
Num. groups: id	28259	24038

Standard errors in parantheses

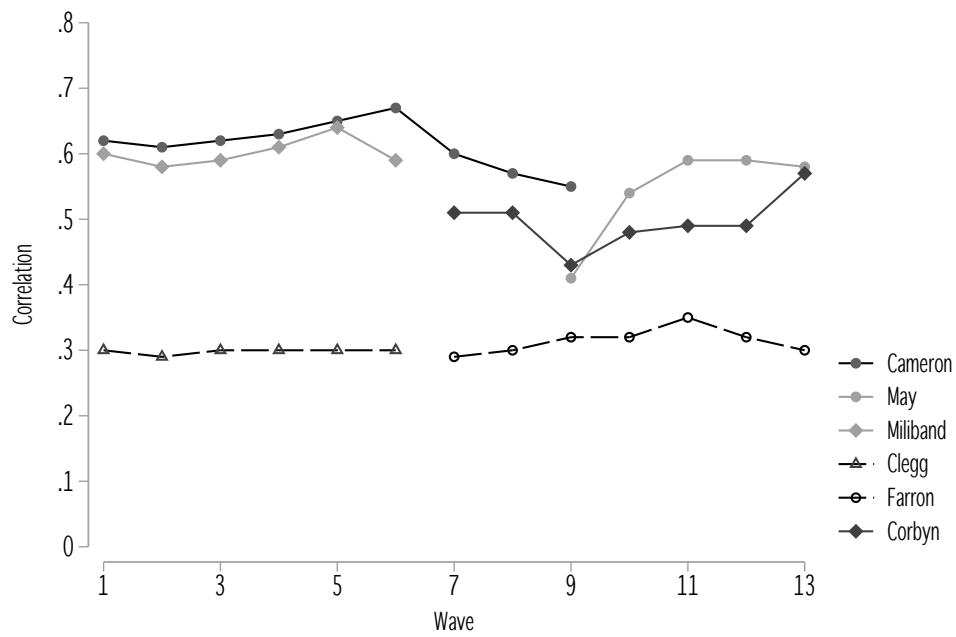


Figure 2.6: Correlation between voters' thermometer evaluation of party leaders and voters' strength of party identification over time. Data: BES (Fieldhouse et al., 2017)

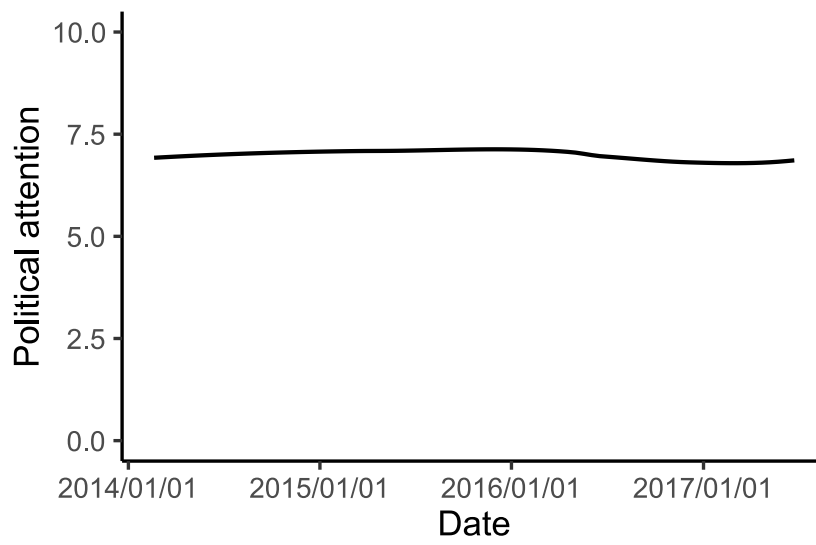


Figure 2.7: Voters' political attention, locally weighted scatter-plot smoothing (0 no attention, 10 a great deal of attention)

Supplementary Information

Unconditional means model:

$$Evaluation_{ij} = \pi_{0i} + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

$$\pi_{0i} = \gamma_{00} + \zeta_{0i}$$

$$\varepsilon_{ij} \sim N(0, \sigma_\varepsilon^2) \text{ and } \zeta_{0i} \sim N(0, \sigma_0^2)$$

Table 2.8: Unconditional Means Models

	Cameron	May	Corbyn	Miliband	Clegg	Farron
Fixed effects						
(Intercept)	3.64 (0.02)	4.51 (0.02)	4.04 (0.02)	3.72 (0.02)	3.13 (0.02)	3.69 (0.01)
Fixed effects						
Var: id (Intercept)	8.06	8.16	8.58	6.77	4.96	4.03
Var: Residual	1.65	2.56	2.42	1.70	1.87	2.47
Num. groups: id	28259	24038	28568	23132	23143	24514
Num. obs.	99936	50495	71459	74609	74670	57388
Log Likelihood	-205113.53	-118928.84	-163983.82	-154691.14	-154215.79	-125529.77
BIC	410261.60	237890.17	328001.16	309415.95	308465.24	251092.42
AIC	410233.06	237863.68	327973.63	309388.28	308437.58	251065.55

Standard errors in parentheses

Unconditional growth model:

$$Evaluation_{ij} = \pi_{0i} + \pi_{1i}TIME_{ij} + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

$$\pi_{0i} = \gamma_{00} + \zeta_{0i}$$

$$\pi_{1i} = \gamma_{10} + \zeta_{1i}$$

$\varepsilon_{ij} \sim N(0, \sigma_\varepsilon^2)$, $\zeta_{0i} \sim N(0, \sigma_0^2)$ and $\zeta_{1i} \sim N(0, \sigma_1^2)$ as well as $\rho\sigma_0\sigma_1$.

Table 2.9: Unconditional Growth Models

	Cameron	May	Corbyn	Miliband	Clegg	Farron
Fixed effects						
(Intercept)	3.68 (0.02)	5.06 (0.03)	3.86 (0.02)	3.61 (0.02)	2.76 (0.02)	3.86 (0.02)
Time	-0.02 (0.00)	-0.38 (0.02)	0.14 (0.01)	0.08 (0.01)	0.29 (0.01)	-0.12 (0.01)
Var: id (Intercept)	8.48	7.03	7.98	6.37	4.82	4.00
Var: id Time	0.08	0.86	0.15	0.21	0.20	0.43
Var: Residual	1.46	2.13	2.27	1.52	1.64	2.07
AIC	408626.06	236250.34	327283.94	308187.41	305564.35	249782.49
BIC	408683.13	236303.32	327339.00	308242.73	305619.67	249836.23
Log Likelihood	-204307.03	-118119.17	-163635.97	-154087.71	-152776.17	-124885.24
Num. obs.	99936	50495	71459	74609	74670	57388
Num. groups: id	28259	24038	28568	23132	23143	24514

Standard errors in parantheses

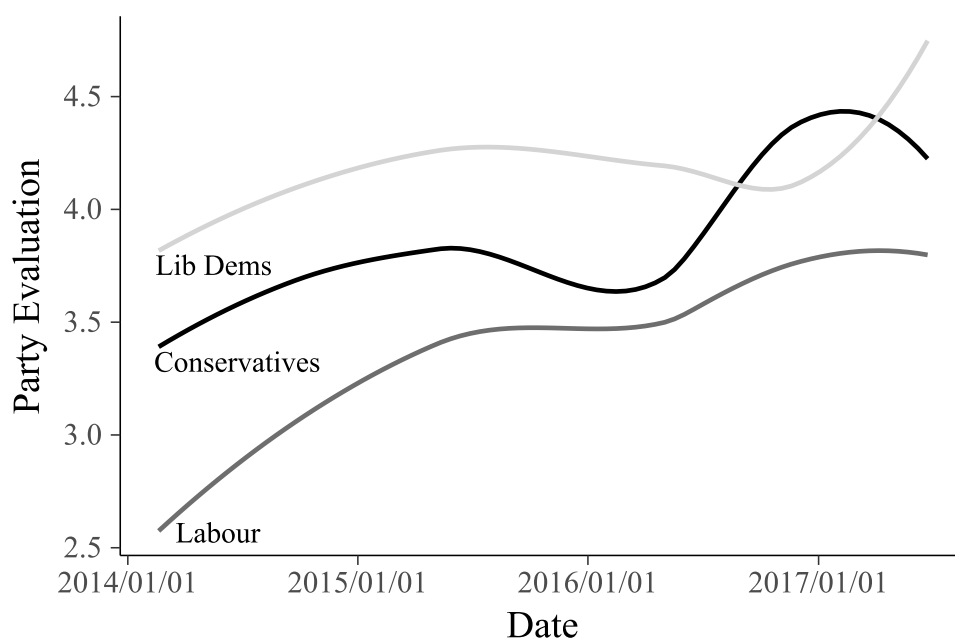


Figure 2.8: Voters' evaluations of British parties, locally weighted scatter-plot smoothing (0 strongly dislike, 10 strongly like). Data: BES (Fieldhouse et al., 2017).

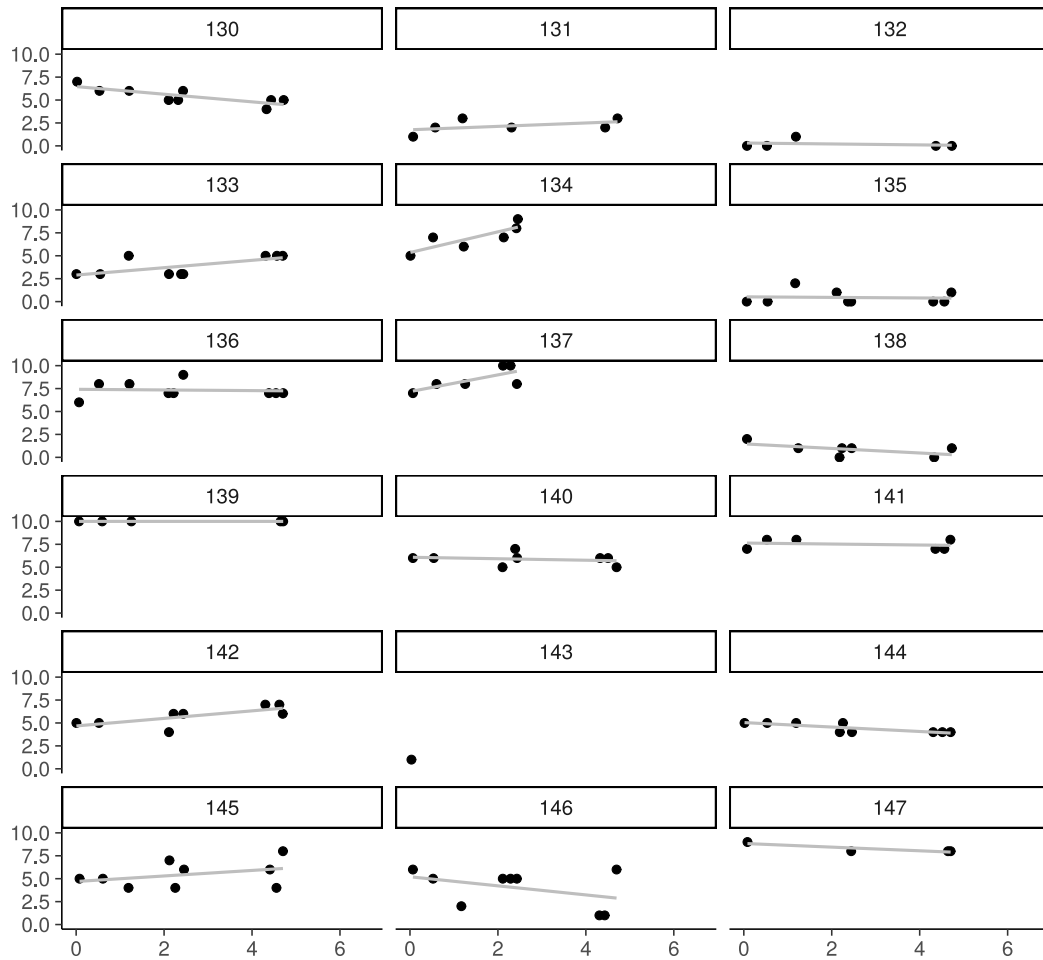


Figure 2.9: Scatter-plots with linear fit of individual voters' evaluation of Cameron from 0 (dislike) to 10 (like) over time (each unit on the x-axis represents 6 months)

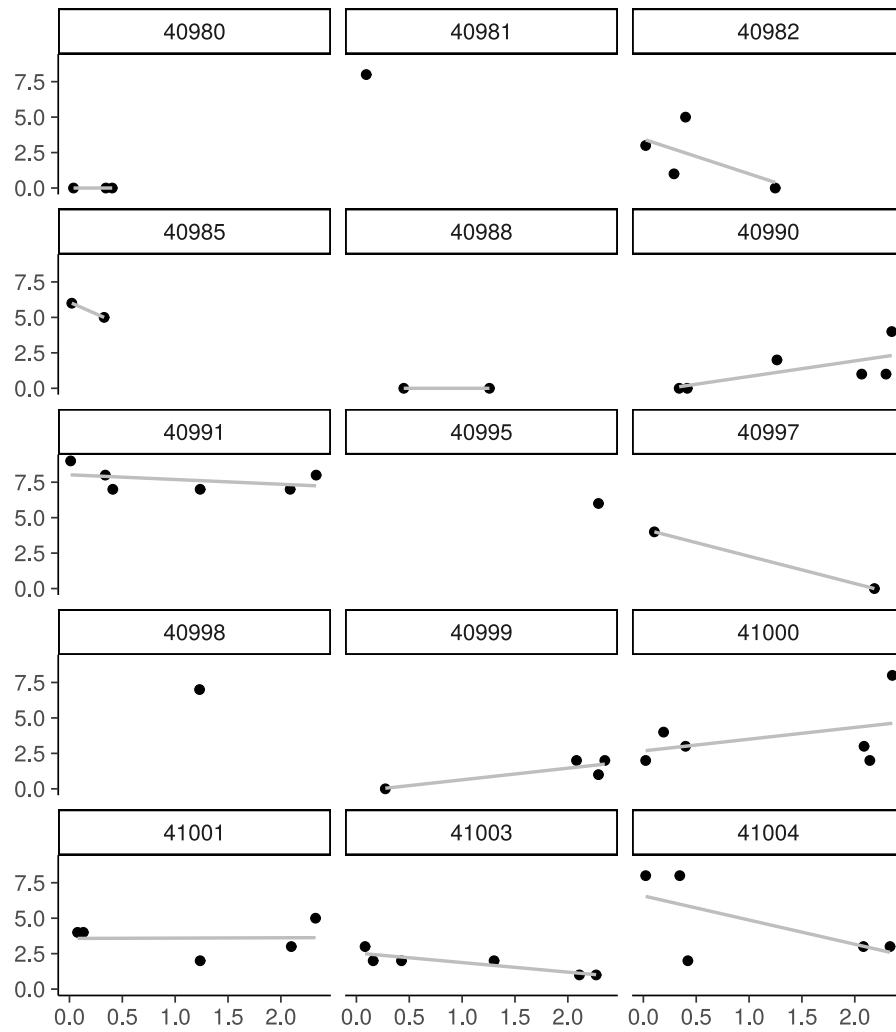


Figure 2.10: Scatter-plots with linear fit of individual voters' evaluation of Corbyn from 0 (dislike) to 10 (like) over time (each unit on the x-axis represents 6 months)

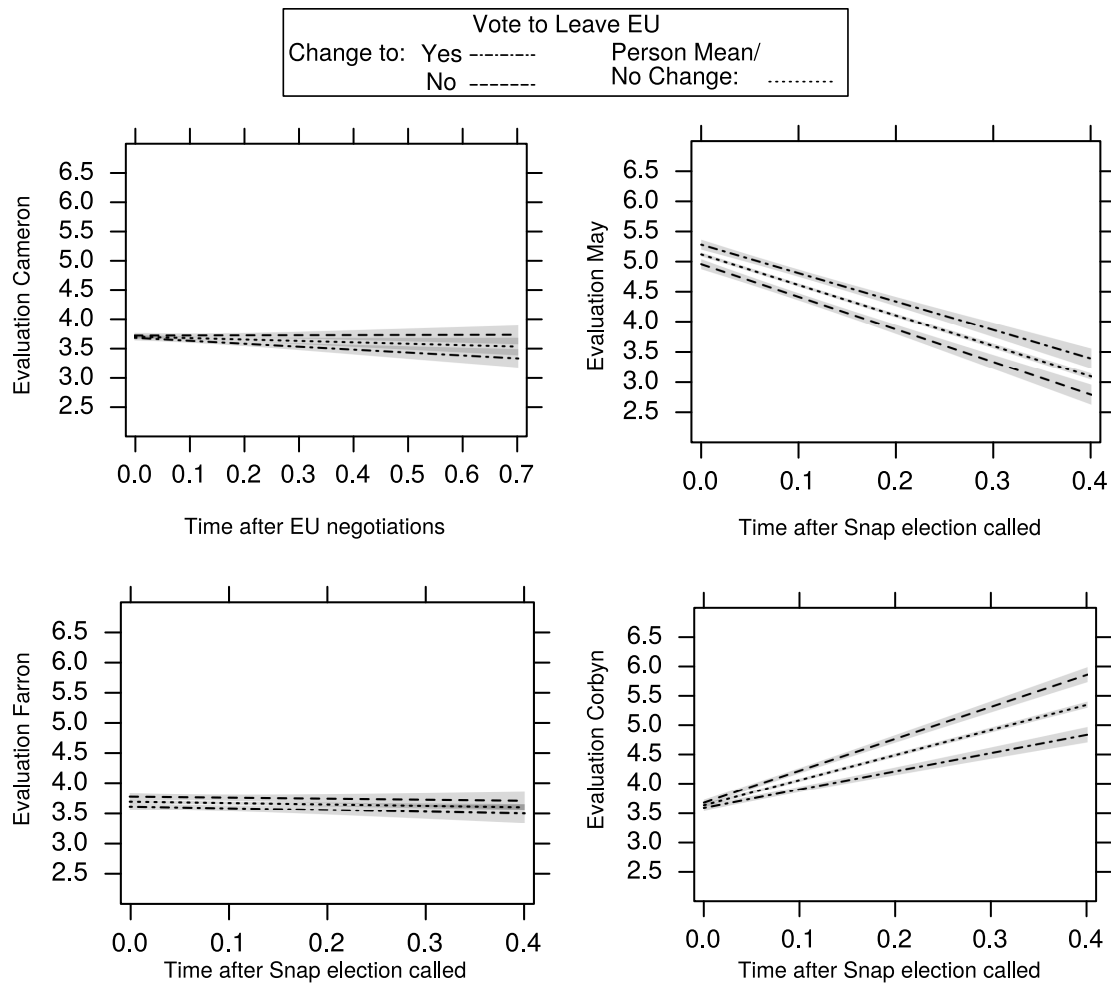


Figure 2.11: Interaction effect plots (predicted values) of respondents' stance on Brexit and time on the evaluation of party leaders (95 % confidence-intervals). The figure displays values for respondents who do not hold a clear remain or leave position over the timespan of the panel.

Chapter 3

Article 2: 14 Jahre

Bundeskanzlerin Merkel:

Unterstützung durch Annäherung

This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Nomos in the Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen 50 (3): 545–556 on the 4th of October 2019, <https://doi.org/10.5771/0340-1758-2019-3-545>.

Abstract: In March 2018 Angela Merkel was appointed to her fourth term as chancellor of the German Federal Republic. How did perceptions among voters develop over the past fourteen years of her chancellorship? A detailed analysis shows that the chancellor is more popular than ever. In the recent federal election even the majorities of voters who identified with the SPD, the Greens, or Die Linke evaluated the chancellor positively. This article analyses why the chancellor became so popular over recent years using survey data from 2005 to 2019 to answer this question. Results from a multivariate regression show that voters increasing satisfaction with the government's performance and the ideological closeness between voters and Angela Merkel offer the best explanation for the rising support of the chancellor.

3.1 Einführung

„Die Fremde“, so wurde ein Porträt über die designierte Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel im Oktober 2005 überschrieben (Neukirch, 2005). Nach vierzehn Jahren als dreimal wiedergewählte Kanzlerin der Bundesrepublik kann davon keine Rede mehr sein, aber wie beurteilt die Wählerschaft sie aktuell im Amt? Im August 2019 sah das Politbarometer der Forschungsgruppe Wahlen (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, 2019) die Bundeskanzlerin bei einer leicht positiven Bewertung mit einem Durchschnitt von 7,5 Punkten auf einer Skala von 1 (halte überhaupt nichts von dieser Person) bis 11 (halte sehr viel von dieser Person). Hier ist praktisch kein Unterschied zu ihrer Bewertung nach ihrem Amtsantritt im November 2005 festzustellen, als sie 7,6 Punkte erhielt. Haben sich die vierzehn Amtsjahre als Bundeskanzlerin folglich nicht auf die Wahrnehmung von Angela Merkel ausgewirkt? Ohne eine detaillierte Analyse wäre eine solche Schlussfolgerung voreilig, denn bei einer genaueren Auswertung von repräsentativen Umfragedaten ergibt sich die interessante Beobachtung, dass inzwischen die Anhängerschaften aller Parteien, außer jene der Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), Merkel mehrheitlich positiv beurteilen. Hatten bei der Bundestagswahl 2005 noch 20 Prozent der Anhängerinnen¹ der Partei Die Linke eine explizit negative Meinung (hielten überhaupt nichts) von der Bundeskanzlerin, waren es bei der Bundestagswahl 2017 nur noch 7,9 Prozent. Eine ähnliche Entwicklung ist für die Grünen und die SPD festzustellen, wo sich die Wahrnehmung der Bundeskanzlerin von überwiegend neutral zu überwiegend positiv wandelte.

Wie kam es zu dieser Entwicklung? Haben die Entscheidungen Merkels in der Eurokrise, der unter ihrer Führung beschlossene Atomausstieg und die Flüchtlingskrise die Einstellung zu ihrer Person in der Wählerschaft maßgeblich beeinflusst? Ist die Bundeskanzlerin in ihrer Amtszeit kontinuierlich in die ideologische Mitte der Bevölkerung gerückt? Um diesen Fragen nachzugehen, werden die Politbarometerdaten der Forschungsgruppe Wahlen Mannheim (FGW), sowie Umfragen zu den Bundestagswahlen von 2005 bis 2017 herangezogen (Rattinger et al., 2014; Roßteutscher et al., 2018; Rattinger et al., 2012; Schmitt-Beck and Faas, 2009). Diese Daten erlauben es, die Veränderungen in der Wahrnehmung der Bundeskanzlerin durch die Wählerinnen in den vergangenen Jahren zu analysieren. Eine solche Untersuchung ergänzt die politikwissenschaftliche Forschung zum Einfluss von

¹Ich verwende in dieser Analyse für die Beschreibung von Personen die weibliche Form. Die Nutzung dieser Form bezieht allerdings ausdrücklich die Angehörigen aller Geschlechter mit ein.

Spitzenpersonal in Parlamentswahlen. Nach anfänglichen Zweifeln (Brettschneider, 2002) wurde dieser Einfluss in zahlreichen wissenschaftlichen Studien festgestellt (Aarts, Blais and Schmitt, 2011; Garzia, 2014; Lobo and Curtice, 2014). So wurde empirisch belegt, dass die Wahlentscheidungen, neben anderen wahlbestimmenden Faktoren, auch durch die politische Wahrnehmung des Spitzenpersonals beeinflusst werden. Dieses trägt damit auch persönlich zum Wahlerfolg wie zur Niederlage ihrer Partei bei. Ob dieser Einfluss durch die steigende Bedeutung des Fernsehens und die zunehmende Individualisierung von Kommunikation über die sozialen Medien in den vergangenen Jahrzehnten zugenommen hat, ist ein höchst wichtiger Gegenstand der aktuellen wissenschaftlichen Debatte. Angesichts der Abnahme stabiler Parteiidentifikationen (Dalton, 1984; Schmitt-Beck and Schrott, 1994), denen bislang eine der größten Bedeutungen für die Wahlentscheidung zugeschrieben wurde, könnte der Einfluss des Spitzenpersonals weiter steigen. Dieser als Personalisierung, beziehungsweise als elektorale Präsidentialisierung parlamentarischer Wahlen (Poguntke and Webb, 2005; Poguntke, 2015), bezeichnete Prozess der zunehmenden Bedeutung des Spitzenpersonals ruft regelmäßig die Bedenken eines 'Schönheitswettbewerbs' hervor (Curtice and Hunjan, 2011; Gabriel and Vetter, 1998). Zur Beantwortung der Frage, wie sich die Beurteilung der Bundeskanzlerin über die Jahre so positiv entwickeln konnte, liegen in der Forschung noch keine hinreichenden systematischen Befunde vor. Hierbei wird die Beurteilung von Angela Merkel vornehmlich während den Bundestagswahlen, als Zeitpunkte von besonderer Bedeutung, analysiert. Zusätzlich soll die Frage beantwortet werden ob sich die Zustimmung zur deutschen Bundeskanzlerin ähnlich wie die Beurteilung von Regierungschefs in präsidentiellen Systemen (Carlin, Love and Martínez-Gallardo, 2015; Ostrom and Simon, 1985) mit der Leistung der Regierung im Amt erklären lässt.

3.2 Die Wahrnehmung der Bundeskanzlerin im Zeitverlauf

Um empirisch darzustellen, wie sich die Wahrnehmung von Angela Merkel in der Bevölkerung entwickelt hat, wird erstens die Evaluation von Charaktereigenschaften der Bundeskanzlerin, beispielsweise „sympathisch“ oder „vertrauenswürdig“, durch die Wählerschaft gemessen. Zweitens stehen Skalen zur Verfügung, die eine zusammenfassende Einschätzung der Person von 1 (halte überhaupt nichts von ihr) bis

11 (halte sehr viel von ihr) angeben. Insbesondere solche Skalen ermöglichen die kontinuierliche Bewertung der Bundeskanzlerin für den Zeitraum von 2005 bis 2019.

Charaktereigenschaften

Tabelle 3.1 zeigt, dass ein steigender Anteil der Wählerschaft der Bundeskanzlerin durchweg vermehrt positive Charaktereigenschaften zuschreibt. Äußert noch ein Drittel der Wählerinnen zur Bundestagswahl 2009, dass Merkel keine Wirtschaftskompetenz aufweise, hat sich dieser Anteil 2017 auf 15 Prozent reduziert. Ein ähnlicher Verlauf zeigt sich bei den Eigenschaften „sympathisch“ und „vertrauenswürdig“. Jeweils etwas über ein Viertel der Befragten hielten die Bundeskanzlerin 2009 für nicht sympathisch und für nicht vertrauenswürdig. Im Jahre 2017 beschrieb die Mehrheit Merkel hingegen als „sympathisch“, „vertrauenswürdig“ und „wirtschaftskompetent“. Seit 2009 gilt dies auch für die „Durchsetzungsfähigkeit“ der Bundeskanzlerin. Insgesamt bleibt festzuhalten, dass bei der überwiegenden Mehrheit der Befragten die positive Einschätzung ihrer Charaktereigenschaften im Zeitverlauf deutlich erkennbar steigt. Dieser universelle Anstieg legt nahe, dass der Zuschreibung dieser positiven Charaktereigenschaften eine gemeinsame Ursache zu Grunde liegt, die innerhalb der Wählerschaft zu einer generell positiveren Wahrnehmung Angela Merkels und vermehrten Zuschreibung positiver Eigenschaften führt.

Table 3.1: Zuschreibung von Charaktereigenschaften in Prozent.

	Sympathisch			Vertrauenswürdig			Wirtschaftskompetent			Durchsetzungsfähig		
	2009	2013	2017	2009	2013	2017	2009	2013	2017	2009	2013	2017
Trifft nicht zu	27,16	25,48	17,93	25,53	23,3	16,3	30,04	22,16	15,63	17,85	9,62	10,04
Teilweise	27,85	22,17	21,94	26,84	24,2	19,48	31,1	30,2	31,26	26,07	16,39	16,38
Trifft zu	45	52,34	60,13	47,63	52,5	64,23	38,87	47,63	53,11	56,08	73,99	73,58

Anmerkung: Fragestellung: "Sagen Sie mir bitte zu jeder der Aussagen, die ich Ihnen jetzt vorlese, inwieweit sie Ihrer Meinung nach auf Angela Merkel zutrifft oder nicht: ist durchsetzungsfähig, ist vertrauenswürdig, ist als Mensch sympathisch, hat vernünftige Vorstellungen, die Wirtschaft anzukurbeln." Die originale Skala der Fragestellung von 1 (trifft überhaupt nicht zu) bis 5 (trifft voll und ganz zu) wurde durch die Kombination der Antworten "trifft überhaupt nicht zu/trifft eher nicht zu" in "trifft nicht zu" und der Kombination von "trifft eher zu/trifft voll und ganz zu" in "trifft zu" zusammengefasst.

Quelle: Eigene Darstellung basierend auf Daten der German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES).

Skalenbewertung

Die kontinuierlich erhobenen Umfragen der Forschungsgruppe Wahlen (Politbarometer) ermöglichen es, die durchschnittliche Skalenbewertung Angela Merkels über den gesamten Zeitraum ihrer Kanzlerschaft zu verfolgen. Abbildung 3.1 zeigt den durchschnittlichen Wert von Anfang Juli 2005 bis August 2019. Ebenfalls aufgezeigt ist die Zufriedenheit mit der Arbeit der Bundesregierung als durchschnittlicher Wert auf einer entsprechenden Skala.²

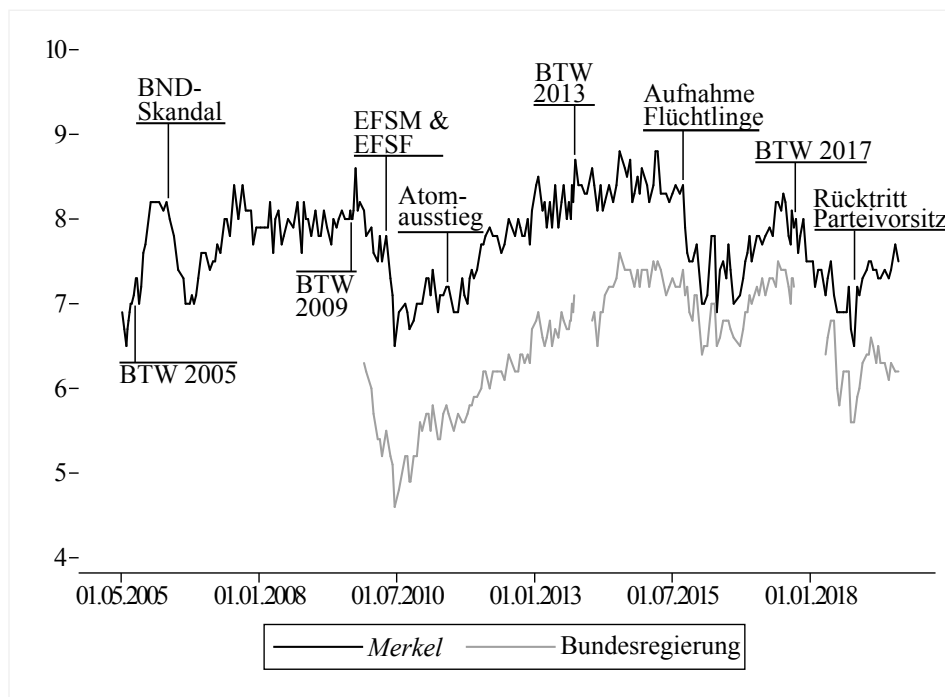


Figure 3.1: Evaluation von Angela Merkel von 1 (halte überhaupt nichts von dieser Person) bis 11 (halte sehr viel von dieser Person) und Evaluation der Bundesregierung als Zufriedenheit mit der Arbeit der Bundesregierung von 1 (vollständig unzufrieden) bis 11 (voll und ganz zufrieden). Quelle: Eigene Darstellung mit Daten der Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, Politbarometer (2005-2019).

Die durchschnittliche Bewertung der Bundeskanzlerin bewegt sich im Zeitverlauf zwischen sechs und neun Punkten und damit durchweg im positiven Bereich der Skala. Ihre beste durchschnittliche Einschätzung erzielte Merkel mit 8,8 Punkten in den Jahren 2014 und 2015. Zuvor war sie direkt nach ihrer ersten Wiederwahl 2009 einmalig mit 8,7 Punkten bewertet worden. Insgesamt ist allerdings kein eindeutiger Trend zu erkennen, sind Anstiege und Abnahmen zu verzeichnen, wobei starke Abnahmen innerhalb kurzer Zeiträume häufiger anzutreffen sind als starke

²Diese Variable ist im Zeitverlauf leider nur für einen kürzeren Zeitraum verfügbar.

Zunahmen. Es ist zu vermuten, dass diese mit besonderen politischen Ereignissen in Verbindung stehen. Um diese These graphisch zu verdeutlichen, wird in Abbildung 3.1 die Bewertung der Bundeskanzlerin mit einigen solcher Ereignisse in Verbindung gebracht. So sank auf das Bekanntwerden der Überwachung deutscher Journalisten durch den Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND) am 11. Mai 2006 die positive Einschätzung Merkels deutlich ab. Im Verlauf des Sommers 2006 ging ihre durchschnittliche Bewertung um etwa einen Punkt zurück. Zu ähnlich starken Abnahmen kam es nach der Einrichtung des Euro-Schutzschirms im Mai 2010 und nach ihrem Beschluss am 5. September 2015, syrische Flüchtlinge aus Ungarn aufzunehmen. Bezeichnenderweise finden sich keine sichtbaren Veränderungen ihrer Bewertung in zeitlicher Nähe zum Atomausstieg, der von Bundeskanzlerin und Bundesregierung als Reaktion auf den Unfall im japanischen Atomkraftwerk Fukushima beschlossen worden war. Die Daten verdeutlichen, dass die Bewertung der Bundeskanzlerin als Person parallel zur Bewertung der Arbeit der Bundesregierung verläuft. Insgesamt belegt Abbildung 3.1, dass die Wählerschaft die Bundeskanzlerin nach bedeutenden politischen Ereignissen anders wahrnimmt. Dies unterstützt bereits die These, dass die Wahrnehmung der Bundeskanzlerin, ähnlich wie die Wahrnehmung von Präsidentinnen, stark von der Leistung der Regierung abhängig ist. Jedoch zeigt die sich schließende Lücke zwischen der Bewertung der Bundesregierung und der Bewertung von Angela Merkel nach der Aufnahme von Flüchtlingen aus Ungarn auch, dass einzelne Entscheidungen im Amt auch der Bundeskanzlerin persönlich zugeschrieben werden; während die Bewertung der gesamten Regierungsleistung kaum beeinflusst wurde. Außerdem ist festzustellen, dass es im gesamten Zeitverlauf keinen eindeutigen Trend gibt. So bewegt sich die durchschnittliche Bewertung der Bundeskanzlerin 2005 und 2019 um sieben Punkte. Eine genauere Analyse zeigt jedoch, dass das arithmetische Mittel nur teilweise geeignet ist, um den Verlauf der Einschätzungen Merkels während ihrer Amtszeit hinreichend zu erklären.

Wahrnehmung der Bundeskanzlerin nach Anhängerinnen der politischen Parteien

Abbildung 3.2 zeigt die Verteilung in der Bewertung der Bundeskanzlerin als Violinen-Plot, aufgeschlüsselt nach den Anhängerschaften der Parteien. Zunächst überrascht es nicht, dass unter den Befragten, die angaben, sich mit der Union zu identifizieren, keine nennenswerten negativen Werte für Merkel auftreten. Im Zeitverlauf stieg der Median innerhalb der Anhängerinnen der Union sogar von

neun auf zehn Punkte.

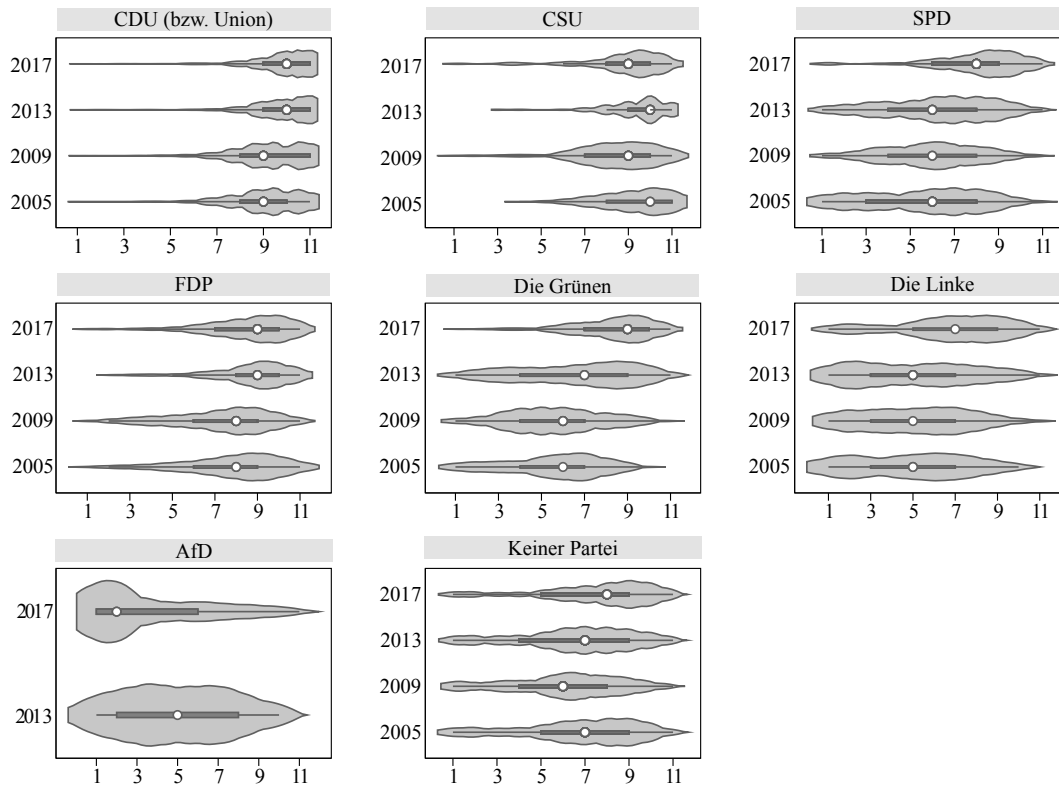


Figure 3.2: Anmerkung: Bewertung von Angela Merkel auf einer Skala von 1 (halte überhaupt nichts von dieser Person) bis 11 (halte sehr viel von dieser Person) anhand der Fragestellung "Bitte geben Sie nun an, was Sie von einigen führenden Politikern halten?" Boxplots innerhalb der Dichtediagramme zeigen den Median sowie das obere und untere Quartil.

Quelle: Eigene Darstellung basierend auf Daten von Rüdiger Schmitt-Beck / Thorsten Faas, a.a.O. (Fn. 4) und der German Longitudinal Election Study.

Im Vergleich zeigen die Dichtediagramme innerhalb der Anhängerschaft der CSU ein anderes Bild. Zwar nehmen auch Befragte, die sich mit der CSU, identifizieren erwartungsgemäß die Bundeskanzlerin mehrheitlich positiv wahr. Jedoch zeigt sich, dass sich die Bewertung Angela Merkels nicht positiv, sondern im Vergleich von 2005 mit 2017 eher negativ entwickelt hat. Die Anhängerinnen der SPD, der Grünen und der Linken schätzten die Bundeskanzlerin zur Bundestagswahl 2005 mit Medianen von fünf bis sechs deutlich negativer ein. In der FDP-Anhängerschaft wird die Bundeskanzlerin, mit einem Medianwert von acht Punkten, ähnlich wie in der CSU vornehmlich positiv beurteilt. Befragte, die sich keiner Partei zugehörig fühlen, bewerteten die Bundeskanzlerin zur Bundestagswahl 2005 mehrheitlich

positiv; wobei die Bewertungen in dieser Gruppe breit streuen und auch eindeutig negative Bewertungen einschließen. Abbildung 3.2 belegt, dass sich die Bewertung der Regierungschefin innerhalb der Anhängerschaft der SPD, der Grünen und der Linken im Zeitverlauf positiv entwickelt hat. Im Vergleich zur Bundestagswahl 2005 wird Merkel 2017 in allen drei Parteianhängerschaften erstaunlich positiv beurteilt. Hierbei ist auffällig, dass die größten Verschiebungen zwischen 2013 und 2017 auftreten. Insbesondere die Anhängerinnen der Linken veränderten in diesem Zeitraum ihre Bewertung. Zwischen 2005 und 2017 sind innerhalb der drei Parteianhängerschaften zudem leichte Differenzen zu erkennen. Unter den Anhängerinnen der Grünen wird die Bundeskanzlerin 2009 negativer beurteilt als noch zur vorherigen Bundestagswahl. Im weiteren Verlauf verbesserten sich jedoch ihre Werte. Zur Bundestagswahl 2013 sind positive Bewertungen in dieser Gruppe deutlich häufiger anzutreffen, auch wenn ein Teil die Bundeskanzlerin immer noch negativ einschätzt. Zur Bundestagswahl 2017 ähnelt die Bewertung Merkels seitens der Anhängerinnen der Grünen der Bewertung von Befragten, die sich mit CSU und FDP identifizieren. Im Vergleich sind unter der Anhängerschaft der SPD, nach der ersten Großen Koalition, negative Bewertungen bereits etwas seltener anzutreffen. Allerdings hatte auch die Anzahl positiver Urteile leicht abgenommen. Zwischen 2009 und 2013 kam es nur zu unmerklichen Veränderungen. Zur Bundestagswahl 2017 bewegt sich die Einschätzung der Bundeskanzlerin unter den Anhängerinnen der SPD in eine positive Richtung. Zwar hält ein kleiner Teil überhaupt nichts von Merkel, die überwiegende Mehrheit beurteilt sie jedoch positiv. Innerhalb der Anhängerschaft der Linken bleibt die Bewertung der Bundeskanzlerin zwischen 2005 und 2013 nahezu konstant und verändert sich erst zur Bundestagswahl 2017 positiv. Bei der AfD zeigt sich ein entgegengesetzter Trend. Zur Bundestagswahl 2013 waren negative und positive Bewertungen nahezu gleich häufig anzutreffen. Wenig überraschend wurde Merkel von der Anhängerschaft der AfD zur Bundestagswahl 2017 mehrheitlich negativ beurteilt, eine Entwicklung, die konträr zu der Entwicklung der anderen Parteien verlief. Diese insgesamt linksschiefe Verteilung in der Einschätzung der Regierungschefin führt dazu, dass das arithmetische Mittel der Werte nur teilweise informativ ist und die grundlegende Unterstützung der Bundeskanzlerin in der Wählerschaft unterschätzt. Die Bewertungen befinden sich überwiegend am positiven Ende der Skala, so dass das arithmetische Mittel unter dem Median liegt. Zusammenfassend hat die Wählerschaft über Parteigrenzen hinweg während Merkels Amtszeit eine deutlich positivere Einschätzung von ihrer Person gewonnen.

3.3 Erklärungsfaktoren für den Evaluationswandel

Um die erheblichen Veränderungen in der Bewertung der Bundeskanzlerin zu erklären, kann auf zwei theoretische Ansätze der Forschung zu politischer Führung zurückgegriffen werden: erstens die inferentielle Wahrnehmung von Führungspersonen und die damit verbundene Differenz vom Bild einer idealen Führungsperson (Lord, Foti and De Vader, 1984) und zweitens die attributive Wahrnehmung von Führungspersonen als Leistungsträger (Calder, 1977; Lord et al., 1978). Eine gute Leistung der Bundeskanzlerin im Amt würde nach dieser Theorie dazu führen, dass Wählerinnen ihr vermehrt positive Eigenschaften und Kompetenzen zuschreiben und sie damit insgesamt positiver bewerten. Im Vergleich zur Theorie der inferentiellen Evaluation kann die attributive Evaluation besser den Wandel in der Wahrnehmung von Führungspersonen und damit auch die Veränderungen in der Bewertung Merkels erklären. Neben diesen Theorien verweist die Wahlforschung schon seit vielen Jahren darauf, dass die Einschätzung von Spitzenpersonal auch von der emotionalen Bindung an eine Partei, der Parteiidentifikation, beeinflusst werden könnte (King, 2002a). Da sich in der vorliegenden Analyse die Veränderungen bei Wählerschaften mit gänzlich unterschiedlichen Parteiidentifikationen vollzogen haben kann dies jedoch nicht zur Erklärung herangezogen werden. Aus Abbildung 3.1 ist ersichtlich, dass die Zufriedenheit mit der Arbeit der Bundesregierung und die Bewertung der Bundeskanzlerin nahezu parallel verlaufen.

Diese empirische Datenlage unterstützt die beschriebene attributive Theorie der Wahrnehmung von Führungsperson. Die Bewertung Angela Merkels durch die Wählerschaft wäre folglich eine Annäherung an die Zufriedenheit der Wählerschaft mit der Arbeit des Bundeskabinetts. Hierbei wird angenommen, dass die Leistung des gesamten Kabinetts der Wählerschaft als Indikator für die Leistung der Bundeskanzlerin dient, denn diese setzt die Eckpunkte der politischen Agenda. Insbesondere unter Berücksichtigung der medialen Personalisierung des politischen Geschehens ist anzunehmen, dass die Wählerinnen, trotz des bestehenden Kollegial- und Ressortprinzips, die Bundeskanzlerin als für die Leistung der Regierung verantwortliche Person wahrnehmen (Blondel and Müller-Rommel (1993). Abbildung 3.1 gibt hierzu jedoch noch keinen ausreichenden Aufschluss. Um zu beurteilen, ob die Bundeskabinette im Laufe der Amtszeit Angela Merkels zunehmend Entscheidungen treffen konnte, die von einer wachsenden Anzahl an Wählerinnen positiv beurteilt wurden, wird im Folgenden die Zufriedenheit mit der

Arbeit der Bundesregierungen analysiert, und zwar wiederum aufgeschlüsselt nach den Anhängerschaften der Parteien. Des Weiteren wird überprüft, ob eine steigende Zufriedenheit mit der Arbeit der Bundesregierung durch eine sinkende ideologische Distanz zwischen der Regierungschefin und der Wählerschaft ermöglicht wurde.

Zufriedenheit mit der Arbeit der Bundesregierung

Abbildung 3.3 zeigt die Zufriedenheit mit der Leistung der Bundesregierung in den Koalitionen zwischen 2005 und 2017. Dabei schnitt die zweite Große Koalition unter Führung Merkels deutlich besser bei der Wählerschaft ab als die erste. Auch im Vergleich zum CDU/CSU-FDP-Bündnis wurde sie von den Anhängerinnen der SPD, der Grünen und der Linken sowie jenen, die sich mit keiner Partei identifizierten, besser benotet. Lediglich innerhalb der Anhängerschaften von CSU und AfD wurde die Leistung der Großen Koalition von 2013 bis 2017 schlechter bewertet als die der schwarz-gelben Regierung. Die Gegenüberstellung der Anhängerschaften von AfD und Linken zeigt, dass erstere zur Bundestagswahl 2013 leicht zufriedener waren mit der Leistung der schwarz-gelben Bundesregierung. 2017 wird die zweite Große Koalition unter Merkel von den Anhängerinnen der AfD deutlich negativer bewertet, während unter den Linken die Zufriedenheit mit der Arbeit der Bundesregierung interessanterweise gestiegen ist. Insgesamt können die Unterschiede in der Zufriedenheit die Entwicklung der Bewertung der Bundeskanzlerin erklären. So sind die Werte für Merkel immer dann positiver ausgefallen, wenn die Zufriedenheit mit der Leistung der von ihr geführten Regierung stieg. Umgekehrt wurde sie negativer beurteilt, wenn die Zufriedenheit mit der Bundesregierung abnahm.

Ideologische Distanz zwischen der Bundeskanzlerin und den Wählerinnen

Um zu erklären, warum die Arbeit der zweiten Großen Koalition unter Merkel besser als die Arbeit der ersten beurteilt wurde, wird untersucht, ob sich die ideologische, und damit auch die inhaltliche, Differenz zwischen der Kanzlerin und der Wählerschaft im Zeitverlauf verringert hat. Eine geringere Distanz sollte die Wahrscheinlichkeit erhöhen, dass Merkel in ihrem Amt Entscheidungen treffen konnte, die einen größeren Nutzen (Downs, 1957) für die Wählerinnen darstellten und entsprechend positiv beurteilt wurden. Abbildung 3.4 zeigt hierzu die Bewertung der Bundeskanzlerin und ihre ideologische Position auf der Links-rechts-Achse

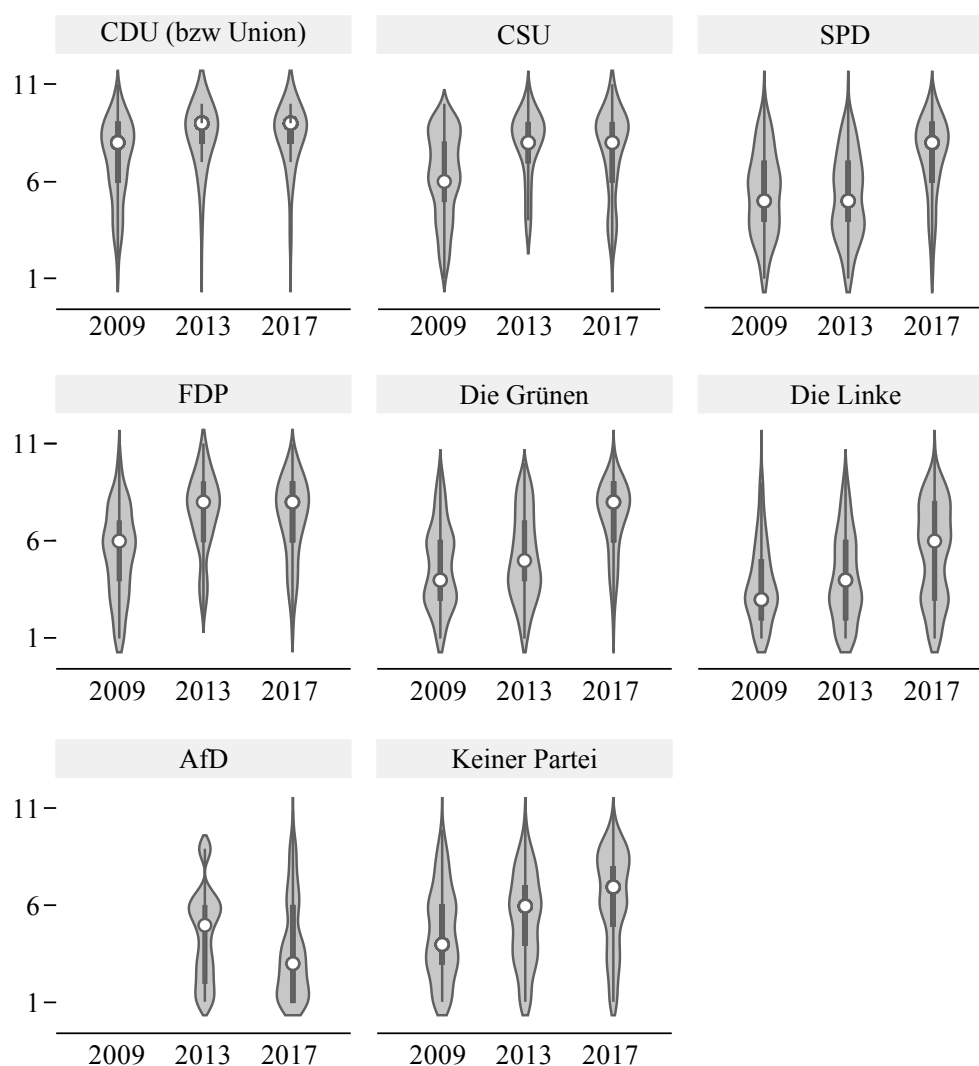


Figure 3.3: Anmerkung: Bewertung der Leistung der Bundesregierung "Sind Sie mit den Leistungen der Bundesregierung aus [Regierungsparteien] in den letzten vier Jahren eher zufrieden oder eher unzufrieden?" von 1 (vollständig unzufrieden) bis 11 (voll und ganz zufrieden). Eigene Darstellung basierend auf Daten der German Longitudinal Election Study. Boxplots innerhalb der Dichtediagramme zeigen den Median sowie das obere und untere Quartil.

Quelle: Eigene Darstellung basierend auf Daten von Rüdiger Schmitt-Beck / Thorsten Faas, a.a.O. (Fn. 4), Steffen Kühnel / Oskar Niedermayer / Bettina Westle, a.a.O. (Fn. 4) und der German Longitudinal Election Study.

wie Befragte sie wahrnahmen. Hieraus wird unter Verwendung der ideologischen Positionierung der Befragten selbst die Distanz zur Bundeskanzlerin errechnet. Erneut wird deutlich, dass Merkel zur Bundestagswahl 2017 am positivsten bewertet wurde: Die Hälfte der Wählerschaft gab ihr neun bis elf Punkte. Zwischen 2005 und 2013 wurde die ideologische Position der Bundeskanzlerin unverändert

wahrgenommen. Hingegen veränderte sich diese Wahrnehmung zwischen 2013 und 2017. Zur Bundestagswahl 2017 lag der Median in der Mitte des Spektrums.

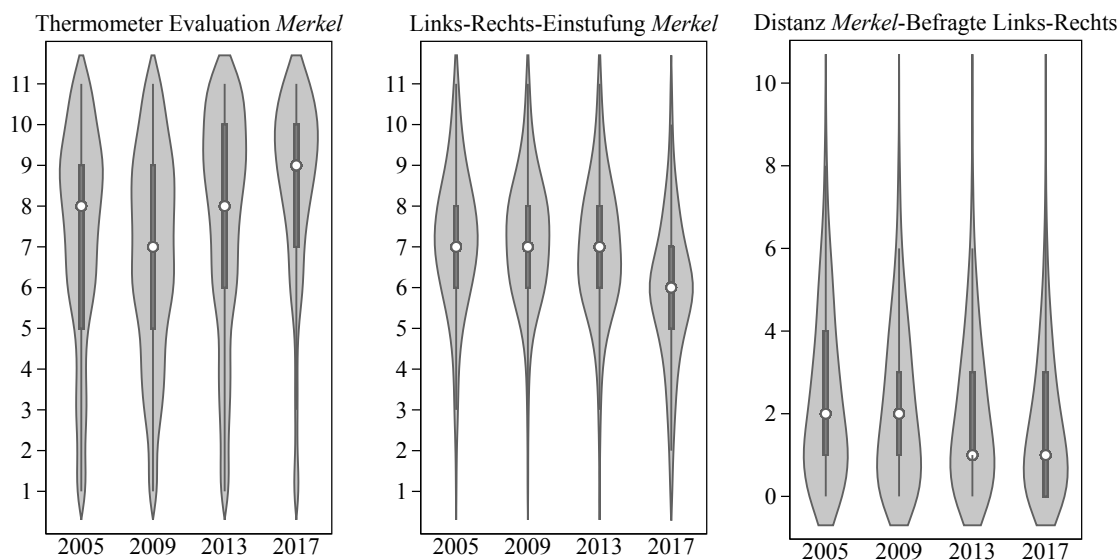


Figure 3.4: Anmerkung: Im linken Abschnitt wird die Bewertung von Angela Merkel auf der Skala von 1 (halte überhaupt nichts von dieser Person) bis 11 (halte sehr viel von dieser Person) angegeben. Der mittlere Abschnitt gibt an, wo Befragte Merkel auf der Links-Rechts-Dimension (1, Links - 11, Rechts) zu den Bundestagswahlen platzierten. Der rechte Abschnitt zeigt die Distanz zwischen der von den Befragten vorgenommenen Positionierung von Merkel auf der Links-Rechts-Dimension und der Position, die die Befragten für sich selbst angaben. Boxplots innerhalb der Dichtediagramme zeigen den Median sowie das obere und untere Quartil.

Quelle: Eigene Darstellung basierend auf Daten von Rüdiger Schmitt-Beck / Thorsten Faas, a.a.O. (Fn. 4), Steffen Kühnel / Oskar Niedermayer / Bettina Westle, a.a.O. (Fn. 4) und der German Longitudinal Election Study.

Die ideologische Distanz zwischen der Regierungschefin und den Wählerinnen hat dabei deutlich abgenommen. Umfasste das obere Quartil zur Bundestagswahl 2005 noch eine Distanz von vier Punkten, hatte sich dieses Quartil in den beiden folgenden Bundestagswahlen auf eine Distanz von drei Punkten reduziert. Diese Abnahme wurde nicht durch eine Veränderung in der Position Merkels hervorgerufen, sondern vor allem durch eine veränderte Positionierung der Wählerschaft. 2017 war die ideologische Distanz der Wählerinnen zur Bundeskanzlerin abermals nur sehr gering; die Hälfte positionierten sich unverändert oder nur einen Punkt von Merkel entfernt auf der Links-rechts-Achse. Ermöglicht wurde dies auch durch eine Verschiebung in der Wahrnehmung der Position der Bundeskanzlerin in die exakte Mitte des ideologischen Spektrums. Die inhaltliche Distanz der Wählerschaft zur Bundeskanzlerin hat sich im Laufe ihrer Amtszeit also wesentlich verringert und

damit hat sich auch die Wahrscheinlichkeit erhöht, dass sie und ihre Entscheidungen im Amt positiv beurteilt wurden.

3.4 Vergleich der Einflussfaktoren Regierungsleistung, Einstellung zur Immigration und ideologische Distanz

Abschließend wird in einer multivariaten Regressionsanalyse der Mechanismus der attributiven Wahrnehmung der Bundeskanzlerin getestet. Ebenso wird geprüft ob die Veränderungen in der Bewertung Angela Merkels nicht auch durch die Einstellung der Wählerschaft zur Immigration, als salientem Thema der Bundestagswahl 2017, erklärt werden können. So zeigen Mader und Schoen das im Zuge der Flüchtlingskrise die Bewertung des Spitzenpersonals durch die an Bedeutung gewonnenen Einstellungen zur Immigration beeinflusst wurden (Mader and Schoen, 2019). Wie in Tabelle 3.2 zu sehen, bietet die Regierungsleistung jedoch die stärkste Erklärungskraft zur Bewertung der Bundeskanzlerin. So erhöht sich bei einer Zunahme der Bewertung der Leistung des Bundeskabinetts um eine Standardabweichung (SD) die Bewertung der Bundeskanzlerin um einen Punkt, während eine Zunahme der Immigrationskritischen Einstellung um eine SD die Bewertung lediglich um etwa 0,2 Punkte reduziert.

Zur Kontrolle wurde unter anderem die vorherige Bewertung von Angela Merkel durch die Befragten im Sommer 2013 herangezogen. Hierdurch wird der Einfluss der langfristigen Wahrnehmung der Bundeskanzlerin berücksichtigt, welche eher auf leistungsunabhängige Einflussfaktoren wie Aussehen und Persönlichkeit von Angela Merkel zurückzuführen sind. Der statistisch signifikante Effekt auf die Bewertung im Jahre 2017 zeigt, dass ein Bestandteil der Bewertung der Bundeskanzlerin stabil ist. Des Weiteren, ist erstaunlich, dass das Geschlecht der Befragten im gleichen Umfang zur Bewertung der Bundeskanzlerin beiträgt wie das Thema Zuwanderung. Im Vergleich der Modelle zeigt sich, dass die ideologische Distanz zwischen Angela Merkel und den Befragten, nur äußerst gering zur Erklärung beiträgt. Eine erhöhte Distanz auf der Links-Rechts-Dimension führt lediglich zu einer minimal geringeren Bewertung der Bundeskanzlerin. Insgesamt lässt sich feststellen, dass die Befragten ihre Wahrnehmung der Bundeskanzlerin hauptsächlich über die attributive Bewertung ihrer Person bilden, wobei die ideologische Annäherung der Wählerschaft an

die Bundeskanzlerin als befördernde Grundlage dieser attributiven Wahrnehmung gewertet werden kann.

3.5 Fazit: Prääsidentielle Bewertung ohne prääsidentiellen Einfluss

Die vorgelegten Analysen zeigen, dass Parteiidentifikationen und ideologische Differenzen (Vgl. Norpoth, 1977; Westle, 2009) nicht ausreichen um die Entwicklung der Wahrnehmung Angela Merkels zu erklären. Stattdessen offenbart sich für die, in der ideologischen Mitte befindliche, Bundeskanzlerin ein prääsidentielles Bewertungsmuster: ihre Bewertung hängt im Wesentlichen, trotz des verfassten Kollegial- und Ressortprinzips, von der wahrgenommenen Leistung der gesamten Bundesregierung ab. Diese Erkenntnis deutet darauf hin, dass die personalisierte Berichterstattung der Massenmedien (Kriesi, 2012) nicht zu einem 'Schönheitswettbewerb' sondern vielmehr zur Erteilung einer persönlichen Verantwortlichkeit für kollektive Regierungsentscheidungen durch die Wählerschaft führt. Ob diese persönliche Verantwortlichkeit der ideologischen Zentrierung Angela Merkels geschuldet ist, oder auch das Ergebnis einer langfristigen Prääsidentialisierung des deutschen parlamentarischen Systems darstellt, können nur Analysen mehrerer deutscher Regierungschefs offenbaren. Ebenfalls stellt sich die Frage inwiefern diese persönliche Verantwortlichkeit für kollektives Regierungshandeln adäquat ist? Gleichzeitig verdeutlicht die vorliegende Untersuchung den letztendlich begrenzten Einfluss des Spitzenpersonals bei Bundestagswahlen. So erzielte die CDU bei der Bundestagswahl in 2017 ein historisch schlechtes Ergebnis, obwohl Angela Merkel so beliebt war wie bei keiner vorherigen Wahl. Auf Grund anderer, die Wahlentscheidung bestimmenden Faktoren wie beispielsweise Problemlösungskompetenzen, führt eine positive Wahrnehmung Angela Merkels nicht zwangsläufig zur Stimmabgabe für die CDU. Ebenfalls ging diese positive Entwicklung mit einer signifikanten Verschlechterung unter den der AfD nahestehenden Wählerinnen einher. Folglich ist der elektorale Einfluss der Bundeskanzlerin, trotz prääsidentieller Bewertung, weit vom Einfluss einer Präsidentin bei direkten Präidentschaftswahlen entfernt.

Table 3.2: Der Einfluss von Regierungsleistung auf die Bewertung der Bundeskanzlerin im Herbst 2017

	Modell 1	Modell 2
Skalometer Regierungsleistung	1,01 *** [0,94 – 1,08]	0,99 *** [0,91 – 1,07]
Begrenzung Immigration	-0,21 *** [-0,26 – -0,16]	-0,24 *** [-0,29 – -0,18]
Skalometer Merkel 2013	0,53 *** [0,46 – 0,60]	0,49 *** [0,42 – 0,57]
Weiblich	0,27 ** [0,10 – 0,45]	0,26 ** [0,08 – 0,45]
Alter	0,02 [-0,02 – 0,07]	0,03 [-0,01 – 0,08]
Links-Rechts-Distanz Merkel-Befragte		-0,13 *** [-0,19 – -0,07]
Konstante	5,57 *** [5,46 – 5,68]	5,53 *** [5,41 – 5,65]
N	1759	1435
R ²	0,71	0,73

Anmerkung: 95% Konfidenzintervall in Klammern, * $p < 0,05$, ** $p < 0,01$, *** $p < 0,001$. OLS-Regressionsmodell mit standardisierten Kovariaten und robusten Standardfehlern. Abhängige Variable: Skalometer Bewertung von Angela Merkel auf einer Skala von 1 (halte überhaupt nichts von dieser Person) bis 11 (halte sehr viel von dieser Person) erhoben 09.-10.2017. Unabhängige Variablen: Skalometer Bewertung Angela Merkel aus 2013, Erhebung (06.-07.2013). Regierungsleistung 1 (vollständig unzufrieden) bis 11 (voll und ganz zufrieden); Begrenzung der Immigration, "Sollten die Zuzugsmöglichkeiten für Ausländer erleichtert oder eingeschränkt werden?" von 1 (erleichtern) bis 7 (einschränken); Distanz Links-Rechts-Selbsteinstufung Befragte und Einstufung Angela Merkels auf der Skala 1(links) bis 11 (rechts); alle im September 2017 erhoben. Quelle: Eigene Berechnung, basierend auf Daten der German Longitudinal Election Study.

Chapter 4

Article 3: All the Prime Ministers Glory? Leader Effects and Accountability of Prime Ministers in Parliamentary Elections

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ABSTRACT: Are prime ministers held accountable for their government's performance? The personalisation of parliamentary elections and subsequent voting behaviour based on the personality of party leaders questions the accountability of elected governments. In this article, I analyse the confounding of prime ministers leader effects by voters' evaluation of government performance to examine whether prime ministers are held accountable for the performance of their government. I use individual-level data from British, Danish and German elections and a natural experiment at the German state level to show that voters hold prime ministers directly accountable. This article further discusses how electoral accountability of prime ministers may vary depending on a prime ministers' influence over their government. The findings constitute an important extension of electoral accountability and have implications for the study of personalisation and presidentialisation in parliamentary democracies.¹

¹Article 3 received a Revise & Resubmit from *Politics* on the 27th of August 2019.

4.1 Introduction

Do voters hold prime ministers accountable for the performance of their government? The personalisation of parliamentary elections and electoral impact of party leaders² has received growing attention in electoral research (Aarts, Blais and Schmitt, 2011; Bittner, 2011, 2018*a*; Ferreira da Silva, 2018; Ferreira da Silva and Costa, 2019; Garzia, 2014; Lobo and Curtice, 2014; Poguntke and Webb, 2005; Wattenberg, 1991). However, these findings raise a major concern: Do parliamentary elections become dominated by voters' perception of party leader's personality which would endanger the accountability of elected governments (Curtice and Hunjan, 2011; Huber, 2014)? Or do perceptions of leading candidates also depend on their performance in government office? Parliamentary elections dominated by voters' perception of party leaders may allow parties and elected politicians to avoid public scrutiny for their actions in office. In this article, I address these concerns by examining whether leader effects of prime ministers are confounded by voters' evaluation of government performance, therefore, voters may hold prime ministers personally accountable for their government's work and punish or reward (Key and Cummings, 1966; Przeworski, Stokes and Manin, 1999) them for policy (Shabad and Slomczynski, 2011) and economic (Downs, 1957; Fiorina, 1981; Fair, 1996; Jacquart and Antonakis, 2015) performance.

I use survey data from British, Danish and German parliamentary elections to analyse whether leader effects of prime ministers are confounded by voters' evaluation of government performance. I find that in most cases, leader effects of re-running prime ministers are partially confounded by voters' evaluation of government performance. However, confounding is lower in Danish elections and I find no confounding in the British elections in which Blair competed as prime minister. I discuss how Blair's deviation may be explained by his 'presidential' leadership. Furthermore, the paper uses a case of prime ministerial replacement at the German state level as a natural experiment to support the claim that the investigated causal relationship does not work in the opposite direction. I also theorise that personal accountability of prime ministers could be moderated by the power of prime ministers over decision making in their government (King, 1994; O'Malley, 2007). The findings suggest that even if parliamentary elections have personalised, voters are likely to hold prime ministers accountable for their

²In the context of this study 'party leader' refers to leading candidates in parliamentary elections, which are not necessarily formal heads of their party.

behaviour in office.

I will begin with a review of the electoral personalisation literature and subsequently discuss findings on economic voting to formulate my hypothesis. Thereafter, I analyse the confounding of prime minister's leader effects and discuss the robustness of my findings. I conclude by suggesting some further avenues for research on personalisation and electoral accountability.

4.2 Electoral Accountability of Prime Ministers

Why should voters hold prime ministers personally accountable for government performance? In this section I argue that voters make their vote choice in light of past government performance and either reward or punish incumbents. In addition, voters will change their evaluation of the prime minister depending on the government's performance in office. Consequently, the effect of voters' evaluation of prime ministers on vote choice is confounded by government performance and likely to be overestimated when government performance is not considered.³

Previous electoral research has clearly established the electoral impact of voters' perception of party leaders (Bittner, 2011, 2018*b*; Garzia, 2014; Lobo and Curtice, 2014; Mughan, 2015). The direct effect of voters' perception of party leaders on vote choice is usually labelled as *leader effects* and I use this term throughout the study. These findings are also relevant towards prime ministers since they have often been analysed as party leaders, alongside other leading candidates in parliamentary elections.

From the perspective of electoral accountability the increasing electoral impact of party leaders has raised concerns (Curtice and Hunjan, 2011). If vote choice is increasingly determined by the personality of party leaders, elections may not fulfil their democratic function to hold elected governments accountable for their actions in office. This is especially true if leader effects are unaffected by actions prime ministers take in office. I argue that the leader effects of prime ministers do depend on their actions in office. King (2002*a*) already outlines the possibility that party leaders influence vote choice because leaders are affiliated with the government and their party, rather than due to the character or personality of party leaders. While the literature has primarily analysed the confounding effect of party leader's party affiliation (Garzia, 2012; Huber, 2014), the government affiliation of party leaders

³Figure 4.4 in the appendix shows this relationship graphically. See King (2002*a*) for an analogous depiction of leader effect mechanisms.

has received scarce attention by the literature. Studying whether voters hold prime ministers personally accountable will not only address a crucial concern, but also contribute to an understudied aspect of leader effects. Formichelli (2014) shows that leader effects may be confounded by the type of government coalition prior to the election, arguing that the fewer parties form the government, the easier it is for voters to process decisions made by the government and link them to parties and subsequently to party leaders. The study offers important comparative evidence of leader effects under varying government contexts. However, recent findings on the assignment of responsibility under coalition governments refine the seminal study of Powell Jr and Whitten (1993) who find differences in the clarity of responsibility between government types. Current studies (Angelova, König and Proksch, 2016; Debus et al., 2014; Duch and Stevenson, 2013; Duch, Przepiorka and Stevenson, 2015; Plescia and Kritzinger, 2017; Williams, Stegmaier and Debus, 2017) strongly suggest that voters hold the agenda-setter accountable for government performance, which means that voters will focus on the prime minister's party when assigning accountability.

That voters punish or reward incumbent parties for retrospective performance on policies and economic dimensions when casting their vote is a well established finding (Anderson, 2000; Duch, May and Armstrong, 2010; Fiorina, 1981; Fair, 1996; Green and Jennings, 2012; Key and Cummings, 1966; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2013, 2009). Recent research furthermore emphasises that voters behave in this way across European countries regardless of differences in electoral institutions (Dassonneville and Lewis-Beck, 2017). While scholars have focused on the accountability of the government parties, Stiers (2018) shows that the mechanism of performance voting even extends to opposition parties.

Why will voters apply the mechanism of reward and punishment for performance to the prime minister and not only hold the government party accountable? I argue that this electoral accountability extends directly to the prime minister, because voters infer behaviour in governmental affairs and build expectations of performance from their evaluation of candidates (Clarke et al., 2004, 2011; Miller, Wattenberg and Malanchuk, 1986). Prime ministers matter to voters not simply due to their personality or appearance, but due to their influence on future government decisions and in turn future government performance. This conceptualises voters' evaluation of party leaders as a short-term factor in the voting calculus. These arguments are empirically supported by Curtice and Lisi (2014), who find stronger leader effects for party leaders of bigger parties and hypothesise that those differences are caused

by the increased likelihood of those party leaders to become prime minister and lead the government. After all prime ministers enjoy considerable power over decision making in their government (Blondel and Müller-Rommel, 1993). Consequently, voters should also apply a punishment and reward behaviour in their evaluation of the prime minister in light of the past performance in government, because rational voters should use past performance as the best available information for their expectation of performance in the next term (Downs, 1957). If the economy fell apart during a prime minister's term most voters would probably not believe that the prime minister and their government could put the economy together again, therefore, voters' evaluation of the prime minister constitutes an expression of the performance the prime minister and her government may provide. Such attributional evaluation has been described in studies of leader evaluation (Calder, 1977; Lord et al., 1978). Jacquart and Antonakis (2015) find that leader evaluation is mainly based on such attributional inference from past performance. Bittner (2011, 2018b) shows that attributes like competence, intelligence and leadership constitute an important dimension of leader evaluations.

In summary, voters consider their evaluation of the prime minister when casting their vote, because they expect the prime minister to influence government decision making and in turn government performance. Consequently, voters update their evaluation of the prime minister under consideration of the actual performance the prime minister achieved in government – either rewarding or punishing them. Lastly, the vote choice cast by voters will depend on government performance. This means that voters' evaluation of government performance may *confound* (Breen, Karlson and Holm, 2013; Clogg, Petkova and Haritou, 1995) the leader effects of prime ministers since it drives their vote choice as well as how they perceive the prime minister.⁴ I accordingly formulate the following hypothesis:

H1: Voters' evaluation of government performance confounds the leader effect of prime ministers, therefore, voters hold prime ministers directly accountable for government performance.

It is possible that not all of the effect of prime ministers evaluations on vote choice is confounded by government performance and that a direct effect of prime

⁴Instead of confounding one may also speak of an omitted variable bias. Alternative one can conceptualise this relationship in terms of direct and indirect effect Breen, Karlson and Holm (see 2013, p. 165).

minister evaluation on vote choice remains. A prime minister's personality and charismatic relationship with voters may still influence vote choice, independently from the performance vote cast by citizens, therefore, confounding may be partial and not complete.

Voters' evaluation of party leaders and retrospective evaluations of government performance are not the only determinants of voting behaviour. Voters' close socio-psychological attachment to parties, described as party identification by Campbell et al. (1966), also influences voting behaviour and in addition influence the perception of the government's performance and the evaluation of party leaders. Furthermore spatial models stress the influence of ideological distance between the voters and parties (Adams, Merrill III and Grofman, 2005; Downs, 1957). I will therefore also consider these factors in my models. I furthermore extend my models to voters' evaluation of other party leaders and parties to include expectations of their potential performance in office.

I have argued that voters' reward and punishment behaviour extends to prime ministers, and that voters therefore hold prime ministers personally accountable for their government's actions. In the following section I discuss available cases and data to examine this confounding of prime minister's leader effects by voters' retrospective evaluation of government performance.

4.3 Data and Case Selection

I test the confounding of prime ministers leader effects by analysing British, Danish and German parliamentary elections in which a prime minister ran for re-election after completing a full term in office.⁵ My selection encompasses seven prime ministers (Margaret Thatcher, Tony Blair, David Cameron, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, Gerhard Schröder and Angela Merkel) running in elections from 1983 to 2017. Voters will most likely have updated their evaluation of prime ministers once a prime minister runs for re-election after a complete term in office. I study the elections following their terms in office with survey data from national election studies (Heath, Jowell and Curtice, 1983, 1987; Borre et al., 2000; Clarke et al., 2003; Falter, Gabriel and Rattinger, 2015; Clarke et al., 2006; Andersen, 2007; Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, 2014; Andersen, 2012; Rattinger et al., 2012, 2014;

⁵In case of the German election in 2005 and the Danish election in 2007 elections were called before the end of the prime minister's terms. However both prime ministers had previously completed a full term in office.

Fieldhouse et al., 2016; Roßteutscher et al., 2018).⁶ I furthermore restrict my analysis to the major national parties in each country.⁷ The selected cases provide a suitable mix of parliamentary democracies to test whether prime minister's leader effects are confounded by voters' perception of government performance and encompasses both single party and coalition governments. Furthermore, the inclusion of different prime ministers in each country provides the possibility to observe whether confounding varies within countries and between prime ministers and elections. Among the selected prime ministers Blair can be identified as a clear outlier, since he is frequently described as a presidential prime minister who dominated decision making in his government and party (Heffernan, 2005; Kavanagh, 2005). Poguntke and Webb (2005) describe such a presidentialisation of prime ministers as dominance over decision making in party and cabinet by means of an increase in leadership power resources and leadership autonomy of a prime minister, while the personalisation of the electoral process, growing complexity of the state and the internationalisation of politics makes it easier for prime ministers to achieve such autonomy.

In the following section I discuss the details of my analysis and present my findings.

4.4 Analysis

Comparing leader effects in models with and without voters' evaluation of actual government performance and economic evaluation will show if prime ministers' leader effects are confounded by voters' perception of performance in office. I model vote choice as binary decision to either vote for the party of the prime minister or any other major national party using logistic regressions for each election under study. I measure voters' evaluation of prime ministers and party leaders with thermometer scales from one, 'dislike very much', to eleven, 'like very much'. This measure is available for all elections except for the British elections in 1987 and 1983. In those two elections respondents were presented with a battery of characteristics and asked whether those applied to party leaders. I use this battery to construct a variable that counts the number of positive qualities mentioned for Thatcher.

⁶I use the core sample of wave four of Fieldhouse et al. (2016) since the wave after the election does not include respondents' government evaluation. Respondents were asked shortly before the election in 2015.

⁷A list of all parties under analysis can be found in the online appendix.

The variables range from zero to seven in 1983 and zero to six in 1987.⁸ For the candidates opposing the prime minister I generate equivalent variables and take respondents' maximum value among the candidates. I operationalise voters' evaluation of retrospective government performance with thermometer scales equal to those of candidates, that captures voters' feelings towards the work of the prime minister's party in the government from one, very dissatisfied, to eleven, very satisfied, for the German elections in 2017, 2013, 2009 and 2005.⁹ For the British elections evaluation of government performance is operationalised with a five-point Likert-scale in 2015 that ranges from 'strongly approve' to 'strongly disapprove' of the government's work. In 2005, 2001, 1987 and 1983 I create a variable summarising voters' mean satisfaction with how the government handled several issues ranging from 'very badly' to 'very well'.¹⁰ For the Danish elections in 2005 and 2007 I measure retrospective government evaluation on a similar Likert-scale with a designated item on voters' overall satisfaction with the government's work. Unfortunately, the survey on the Danish election in 1998 uses a different battery on government performance and asks respondents whether the current government, a liberal government or neither is best on several issues.¹¹ I create a variable that counts how often respondents mentioned the current government over a liberal government to measure respondents' satisfaction with the government; it ranges from plus 17 (always mentions current government) to minus 17 (always mentions liberal government). I also include respondents' retrospective perception of the general economic situation to capture a further important aspect of retrospective voting, although this measure is likely to be already reflected in voters' overall performance evaluation of the government. Voters' economic perception is measured on Likert-scales from one, 'got a lot worse' to five, 'improved a lot'. In surveys in which a retrospective evaluation is unavailable I use respondents' current perception of the economy in general. Unfortunately, neither measure is available for the British elections in 1987 and 1983.

I also include thermometer variables measuring voters' short-term feelings towards the parties opposing the prime minister to gain a proxy for voters' evaluation

⁸Ascribed personal qualities in 1987 are: good at getting things done, moderate, looks after all classes, capable of being strong, caring, likeable. 1983: caring, determined, likeable, tough, listens to reason, decisive, principled.

⁹I use this party-directed measure of voters' feelings of government performance, instead of party-undirected evaluation of the government's work. I test the robustness of my findings with party-undirected evaluations, which I discuss in section six.

¹⁰I list all included issues for each election in the appendix.

¹¹The seventeen issues are listed in the online appendix.

of their performance in the opposition. In the German elections of 2017, 2013, 2009 and 2005 I chose a variable which measures voters' satisfaction with the work of the opposition parties or coalition partners of the prime minister's party as equivalent to the measurement of voters' evaluation of government performance.¹² For the Danish elections and the British elections in 2015, 2005 and 2001 voters' evaluation of opposition performance are measured with like-dislike thermometers which capture voters' general feelings towards the parties. The survey covering Thatcher's run for re-election in 1987 does include an evaluation of the opposition parties based on Likert-scales instead of thermometer evaluations. In 1983 the British survey includes a battery on four characteristics¹³ of parties which I use to construct a zero to four scale based on the number of positive characteristics ascribed by respondents.

I furthermore include common predictors of vote choice like party identification measured by a binary variable for the presence of such an identification for either the prime minister's party or an identification with any of the opposing parties. Voters' squared distance from parties on the left-right-dimension with respondents self reported position and party positions based on the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) (Polk et al., 2017) prior to the election are included as well. I choose this strategy to ensure the exogeneity of voters' distance from party positions since Dinas, Hartman and van Spanje (2016) show that voters may affectively place parties closer to their own position. In the instance of the British elections in 1987 and 1983 I calculate voters' distance from the individually reported position of parties as CHES data is not available before 1999. I summarise all measures related to parties opposing the prime minister's party in one variable. In case of respondents' party and leader evaluation I take respondents' maximum value for any of the party or leader evaluations. I use the minimum value for voters' distance on the left-right-dimension. I furthermore control for respondents' age and gender. I use the Karlson-Holm-Breen (KHB) method (Breen, Karlson and Holm, 2013) to test for the confounding of voters' evaluation of the prime minister by voters' evaluation of government performance and perception of the economy. I use KHB as implemented for Stata by Kohler, Karlson & Holm (Kohler et al., 2011). I display results of the KHB analysis graphically for ease of comparison in this section. Additional information on the individual contribution of voters'

¹²I use thermometer scales of feelings towards the party in general in case of Die Linke (The Left) in 2005 as no performance evaluation is available.

¹³The characteristics are: moderate, united, good for all classes, clear policies.

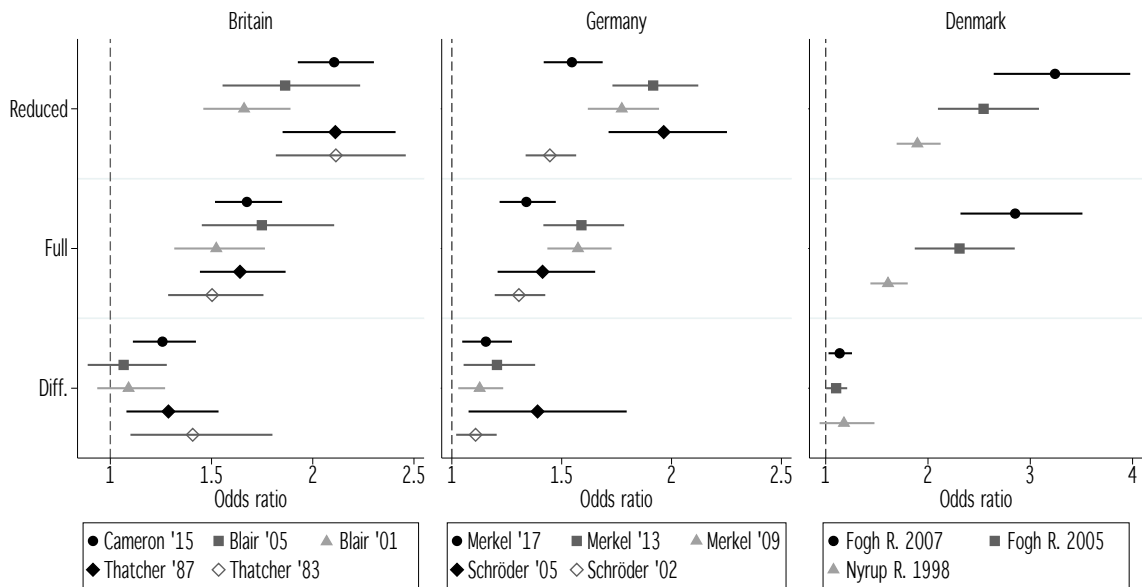


Figure 4.1: Confounding of prime ministers leader effect on vote choice by voters' evaluation of government performance (95% confidence interval) by country. The lower sections display the difference between the reduced and full model calculated with KHB.

government evaluation and economic perception to confounding is presented in the appendix in Tables 4.1–4.3. Detailed regression results are presented in Tables 4.8–4.10 (also in the appendix).

As expected, voters' evaluation of most prime ministers are highly correlated with government performance, ranging from 0.79 for Cameron in 2015 and 0.48 for Thatcher in 1983.¹⁴ This already supports the theory that voters form their evaluation of the prime minister jointly with their evaluation of the government's performance and apply rewards or deal punishment. I further test this argument by examining longitudinal data from Germany. Figure 4.3 in the appendix shows that Merkel's and the government's evaluation run in parallel. The correlation between voters' evaluation of prime ministers and perception of the economy is lower and mostly varies between 0.2 and 0.3 with the highest correlation for Cameron (0.58) and the lowest for Merkel in 2009 (0.19).

Figure 4.1 shows the results of the KHB analysis by displaying the leader effects of prime ministers in odds ratios in the reduced models without government

¹⁴I test whether multicollinearity biases the presented results by calculating variance inflation factor values with linear regression models including the same variables as the logistic regression models. The results do not indicate multicollinearity and can be found in the appendix, Table 4.11.

performance, in the full model with government performance and the estimated difference in leader effect due to the confounding of prime ministers leader effects by government performance. Nearly all of the confounding is caused by voters' government evaluation and economic perception adds little additional explanatory power. Overall evaluations of prime ministers have a significant effect on vote choice. The better voters evaluate prime ministers the more likely they are to vote for the prime minister's party. This effect holds for both the full and reduced models. None of the leader effects are fully confounded by government performance, an independent effect always remains, but partial confounding of leader effects is present in ten out of thirteen elections which largely supports H1. In all German elections leader effects of prime ministers show significant confounding by government performance, with confounding-percentages ranging from 48 to 33 %. Leader effects are also significantly confounded in the British elections in which Cameron and Thatcher ran for re-election.¹⁵ In these cases confounding-percentages similarly range from 30 % to 45 %. Leader effects are also confounded in two out of the three Danish elections. However, the difference in leader effects in these elections are also close to being insignificant at the 5 % level. With 10 %, the percentages are also considerably lower compared to British and German elections. Nyprup Rasmussen's leader effect shows no significant confounding by government performance.

I find that in deviation from the other studied British prime ministers, Blair's leader effects are not confounded by government performance. This is surprising as confounding in the other British elections is more substantial than in most German elections. Furthermore, the description of Blair as a presidential prime minister seems at odds with the insignificant confounding by voters' evaluation of government performance. What may explain this deviation?

The contrary findings for Blair may be caused by this presidential position in which he had quite extensive control over decision making in his cabinet and party (Heffernan, 2005; Kavanagh, 2005). At first one would expect H1 to entail that if prime ministers have extensive control over decision making in their government, their leader effects will be confounded to a large extent. In such a case voters should most likely consider prime ministers in their calculus, because of their extensive influence over government decision making.

¹⁵Replacing voters' intention with their recalled vote after the general election in 2015 as the dependent variable yields identical results. Confounding is significant on the 0.1 % level with a percentage of 28 %. Results can be found in the appendix.

However, it may be the case that if a prime minister were to succeed in such a presidentialisation, the evaluation of the prime minister becomes the dominant factor in voters' calculus and their evaluation of past government performance would have no effect on their vote choice. Rather deciding whether to re-elect the government party voters would ask themselves whether to re-elect the prime minister. In turn the leader effect of a presidential prime minister would not be confounded, because voters' retrospective government evaluation has no effect on vote choice.¹⁶ I explore this argument in Figure 4.5 in the appendix by comparing the influence of voters' evaluation of government performance between models which include Blair's thermometer evaluation and which exclude the variable. In all elections except in the two elections in which Blair ran for prime minister government evaluation has a significant effect on vote choice. However, the exclusion of Blair's evaluation leads to a significant effect of government performance on the vote choice in both of these elections. This suggests that voters rather decided to re-elect or not re-elect Blair rather than the government as a whole.¹⁷ The results therefore tentatively support an addition to H1, which would need to be tested with several presidential prime ministers. Unfortunately, this is complicated by the absence of other prime ministers on which are clearly identified as 'presidential' prime ministers by the literature.

The presented results largely support the confounding of prime ministers leader effects by voters' evaluation of performance in office. In most elections voters hold prime ministers accountable for government performance.

Robustness checks

I check the robustness of my presented findings by means of a natural experiment and alternative model specification. Where available I re-fitted models with respondents' perceived distance from parties instead of positions based on CHES data. The presented results remain robust with the exception of the Danish election in 2005 which no longer shows significant confounding. This reiterates the conclusion

¹⁶The correlation of voters' evaluation of Blair with their evaluation of past government performance itself is not lower than for other prime ministers (0.63 in 2001; 0.56 in 2005).

¹⁷Was Blair therefore not held accountable for his government's performance? This would depend on whether voters still updated their evaluation of Blair by attribution of actual performance under his term of prime minister. The fact that Blair's approval significantly reduced over his time in office (Evans and Andersen, 2005), partially due to his government's support of the Iraq war, suggests that Blair was still held responsible for actions taken in office.

that for Danish prime ministers confounding is substantially weaker and may not always occur. I furthermore re-fit models on German elections in which party-targeted evaluation of performance have been used with non-targeted evaluation of government performance measured by thermometer evaluations. Results are presented in the online appendix and show significant confounding, with the exception of the 2009 election in which confounding of Merkel's leader effect is considerably reduced. What could explain the less robust confounding of Merkel's evaluation in 2009? Zohlnhöfer (2011) shows that most German voters were satisfied with the response of the Union to the economic crisis, but far less satisfied with the crisis response of the coalition partner, the SPD. The results suggest that in this context voters' evaluations of the government were quite differentiated and that voters did not hold Merkel accountable for the SPD's policies in government. As regards the economic context, in combination with the first-time coalition consisting of the two biggest political parties, voters' allocation of accountability seems to deviate slightly. Since all other German governments under study also included governments' led by coalitions this is likely to be an exception due to the special political context. I present all these findings in the online appendix.

What if the true causal relationship worked in the opposite direction? If parliamentary systems have personalised, voters may evaluate the government more positively not because of actual government performance, but because the government is led by a charismatic prime minister from which voters simply assume good performance. Such findings would support the personalisation thesis and question the democratic accountability of elected governments. In this section I provide a robustness check for my assumed causal relationship using a natural experiment. I test if voters' evaluation of government performance changes when the prime minister is replaced as-if-randomly between elections and no changes occur with regard to the composition of governing parties.¹⁸ This ensures that changes in government evaluation are very unlikely to be due to changing issue positions of the governing party. The German states provide such a case: The replacement of the prime minister of Lower Saxony Christian Wulff in 2010 by David McAllister. The case has two advantageous qualities. First, Wulff did not leave the government due any issue connected to his government, but was nominated as president by the federal government. The previous president Horst Köhler resigned before the end of his term following a controversial speech. Therefore, the treatment, the

¹⁸In addition this may also partially test a reverse causation for economic perception since economic performance influences government satisfaction (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2013).

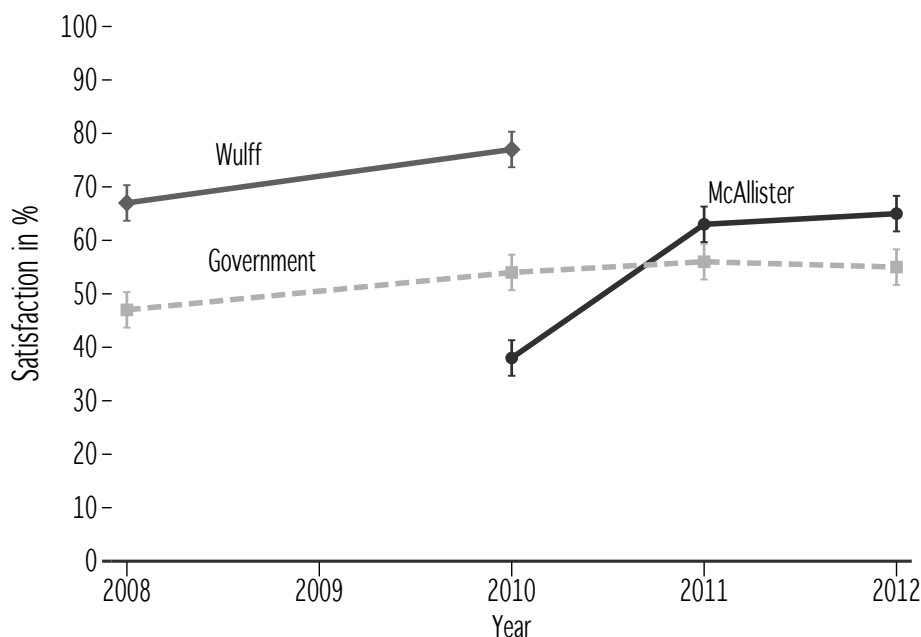


Figure 4.2: Satisfaction with the work of politicians and the government in Lower Saxony. Percentage of respondents who are very satisfied or satisfied with 95 % confidence intervals (margin of error 3.1 %), Infratest dimap (2012).

replacement of Wulff, can be considered to have occurred as-if-random, as the government in Lower Saxony did not self-select into treatment and the assignment to treatment can not plausibly have influenced voters' evaluation of the government in Lower Saxony. One can therefore consider Wulff's replacement to be a natural experiment. Second, McAllister was already known to citizens in Lower Saxony, being a member of the state parliament and head of the CDU on the state level since 2008. Voters were therefore already familiar with him. At that time he was the likely prime ministerial candidate for the next election, which he went on to be in 2013. Changes in the evaluation of his person due to him being previously unknown to voters are unlikely. Lastly, prime ministers in the German states closely resemble prime ministers at the national level in their governmental tasks and position within the cabinet.

Figure 4.2 shows the evaluation of Wulff, McAllister and the government over time. Wulff was evaluated more favourably than McAllister before becoming president with 67 % being satisfied with him in 2008 and 77 % in January 2010 shortly before he was nominated as president of Germany. In contrast, McAllister achieved a significantly lower score (36 % satisfaction) than Wulff before he took

office in 2010. His evaluation increased considerably, to 63%, in the year after becoming prime minister of Lower Saxony. Citizens' evaluation of McAllister, even in the year after taking office, was lower than citizens' evaluation of Wulff in 2008. If voters evaluate the government based on the prime minister, a drop in government satisfaction should be visible after McAllister took office. Instead government evaluation remained stable. When Wulff left office in 2010 government satisfaction was at 54%. After McAllister became prime minister government satisfaction increased slightly to 56%. The result of this natural experiment supports the assumed causal relationship.¹⁹ Government evaluation does not change under as-if-random prime ministerial replacement, instead the natural experiment rather supports the argument that the evaluation of prime ministers is attributional and that prime ministers benefit from good government evaluation.

4.5 Conclusion

Are prime ministers personally held accountable for their government's performance? In this article I have provided evidence for such personalised accountability. In the majority of elections voters do hold prime ministers personally accountable and leader effects of prime ministers are confounded by voters' perception of government performance. These findings provide an important extension of electoral accountability to the head of government in parliamentary systems. Evidence from an as-if-random prime ministerial replacement from the German state level supports the causal relationship of the analysis.

The findings also suggest that the extent of the presented indirect effect may vary with prime ministerial power. In general prime ministers enjoy influence over the government's agenda, but prime ministerial power varies between countries (King, 1994; O'Malley, 2007). British and German prime ministers enjoy considerable control over their cabinet (King, 1994; O'Malley, 2007), which makes the confounding of leader effects by government performance most likely. In contrast, Danish prime ministers enjoy less influence over their government. The presented smaller indirect effects in the three Danish elections suggest that in countries in

¹⁹One may argue that the results are inconclusive since the observed variable measures satisfaction with the work of Wulff and McAllister and therefore does not include an evaluation of their personality, like in overall thermometer feelings. However if the causal relationship worked from the prime minister's personal characteristics to government evaluation, then satisfaction ratings of party leader's work would also reflect these characteristics, since the same causal relationship should hold for their own person.

which prime ministers have less influence over government decision making, voters might also assign them lower responsibility for government performance. This lesser influence is likely to reduce the confounding of prime minister's leader effects. Consequently, the degree to which prime ministers are personally held accountable for government performance may vary between political systems, depending on the institutional power of prime ministers. Future studies may test this hypothesis with a selection of countries representing a more fine-grained variation on this dimension.

Furthermore, findings presented in this study should be extended to other countries and prime ministers, to ensure their stability. Especially, analysing prime ministers with a dominance over government decision making similar to Tony Blair should be of interest. In addition, researchers may investigate whether prime ministers with lower influence over government decision making are not held accountable for overall government performance, but voters still hold them accountable for actions taken in office which can be directly attributed to them. Moreover the discussed natural experiment suggests that voters may quickly attribute government performance to new prime ministers and change their evaluations of the prime minister accordingly. This may lead voters to falsely reward or punish prime ministers, if they base their evaluation on government performance prior to the prime minister's leadership. Analysing the extent of such irrational updates of character evaluation may be of interest to the study of electoral accountability. Such studies are to be welcomed and would improve our understanding of voting behaviour and the role of prime ministers in parliamentary elections, while also providing valuable insights for the debate on the personalisation and presidentialisation of parliamentary systems.

Even if parliamentary elections have personalised, voters are likely to hold influential prime ministers personally accountable for government performance. This is a welcome finding for the democratic function of elections.

4.6 Appendix to Article 3

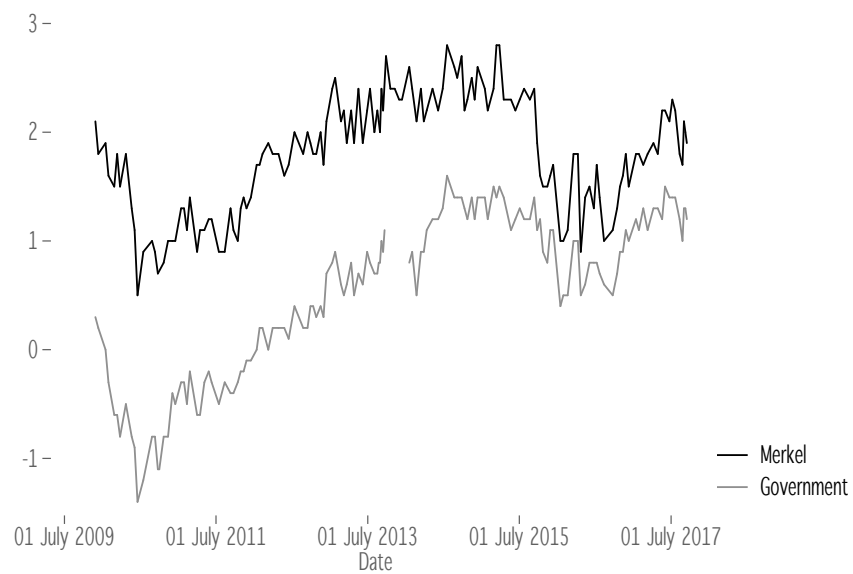


Figure 4.3: Voters' mean evaluation of Angela Merkel and mean satisfaction with the federal government on a scale from -5 to +5 over time. Data: (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, 2019)

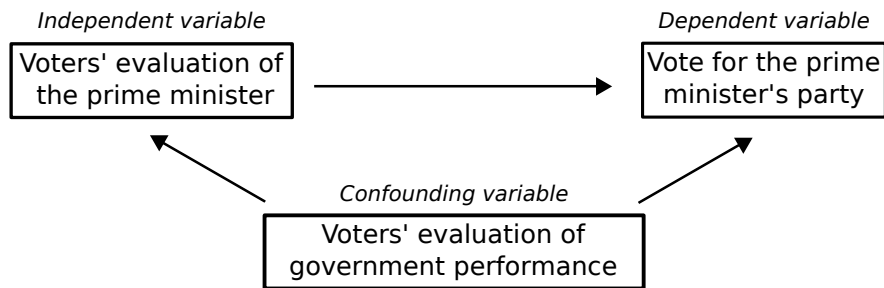


Figure 4.4: Theorised causal relationship between the variables of interest. Voters' evaluation of government performance influences their evaluation of the prime minister, as well as their vote choice, therefore the effect of evaluations of the prime minister is confounded by government performance.

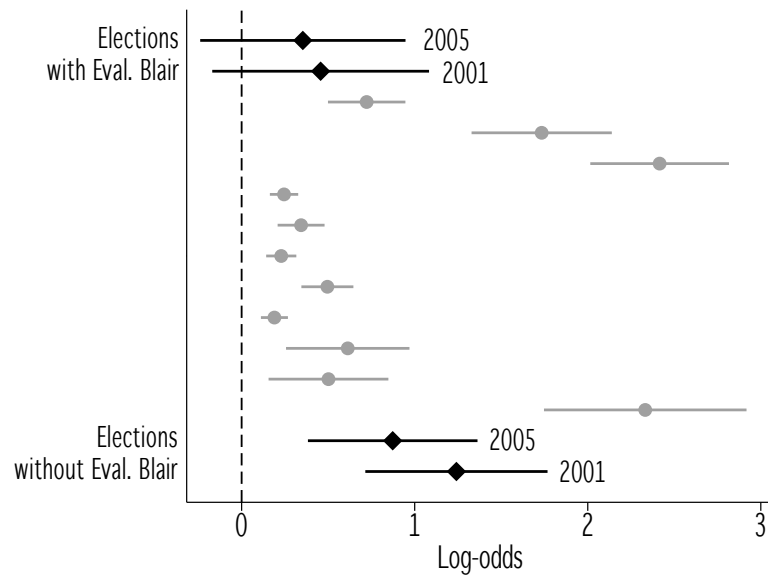


Figure 4.5: Effect of voters' government evaluation on vote choice with 95% confidence intervals. Black coefficients present results from elections in which Blair competed; results from other elections are displayed in grey.

Table 4.1: KHB results – United Kingdom

	Thatcher 1983 Con. v. rest	Thatcher 1987 Con. v. rest	Blair 2001 Labour v. rest	Blair 2005 Labour v. rest	Cameron 2015 Con. v. rest
Eval. PM					
Reduced	2.080*** [1.784,2.424]	2.112*** [1.851,2.409]	1.661*** [1.459,1.890]	1.864*** [1.554,2.234]	2.106*** [1.926,2.302]
Full	1.494*** [1.276,1.750]	1.641*** [1.443,1.866]	1.523*** [1.316,1.764]	1.749*** [1.452,2.106]	1.675*** [1.517,1.849]
Diff	1.392** [1.083,1.788]	1.287** [1.080,1.535]	1.090 [0.935,1.271]	1.066 [0.888,1.279]	1.258*** [1.111,1.423]
N	2599	2642	1295	828	5514
Pseudo R^2	0.69	0.71	0.61	0.7	0.81
Confounding-Ratio	1.823	1.510	1.205	1.114	1.444
Confounding-Perc.	45.13	33.77	17.02	10.23	30.77
P_Red. Gov. Eval.	45.13	33.77	11.84	6.67	21.98
P_Red. Economy			5.17	3.57	5.98

Exponentiated coefficients; 95% confidence intervals in brackets

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 4.2: KHB results – Germany

	Schröder 2002 SPD v. rest	Schröder 2005 SPD v. rest	Merkel 2009 Union v. rest	Merkel 2013 Union v. rest	Merkel 2017 Union v. rest
Eval. PM					
Reduced	1.446*** [1.336,1.566]	1.964*** [1.713,2.252]	1.774*** [1.619,1.943]	1.916*** [1.731,2.122]	1.547*** [1.418,1.686]
Full	1.305*** [1.195,1.425]	1.413*** [1.208,1.652]	1.574*** [1.435,1.727]	1.590*** [1.417,1.784]	1.339*** [1.217,1.473]
Diff	1.108* [1.020,1.204]	1.390* [1.076,1.796]	1.127** [1.029,1.234]	1.205** [1.054,1.379]	1.155** [1.047,1.274]
<i>N</i>	2170	1482	2704	2493	3651
Pseudo R^2	0.55	0.54	0.61	0.67	0.42
Confounding-Ratio	1.385	1.953	1.263	1.403	1.493
Confounding-Perc.	27.81	48.80	20.83	28.72	33.02
P_Red. Gov. Eval.	28.11	47.44	19.6	29.45	31.2
P_Red. Economy	-0.3	1.36	1.22	-0.73	1.82

Exponentiated coefficients; 95% confidence intervals in brackets

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 4.3: KHB results – Denmark

	N. Rasmussen 1998 Socialdem. v. rest	F. Rasmussen 2005 Venstre v. rest	F. Rasmussen 2007 Venstre v. rest
Eval. PM Reduced	1.896*** [1.693,2.124]	2.544*** [2.097,3.085]	3.242*** [2.642,3.977]
Full	1.609*** [1.437,1.802]	2.308*** [1.871,2.848]	2.852*** [2.318,3.510]
Diff	1.178 [0.940,1.477]	1.102* [1.004,1.210]	1.137* [1.028,1.257]
<i>N</i>	1593	1809	2415
Pseudo <i>R</i> ²	0.65	0.66	0.75
Confounding-Ratio	1.345	1.116	1.122
Confounding-Perc.	25.66	10.41	10.89
P_Red. Gov. Eval.	25.19	9.54	10.77
P_Red. Economy	0.47	0.87	0.12

Exponentiated coefficients; 95% confidence intervals in brackets

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 4.4: KHB results – United Kingdom with alternative left-right distance

	Blair 2001 Labour v. rest	Blair 2005 Labour v. rest	Cameron 2015 Conserv. v. rest
Eval. PM			
Reduced	1.632*** [1.431,1.861]	1.718*** [1.440,2.049]	2.033*** [1.848,2.237]
Full	1.509*** [1.298,1.755]	1.603*** [1.338,1.919]	1.637*** [1.471,1.823]
Diff	1.081 [0.938,1.246]	1.072 [0.877,1.310]	1.242*** [1.099,1.403]
<i>N</i>	1257	810	5181
Pseudo R^2	0.61	0.69	0.82
Confounding-Ratio	1.190	1.147	1.439
Confounding-Perc.	15.95	12.81	30.51

Exponentiated coefficients; 95% confidence intervals in brackets

+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 4.5: KHB results – Germany with alternative left-right distance

	Schröder 2002 SPD v. rest	Merkel 2009 Union v. rest	Merkel 2013 Union v. rest	Merkel 2017 Union v. rest
Eval. PM				
Reduced	1.455*** [1.338,1.582]	1.715*** [1.563,1.881]	1.904*** [1.711,2.119]	1.546*** [1.414,1.691]
Full	1.316*** [1.199,1.443]	1.543*** [1.405,1.694]	1.591*** [1.411,1.794]	1.349*** [1.225,1.487]
Diff	1.106* [1.020,1.198]	1.111* [1.019,1.213]	1.197** [1.047,1.369]	1.146** [1.044,1.258]
<i>N</i>	2081	2659	2434	3575
Pseudo R^2	0.55	0.62	0.67	0.43
Confounding-Ratio	1.367	1.243	1.388	1.454
Confounding-Perc.	26.82	19.57	27.93	31.23

Exponentiated coefficients; 95% confidence intervals in brackets

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 4.6: KHB results – Denmark with alternative left-right distance

	N. Rasmussen 1998 Socialdem. v. rest	F. Rasmussen 2005 Venstre v. rest	F. Rasmussen 2007 Venstre v. rest
Eval. PM			
Reduced	1.898*** [1.684,2.140]	2.630*** [2.152,3.213]	3.089*** [2.500,3.817]
Full	1.563*** [1.385,1.764]	2.397*** [1.937,2.967]	2.787*** [2.248,3.456]
Diff	1.214 [0.964,1.530]	1.097 [0.997,1.206]	1.108* [1.014,1.212]
<i>N</i>	1560	1771	2409
Pseudo R^2	0.66	0.67	0.75
Confounding-Ratio	1.434	1.106	1.100
Confounding-Perc.	30.29	9.571	9.128

Exponentiated coefficients; 95% confidence intervals in brackets

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 4.7: KHB results – Germany with non party specific government eval.

	Schröder 2005 SPD v. others	Merkel 2009 Unions v. others	Merkel 2013 Unions v. others	Merkel 2017 Unions v. others
Eval. PM				
Reduced	1.871*** [1.617,2.165]	1.740*** [1.593,1.900]	1.917*** [1.729,2.126]	1.538*** [1.411,1.677]
Full	1.544*** [1.326,1.799]	1.661*** [1.519,1.816]	1.682*** [1.505,1.881]	1.392*** [1.271,1.525]
Diff	1.211* [1.029,1.426]	1.048 [0.990,1.109]	1.140* [1.018,1.276]	1.105* [1.023,1.194]
<i>N</i>	1489	2708	2492	3682
Pseudo R^2	0.52	0.61	0.67	0.42
Confounding-Ratio	1.441	1.092	1.251	1.303
Confounding-Perc.	30.60	8.394	20.08	23.24

Exponentiated coefficients; 95% confidence intervals in brackets

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 4.8: British elections - Full regression results

	Thatcher 1983 Con. v. rest	Thatcher 1987 Con. v. rest	Blair 2001 Labour v. rest	Blair 2005 Labour v. rest	Cameron 2015 Con. v. rest
Eval. prime minister	1.494*** (0.120)	1.641*** (0.108)	1.523*** (0.114)	1.749*** (0.166)	1.675*** (0.0844)
Eval. government	10.77*** (2.184)	5.662*** (1.171)	1.579 (0.505)	1.424 (0.431)	2.060*** (0.235)
Economic perception			1.298 (0.203)	1.372 (0.346)	1.467*** (0.141)
Eval. other leaders	0.748*** (0.0457)	0.748*** (0.0419)	0.781* (0.0903)	0.770*** (0.0606)	0.774*** (0.0432)
Eval. other parties	0.718** (0.0791)	0.193*** (0.0344)	0.778* (0.0771)	0.942 (0.110)	0.575*** (0.0360)
PID PM party	8.802*** (1.980)	2.527*** (0.574)	3.409*** (1.072)	8.534*** (3.474)	0.361*** (0.0647)
PID other parties	0.149*** (0.0302)	0.190*** (0.0416)	0.127*** (0.0471)	0.0991*** (0.0493)	7.287*** (1.668)
LR-distance PM party	0.991*** (0.00241)	0.985*** (0.00341)	1.041 (0.0362)	1.127** (0.0472)	0.922*** (0.0133)
LR-distance other parties	1.003 (0.00286)	1.016* (0.00707)	0.940 (0.0808)	0.829 (0.0848)	1.011 (0.0175)
Female	0.826 (0.136)	0.889 (0.145)	0.907 (0.222)	1.119 (0.372)	1.143 (0.181)
Age	1.009 (0.00496)	1.002 (0.00491)	0.994 (0.00659)	0.989 (0.0110)	1.016** (0.00502)
Observations	2599	2642	1295	828	5514
Pseudo R^2	0.691	0.708	0.616	0.701	0.813

Exponentiated coefficients; Robust standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 4.9: Denmark – Full regression results

	N. Rasmussen 1998 Socialdem. v. rest	F. Rasmussen 2005 Venstre v. rest	F. Rasmussen 2007 Venstre v. rest
Eval. prime minister	1.609*** (0.0929)	2.308*** (0.248)	2.852*** (0.302)
Eval. government	10.30*** (3.075)	1.652** (0.292)	1.846*** (0.336)
Economic perception	1.056 (0.158)	1.122 (0.156)	1.019 (0.143)
Eval. other leaders	0.828** (0.0596)	0.732*** (0.0614)	0.615*** (0.0604)
Eval. other parties	0.538*** (0.0428)	0.464*** (0.0465)	0.456*** (0.0399)
PID PM party	14.63*** (5.123)	16.95*** (6.703)	28.20*** (10.02)
PID other party	0.200*** (0.0711)	0.0921*** (0.0303)	0.0914*** (0.0341)
LR-distance PM party	0.929*** (0.0168)	0.964* (0.0157)	1.004 (0.0106)
LR-distance other parties	1.054 (0.236)	1.109 (0.0802)	0.916* (0.0391)
Female	1.298 (0.267)	1.697** (0.337)	1.011 (0.199)
Age	0.993 (0.00691)	0.995 (0.00643)	0.997 (0.00586)
<i>N</i>	1593	1809	2415
pseudo R^2	0.657	0.659	0.748

Exponentiated coefficients; Robust standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 4.10: German elections - Full regression results

	Schröder 2002 SPD v. rest	Schröder 2005 SPD v. rest	Merkel 2009 Union v. rest	Merkel 2013 Union v. rest	Merkel 2017 Union v. rest
Eval. prime minister	1.305*** (0.0586)	1.413*** (0.113)	1.574*** (0.0744)	1.590*** (0.0936)	1.339*** (0.0651)
Eval. government	1.209*** (0.0481)	1.641*** (0.126)	1.257*** (0.0559)	1.410*** (0.0976)	1.278*** (0.0534)
Economic perception	1.021 (0.0925)	1.219 (0.191)	1.219* (0.115)	0.925 (0.111)	1.140 (0.0935)
Eval. other leaders	0.898*** (0.0249)	0.843* (0.0720)	0.702*** (0.0440)	0.847** (0.0490)	0.921* (0.0366)
Eval. other parties	0.689*** (0.0390)	0.642*** (0.0586)	0.629*** (0.0414)	0.624*** (0.0431)	0.769*** (0.0420)
PID PM party	5.658*** (0.918)	4.344*** (0.939)	4.038*** (0.683)	4.995*** (0.972)	6.135*** (0.877)
PID other parties	0.176*** (0.0379)	0.155*** (0.0435)	0.178*** (0.0397)	0.148*** (0.0313)	0.469*** (0.0857)
LR-distance PM party	0.970 (0.0189)	1.005 (0.0238)	0.979 (0.0120)	0.959** (0.0137)	0.977* (0.0110)
LR-distance other parties	0.950 (0.141)	1.368 (0.231)	0.993 (0.0425)	1.055 (0.0679)	0.986 (0.0998)
Female	1.147 (0.167)	1.409 (0.281)	0.922 (0.133)	1.099 (0.179)	1.088 (0.127)
Age	0.996 (0.00407)	0.929 (0.0355)	1.013** (0.00419)	1.004 (0.00505)	1.007* (0.00312)
<i>N</i>	2170	1482	2704	2493	3651
pseudo R^2	0.550	0.543	0.605	0.666	0.424

Exponentiated coefficients; Robust standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

The following parties have been included in the analysis:

Germany: Social Democratic Party (SPD), Union (Christian Democratic Union & Christian Social Union), Free Democratic Party (FDP), The Greens. The Linke has been included in 2017, 2013 and 2009. In 2005 and 2002 the PDS is included. The Alternative for Germany (AfD) is included in 2017.

Britain: The elections in 2015, 2005, 2001 include the Conservatives, Labour, Liberal Democrats. In 1983 and 1987 the SDP–Liberal Alliance has been included, as well as Labour and the Conservatives.

Denmark: Social Liberals, Social Democrats, Conservatives, Socialists, Danish People's Party, Left-wing Alliance, Venstre.

List of issues covered by the constructed voters' evaluation of the government in the British elections in 1983, 1987, 2001 & 2005 and the Danish election in 1998:

2001 includes: asylum seekers, crime, economy, education, European Union, inflation, National Health Service, pensions, taxes, transport, unemployment, improvement of living conditions in general and handling of the foot & mouth epidemic.

2005 includes: crime, asylum seekers, health service, terrorism, economy and taxation.

1987 includes: prices, unemployment, taxes, health, crime, education, defence.

1983 includes: Falklands, inflation, unemployment, taxes, standard of living, strikes.

1998 includes: economy, unemployment, state surplus, protecting Denmark's interest in the EU, environment, law and order, ensuring co-decision, freedom, tax burden, refugee policy, families, elderly issues, health care, education, protection, social expenses, equality.

Table 4.11: Variance inflation factors

GER 2017			GER 2013			GER 2009		
Variable	VIF	1/VIF	Variable	VIF	1/VIF	Variable	VIF	1/VIF
Eval. Gov.	2.09	0.478	Eval. Gov.	3.06	0.326	Eval. Gov.	2.50	0.399
Eval. Merkel	2.09	0.478	Eval. Merkel	2.84	0.352	PID Union	2.29	0.436
PID Union	1.83	0.545	PID Union	2.57	0.389	Eval. Merkel	2.15	0.465
PID other	1.78	0.562	PID other	2.44	0.409	PID other	2.00	0.499
Eval. other parties	1.42	0.703	Eval. other leaders	1.40	0.711	Eval. other parties	1.79	0.558
Eval. other leaders	1.35	0.739	Dist. Union	1.38	0.722	Eval. other leaders	1.74	0.573
Dist. Union	1.17	0.856	Eval. other parties	1.29	0.773	Dist. Union	1.39	0.721
Economic Perc.	1.09	0.920	Economic Perc.	1.08	0.929	Dist. others	1.06	0.944
Age	1.05	0.949	Age	1.07	0.931	Economic Perc.	1.06	0.946
Female	1.04	0.958	Dist. others	1.07	0.933	Age	1.04	0.961
Dist. others	1.03	0.968	Female	1.01	0.986	Female	1.01	0.990
Mean VIF	1.45		Mean VIF	1.75		Mean VIF	1.64	
GER 2005			UK 1987			UK 1983		
Variable	VIF	1/VIF	Variable	VIF	1/VIF	Variable	VIF	1/VIF
Eval. Gov.	2.71	0.369	PID Conserv.	2.82	0.354	PID Conserv.	3.49	0.286
Eval. Schröder	2.70	0.369	PID other	2.45	0.407	PID other	3.38	0.295
Dist. SPD	2.45	0.408	Eval. Thatcher	2.29	0.437	Eval. Gov.	1.98	0.505
Dist. others	2.36	0.423	Eval. other parties	2.28	0.437	Eval. Thatcher	1.58	0.631
PID other	1.68	0.594	Eval. Gov.	2.24	0.446	Eval. other leaders	1.26	0.795
pidspd	1.65	0.604	Dist. Conserv.	1.34	0.744	Eval. other parties	1.25	0.797
Eval. other parties	1.32	0.759	Eval. other leaders	1.12	0.891	Dist. Conserv.	1.19	0.840
Eval. other leaders	1.30	0.769	Dist. others	1.07	0.934	Dist. others	1.06	0.939
Economic Perc.	1.11	0.900	Age	1.03	0.966	Female	1.03	0.968
Female	1.05	0.951	Female	1.02	0.984	Age	1.03	0.971
Age	1.04	0.963						
Mean VIF	1.76		Mean VIF	1.77		Mean VIF	1.73	
UK 2017			UK 2005			UK 2001		
Variable	VIF	1/VIF	Variable	VIF	1/VIF	Variable	VIF	1/VIF
Eval. other parties	3.95	0.253	PID Labour	3.21	0.311	PID Labour	3.79	0.263
Eval. Cameron	3.59	0.278	PID other	2.90	0.344	PID other	3.69	0.271
Eval. Gov.	3.27	0.305	Eval. Blair	1.91	0.522	Dist. Labour	3.36	0.297
PID Conserv.	3.15	0.317	Eval. Gov.	1.79	0.558	Dist. others	3.28	0.304
PID other	3.05	0.327	Dist. Labour	1.65	0.604	Eval. Blair	2.39	0.417
Eval. other leaders	2.82	0.354	Dist. others	1.60	0.625	Eval. Gov.	2.10	0.476
Economic Perc.	1.82	0.550	Eval. other parties	1.59	0.629	Eval. other parties	2.04	0.490
Dist. Conserv.	1.80	0.554	Eval. other leaders	1.37	0.731	Eval. other leaders	1.71	0.583
Dist. others	1.34	0.748	Economic Perc.	1.37	0.731	Economic Perc.	1.36	0.733
Age	1.05	0.954	Age	1.10	0.906	Age	1.08	0.928
Female	1.02	0.980	Female	1.03	0.972	Female	1.02	0.979
Mean VIF	2.44		Mean VIF	1.78		Mean VIF	2.35	
DK 2007			DK 2005			DK 1998		
Variable	VIF	1/VIF	Variable	VIF	1/VIF	Variable	VIF	1/VIF
Eval. Fogh	3.18	0.314	Eval. Fogh	2.43	0.412	Eval. Gov.	2.10	0.475
Eval. Gov.	3.03	0.330	Eval. Gov.	2.39	0.419	Eval. Nystrup	1.74	0.573
Eval. other parties	1.97	0.506	Eval. other parties	1.78	0.561	Eval. other parties	1.73	0.577
Eval. other leaders	1.78	0.561	Eval. other leaders	1.62	0.616	Dist. Social Dem.	1.59	0.630
Dist. Venstre	1.47	0.681	Dist. Venstre	1.62	0.618	Eval. other leaders	1.54	0.650
PID Venstre	1.46	0.687	PID Venstre	1.36	0.735	PID Social Dem.	1.48	0.677
PID other	1.42	0.703	PID other	1.30	0.768	PID other	1.37	0.731
Economic Perc.	1.21	0.824	Economic Perc.	1.28	0.780	Economic Perc.	1.13	0.882
Dist. others	1.15	0.870	Dist. others	1.19	0.842	Dist. others	1.09	0.916
Age	1.06	0.942	Age	1.08	0.929	Age	1.07	0.933
Female	1.05	0.955	Female	1.06	0.947	Female	1.04	0.957
Mean VIF	1.71		Mean VIF	1.55		Mean VIF	1.44	

Chapter 5

Article 4: Potent Executives: The Electoral Strength of Prime Ministers in Central Eastern Europe

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ABSTRACT: Prime ministers in Central Eastern Europe (CEE) are commonly perceived to be weaker and less “presidential” than their Western European colleagues. In contrast, I argue that the post-communist legacy of CEE provides a more favourable context for prime ministers to develop a central characteristic of “presidential” prime ministers: a strong personal influence on voting behaviour in parliamentary elections, which provides prime ministers with the opportunity to gain autonomy within their party and cabinet. I theorise that party system instability, as well as the comparatively lower media independence and freedom, gives greater electoral potential to prime ministers in CEE than to their Western European counterparts. Consequently, prime ministers in CEE have a stronger influence on vote choice than West European prime ministers. These hypotheses are investigated using survey data from several waves of the CSES project.

5.1 Introduction

Are prime ministers in Central Eastern Europe (CEE) weaker than prime ministers in Western Europe (WE)? The notion that prime ministers in CEE are weaker is widely accepted (Baylis, 2007; Elgie, 2012) and relies on the operationalisation of prime ministerial strength as duration in office. In this paper, I challenge this conclusion by comparing prime ministers in CEE and WE over another dimension of strength: Their personal influence on individual vote choice in parliamentary elections as measure of *electoral strength*. Throughout this paper I refer to this personal influence on citizens' vote choice with the commonly used term *leader effect* (Mughan, 2015). The increasing personalisation of electoral behaviour and personal influence of leading candidates on voting behaviour has received growing attention in recent years (Bittner, 2011, 2018b; Costa and Ferreira da Silva, 2015; Ferreira da Silva, 2018; Garzia, 2014; King, 2002b; Lobo and Curtice, 2014), as parliamentary elections tend to more closely resemble presidential elections. I argue that a prime minister's personal effect on voting behaviour in parliamentary elections, their *electoral strength*, can be used as a measure of a prime minister's performance.¹ In addition, the more prime ministers gain a 'presidential' role in parliamentary elections, the more authority and autonomy they may gain within their party and cabinet (Poguntke and Webb, 2005; Worthy, 2016).

Prime ministers in CEE are more likely to hold a presidential connection to voters than prime ministers in WE, because the comparatively lower voter alignment and party system stability in CEE provides a favourable context for presidentialised parliamentary elections (Bértoa and Mair, 2012; Mair, 1997; Poguntke and Webb, 2005). Furthermore, elites in CEE are able to exert more influence over institutions of mass communications (Bairrett, 2015; Bajomi-Lázár, 2013; Dragomir, 2018; Garzia, 2017a).

I use several waves of Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) data to study the leader effect of prime ministers across European countries. The hypothesis that will be tested is that prime ministers in CEE have a stronger direct personal effect on vote choice (leader effect) than prime ministers in WE. I employ multilevel models to test this hypothesis, analysing whether the leader effect of prime ministers varies across countries and if this variance can be attributed to a systematic difference between CEE and WE countries.

¹Throughout the paper I follow (Baylis, 2007) and use the terms performance and strength interchangeably.

I find that the leader effect of prime ministers in parliamentary elections is significantly larger in CEE than in WE. This finding also remains robust to the exclusion of single countries and prime ministers who the literature considers to be outliers. A further analysis shows that differences between CEE and WE can be explained by differences in media freedom and party system stability. Furthermore, this paper discusses to what extent the presented findings present a puzzle for the presidentialisation thesis, since prime ministers in CEE seem unable to use their *electoral strength* to secure their survival in office.

The remaining part of the paper proceeds as follows: Firstly, I discuss why a prime minister's personal influence on individual voting behaviour constitutes an important dimension of strength. Secondly, I argue that prime ministers in CEE may be electorally stronger than prime ministers in WE. Thirdly, I discuss the selection of my cases and data. Fourthly, I provide information on my statistical model and review their findings. Fifthly, I draw my conclusions and outline opportunities for further research.

5.2 Prime Ministers in Central Eastern and Western Europe

In this section I argue that a prime minister's personal impact on vote choice, their leader effect, fosters their performance. The ability of prime ministers to personally influence vote choice is an essential aspect of 'presidential' prime ministers and can provide prime ministers with the opportunity to gain autonomy within their party and cabinet.

How well individual prime ministers perform and what factors may explain differences in performance has been a long-standing interest and debate in the study of democratic government (Kaarbo and Hermann, 1998; Strangio, Hart and Walter, 2013; Helms, 2017). However, it is generally accepted that prime ministers in CEE are weaker and less 'presidential' than prime ministers in WE (Baylis, 2007; Elgie, 2012). Although the new democracies in CEE adapted well to the new system of government (Blondel et al., 2007), prime ministers in CEE stay in office for shorter periods than prime ministers in WE. This duration-gap still holds true to the present day, although duration varies within CEE and in some countries prime ministers stay in office over periods that are comparable to periods in WE (Grotz and Müller-Rommel, 2015). Baylis (2007) argues that a prime

minister's duration in office approximates his potential to implement policies and therefore indicates his or her strength. However, a prime minister's duration in office remains a rather rough approximation of their policy performance. While a short-serving prime minister has little time to enact policies, nothing guarantees that a long-serving prime minister will achieve more. Unfortunately, the use of policy achievements themselves is met by two major difficulties. Firstly, assessing policy achievements comparatively over a long period of time. Secondly, deciding whether these achievements are attributable to the prime minister or rather to the cabinet as a whole since democratic governance in parliamentary systems is based on joint-decision making (Blondel and Müller-Rommel, 1993).

In light of these limitations I turn to another accessible measure of strength and 'presidential' position in office: A prime minister's personal influence on citizen's vote choice in parliamentary elections, their leader effect.

In their seminal work on the concept of presidentialisation Poguntke and Webb (2005) describe how parliamentary elections start to resemble presidential elections and increasingly focus on the competition among leading candidates. Together with the internationalization of politics and growing complexity of the state these changes enable chief executives in parliamentary systems to gain increasing control and autonomy similar to presidents, even under the continuation of existing formal parliamentary procedures.

Under the growing presidentialisation of parliamentary elections it becomes essential for prime ministers to influence voters to vote in favour of their party. This influence is commonly described as *leader effect*: the direct personal influence on vote choice in parliamentary election (Garzia, 2017b; King, 2002a; Mughan, 2015). Weakening social cleavages and changes in communication give greater weight to the competition between leading candidates and their personality (Bittner, 2011, 2018b; Blondel, Thiébault et al., 2009; Garzia, 2014; Rahat and Sheaffer, 2007). Performing on this dimension becomes an essential duty of prime ministers. As citizens continue to base their vote choice to a larger extent on their impression of the prime ministers and leaders who become the "chief means of engaging the political interest of publics" (Poguntke and Webb, 2005, 21), parties will rely more heavily on the prime minister for political success.

In terms of recent conceptions of executive authority as leadership capital (Bennister, 't Hart and Worthy, 2015; Helms, 2016), leader effects reach beyond reputational sources like popularity. Leader effects evidence a relational change in the leader-follower relationship (Garzia, 2011) between prime ministers and the

electorate, which alters the role of prime ministers and other leaders in the political processes of parliamentary systems. Curtice and Holmberg (2005) show empirically that leader effects are not a reflection of a leader's popularity.²

Under the concept of presidentialisation a prime minister's presidential role in parliamentary elections may impact their position within party and cabinet (Poguntke and Webb, 2005, 17) and allows them to govern past their parties. It is plausible for prime ministers to use this increased importance in parliamentary elections to foster intra-party and intra-executive presidentialisation to their own benefit. The more parties need to rely on prime ministers to engage potential voters, the more likely they will give way to the prime minister's policy goals in order to maintain the presidential connection between the prime minister and the electorate. Prime ministers who hold a presidential connection with the electorate also hold a stronger bargaining position, because they are able to reach past their party and steer the electorate against intra-party or intra-cabinet opposition. This entails the plausible assumption that prime ministers will prefer to work towards and campaign with the policies which they themselves favour and can argue for with conviction. Worthy (2016) similarly argues that elections provides a basic measure of a prime minister's performance and grant them authority. Hence, I understand a prime minister's leader effect as a direct and indirect measure of strength:

1. Prime ministers leader effects, their *electoral strength*, are a direct measure of their 'presidential' influence in parliamentary elections and relationship with the electorate. Prime ministers performance on this dimension is an essential function in increasingly presidentialised parliamentary systems.
2. Larger leader effects enable prime ministers to foster their autonomy within cabinet and party and govern past their party. Prime ministers with greater autonomy within their cabinet and party are likely to secure their policy goals against opposing goals of colleagues. This constitutes the additional indirect contribution of a prime minister's *electoral strength* to their overall strength.

In summary, a prime ministers leader effects provide a good indication of their strength and 'presidential' position. This conception of prime ministerial strength complements duration in office as common operationalisation of performance by

²Table 5.4 in the appendix shows that the mean popularity of prime ministers in this study differs only slightly between CEE and WE in favour of prime ministers in WE.

an additional and empirically observable component. It follows that a prime minister's strength is best understood as a combination of factors. A prime minister with a long duration in office, but without sufficient autonomy from their cabinet may achieve less in terms of policies, than an autonomous prime minister with a shorter tenure. While it is undeniable that many prime ministers in CEE have the disadvantage of their comparatively short period in office, they may enjoy advantages in other dimensions of strength. In this paper I set out to explore differences in the electoral aspect of prime ministerial strength between CEE and WE empirically. In the next section I theorise why such a difference between prime ministers in CEE and WE may exist.

5.3 Presidentialisation of Parliamentary Elections

In the following paragraphs I discuss why leader effects of prime ministers are likely to be systematically larger in CEE than in WE. I argue that differences in social cleavages and resulting party system instability, as well as in media independence provide leading candidates, and in particular prime ministers, with a favourable playing ground to personally influence vote choice and discuss whether these measures differ between CEE and WE.

Poguntke and Webb (2005) identify the increasing focus on competing candidates in parliamentary elections as a key driver of presidentialisation and increasing autonomy of prime ministers. Over the past decades electoral research has overwhelmingly secured such an increasing electoral impact of voters' perception of leading candidates in parliamentary elections (Bittner, 2018*b*; Garzia, 2014, 2017*b*; Lobo and Curtice, 2014; Mughan, 2015; Wattenberg, 1991). The presidentialisation of parliamentary elections is driven by societal changes and changes in communication technology, namely the erosion of societal cleavages in Western democracies and the success of television as medium of mass communication. Changes in media technology have frequently been identified as drivers of electoral presidentialisation and give individual candidates greater importance (Sartori, 1989; Mughan, 2000; Lenz and Lawson, 2011). Recent research has shown that especially the consumption of television moderates the influence of leaders in parliamentary elections (Garzia, 2017*a*). The more television voters consume the greater is the effect of leading candidate's personality on their vote choice. Electoral presidentialisation therefore shares common causes with personalisation (Rahat and Sheaffer, 2007), a process in which eroding societal cleavages and the changing structure of mass

communication increase the weight of individual political actors relative to political groups. With regard to these two causes of electoral presidentialisation, media structure and cleavages, CEE differs from WE.

Firstly, the newer democracies in CEE faced several simultaneous challenges of political transformation (Lewis, 2002; Tworzecki, 2003; Millard, 2004). Departing from the absence of political competition, dealignment has, therefore, been the starting hypothesis of party systems in these post communist countries (Mair, 1997) and this hypothesis has largely held true (Bértoa and Mair, 2012). Although there is evidence for increasing organisational consolidation of party systems in CEE, alignment between voters and parties is still lacking (Weßels and Klingemann, 2006). These contextual factors foster the presidentialisation of parliamentary elections and provide prime ministers in CEE with greater potential to influence vote choice. Since the link between parties and voters is weaker than in WE, voters are likely to consider individual leaders and their personalities to a greater extent than in WE when casting their ballot (Grotz and Weber, 2017). Voters are more likely to identify with a specific leading candidate in a given parliamentary election than with the candidate's party as a whole. In turn the leader effects of prime ministers in CEE will likely be larger, compared to the leader effects of prime ministers in WE where the alignment between voters and parties is stronger.

Secondly, elites in CEE are able to exert greater influence over the media than elites in WE. Like a transformation of the party system a transformation of media institutions in CEE was necessary after the breakdown of communism (Jakubowicz, 2001). The new democracies in CEE needed to reform party- and state-owned media systems to a democratised media (Splichal, 1992; Dobek-Ostrowska, 2015). Despite this transformation a greater influence of political elites on media institutions remains (Jakubowicz, 2001; Örnebring, 2012) in which the media is to some extent a resource of elites and clientelistic networks. (Hanretty, 2010) finds that among a large number of European public broadcasters, and a few broadcasters outside of Europe, broadcasters in CEE are evaluated to be the least independent. In line with these findings Bairett (2015) shows how executives in CEE actively reduce media-freedom to avoid public scrutiny of their actions in office. Hungary provides a particular visible case (Bajomi-Lázár, 2017) in which the strategy has been described as a party colonialisation of the media (Bajomi-Lázár, 2013). The pattern is not limited to countries in CEE. Dragomir (2018) shows that after the economic crisis regimes around the world have made increasing use of government funding to exert influence over media outlets. Overall, existing research supports the

notion that PM are aware how media coverage of them can affect their perception among the electorate negatively. In summary, not only do media structures differ between WE and CEE, executives in CEE also continually seek to alter the public playing field in their favour. I argue that this higher degree of media influence and lower degree of media independence and freedom allows prime ministers in CEE to exert greater influence on voters than prime ministers in WE. Prime ministers should be able to use their elite position at the top of the executive to shape mass communication on their personal image and importance to their liking. Although other leading candidates may be likewise able to exert their elite influence over the media, the executive position of prime ministers provides them with a clear advantage in political systems departing from widespread state control over media.

In conclusion, I hypothesise that due to the discussed differences in media independence and party institutionalisation the *electoral strength* of prime ministers will be larger in CEE than in WE:

H1: Leader effects of prime ministers in Central Eastern Europe are larger than in Western Europe.

While leading candidates without a position as prime minister, may have fewer resources to shape media reporting to their liking, they still profit from the weakened cleavages and resulting volatile party systems in CEE democracies to the same extent. I hypothesise that their leader effect is also likely to be larger than their counterparts in Western Europe:

H2: Leader effects of other leading candidates are larger in Central Eastern Europe than in Western Europe.

King (2002a) argues that voters consider party leader when casting their vote because party leaders may choose to follow their personal policy preferences over their party line and that the personality of prime ministers may influence the decisions made by their government. Consequently, the weight of prime ministers in voters' calculus may be moderated by their impact on decision making in parliamentary systems, therefore, the leader effect of prime ministers in semi-presidential systems may be weaker as executive power (Baylis, 1996; Sedelius and Mashtaler, 2013) is shared:

H3: Leader effects of prime ministers and other leading candidates in semi-

presidential systems are smaller.

Since voters may also like a prime minister or party leader, simply because they belong to a specific party (Curtice and Holmberg, 2005) I will include voters' party identifications (Campbell et al., 1966) as the main explanatory factor opposing the leader effect of prime ministers. I also include voters' education level, gender and age as further control variables.

In the following section I discuss the selection of my cases and the available data.

5.4 Data and Case Selection

I use the harmonised Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) file (Giebler et al., 2016) as well as the fourth wave (CSES, 2018) to test whether the electoral strength of prime ministers differs between CEE and WE. This data sources allow for the broadest comparison across differing countries and over time to minimise potential selection biases. Unfortunately, elections in the second CSES wave have to be excluded since voters' evaluation of leaders are not available. I further exclude presidential systems, following the definition of Elgie (2018b) and non European countries. In addition, parliamentary elections in which the prime minister did not run as a leading candidate or in which the government was led by a caretaker are excluded as well.³ I also exclude the 2009 parliamentary election in Iceland in which the prime minister came into office at less than two months prior to the election. It is probable that such a short time period is insufficient to prepare an electoral campaign designated to the prime minister. The final selection encompasses 22 countries and 44 individual prime ministers. A list of included countries, elections and prime ministers can be found in table 5.1 in the appendix.

My dependent variable measures whether respondents voted for the prime minister's party (1) or did vote for any other party (0). This negates differences between the parties who do not hold the office of prime minister, but eases country-comparison and allows for a more parsimonious model which focuses on the vote choice of interest. I include a number of individual-level predictors of vote choice: Firstly, voters' thermometer evaluations of prime ministers and of party leaders of opposing parties. These thermometer evaluations range from dislike (0) to like

³A few elections are excluded since the CSES covers a leader other than the prime minister (e.g. the president in France).

(10). I summarise all party leaders opposing the prime minister in one variable by taking a respondents' highest evaluation of a party leader. I furthermore measure whether respondents hold a party identification with the party of the prime minister or any of the other parties. Lastly, respondents' gender, age and education-level are included as control variables. To test H3 a country-level variable is created that differentiates between parliamentary and semi-presidential systems, using the classification by Elgie (2018*b*).

The following section discusses my model strategy and results. I provide graphical results to facilitate interpretation and give full regression results in the appendix (Table 5.2 & 5.3).

5.5 Analysis

I model the contextual factors of interest by employing a logistic multilevel model with a individual- and a country-level that allows for varying intercepts by country in which individual respondents are nested.⁴ The model includes a random slope for voters' evaluation of prime ministers, which allows for the influence of voters' evaluation of prime ministers to vary between each country. Whether there is a systematic variation in prime ministerial influence between CEE and WE (H1), regions who differ in media independence and party institutionalisation, is tested by a cross-level interaction (*Eval. prime minister* \times *CEE*). I also allow for the slope of voters' evaluations of other leaders to vary by country to test whether the influence of other leaders (H2) significantly varies between CEE and WE. Non-dichotomous individual-level variables are centred on country means and standardised by two standard deviations to ease the comparison of effects. Two models are fitted: Firstly, a main model that tests the cross-level interactions between voters' evaluation of prime ministers and CEE, as well as voters' evaluation of other leaders and CEE. Secondly, a semi-presidential model in which I also test whether the influence of prime ministers and other leaders significantly varies between parliamentary and semi-presidential systems (H3).⁵

Figure 5.1 shows the estimated median effects from the main regression model. All explanatory variables, voters' evaluation the prime minister, party identification with the prime minister's party, have a statistically significant and positive effect

⁴The following software is employed for statistical modelling: Bates et al. (2014); Knowles and Frederick (2016).

⁵The formula of both models is provided in the appendix.

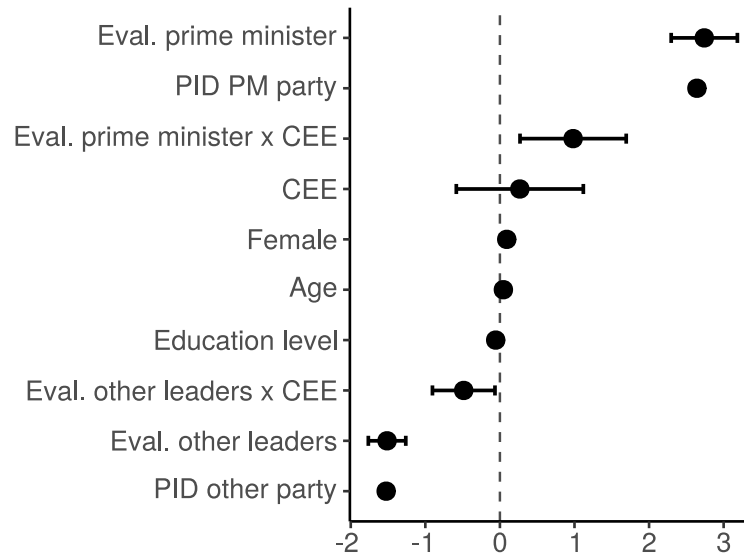


Figure 5.1: Estimated median effects on vote choice for the prime minister's party, 95 % confidence intervals.

on vote choice for the prime minister's party. In contrast voters who identify with a different party or evaluate other party leaders positively are significantly less likely to vote for the prime minister's party. The control variables age, gender and education level show no relevant influence on vote choice.

Figure 5.1 also shows that the effect of voters' evaluation of the prime minister on vote choice, prime ministers *electoral strength*, differs systematically between CEE and WE (H1). The respective cross-level interaction '*Eval. prime minister x CEE*' is significant. The effect is significantly larger in CEE than in WE, therefore, prime ministers in CEE have a larger personal impact on individual vote choice than prime ministers in WE. Similarly the effect of other party leaders on vote choice is also larger in CEE than in WE (H2), although the confidence interval is closer to zero. The results of both interaction effects match the previously derived expectations.

Figure 5.2 provides a visual representation of the interaction effect between voters' evaluation of prime ministers and CEE. The more positively voters evaluate the prime minister, the more likely they are to vote for the prime minister's party. This effect holds true for prime ministers in WE and in CEE, but the effect is larger in CEE. Prime ministers in CEE are, therefore, more 'presidential' than their counterparts in WE as they have a larger direct effect on voters' decision

in parliamentary elections. Due to this larger leader effect of prime ministers, parliamentary elections in CEE more closely resemble presidential elections than parliamentary elections in WE. However, it may be the case that the difference in prime ministers leader effects between the two regions is driven by differences between semi-presidential and parliamentary systems. As stated in hypothesis three leader effects of prime ministers may be smaller in semi-presidential systems than in parliamentary systems. I test this assumption in an additional model, but find no significant difference of voters' evaluation of the prime minister between semi-presidential and parliamentary systems. Table 5.2 in the appendix provides the results for this additional model. The inclusion of this additional interaction does also not improve how well the model fits the data. Most importantly the interaction between voters' evaluation of the prime minister and CEE remains significant.

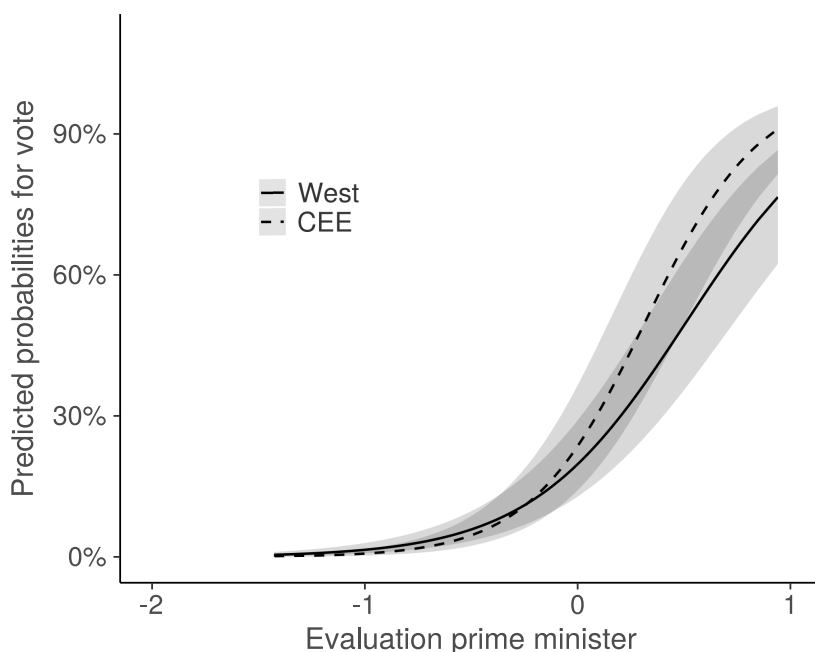


Figure 5.2: Interaction effect of prime minister evaluation and Central Eastern Europe on vote choice for the prime minister's party, 95 % confidence intervals.

I further substantiate these findings and test my theoretical assumptions with two additional models that analyse a moderation of leader evaluations by measures of party system stabilization and media freedom. These models go beyond regional differences and explain variation in the electoral influence of prime ministers between individual countries. In order to measure the degree of media freedom in a country

I use the freedom of the press index (FOTP) by Freedom House (2002-2017). This index has been shown to perform well and track other measures of media freedom (Bairrett, 2015) and covers all necessary time points and countries. In political system with lower freedom of the press prime ministers and other leaders should have more opportunities to control public perceptions and narratives of them and in turn exert more influence over voters' decisions. I rescale the original Freedom House measure from 0–100 to 0–1 and also reverse it's direction so that 1 indicates maximum freedom of the press while 0 indicates no freedom. Country scores of media freedom are calculated by taking the Freedom House score that cover the election years in the data and averaging them for each country in which more than one election is observed. The studied CEE countries have on average a 0.14 lower media freedom score, see Table 5.5 in the appendix. However, within region variance exists and some WE countries rank lower on media freedom than the CEE average.

As a measure of party system stabilization I employ the indicator of party system closure calculated by Bértoa and Enyedi (2016). Which measures the degree of stability in government formation by observing access and alteration in government, as well as whether new or familiar government coalitions emerge. Following the logic of Mair (1996, p. 102-105) parties can more easily claim the loyalty of voters when patterns of inter-party competition and government formation are established, therefore, alignments of voters should be more frequent and stable. In contrast, more open party systems should give greater opportunities for prime ministers and other leaders to re-define party brands and previous modes of party cooperation and competition. Table 5.6 shows that party systems in CEE countries are considerably more open than in WE, although, as with media freedom, variance within the regions exists.

To test whether the influence of prime ministers and other leaders on vote choice is moderated by these substantial measures of regional difference I re-estimate the previous main model, replacing the dichotomous CEE indicator with the continuous measures of party system stability and press freedom. Since the resulting cross-level interaction in these additional models interacts two continuous variables on a small number of countries they are estimated in separate models and do not include random slopes, which would substantively increase complexity and in turn standard errors. Like all other non-dichotomous variables the measure of press freedom and party system closure have been mean centred and standardised by two standard deviations and are centred on the grand mean. The full regression results of these

two models are provided in Table 5.3 in the appendix.

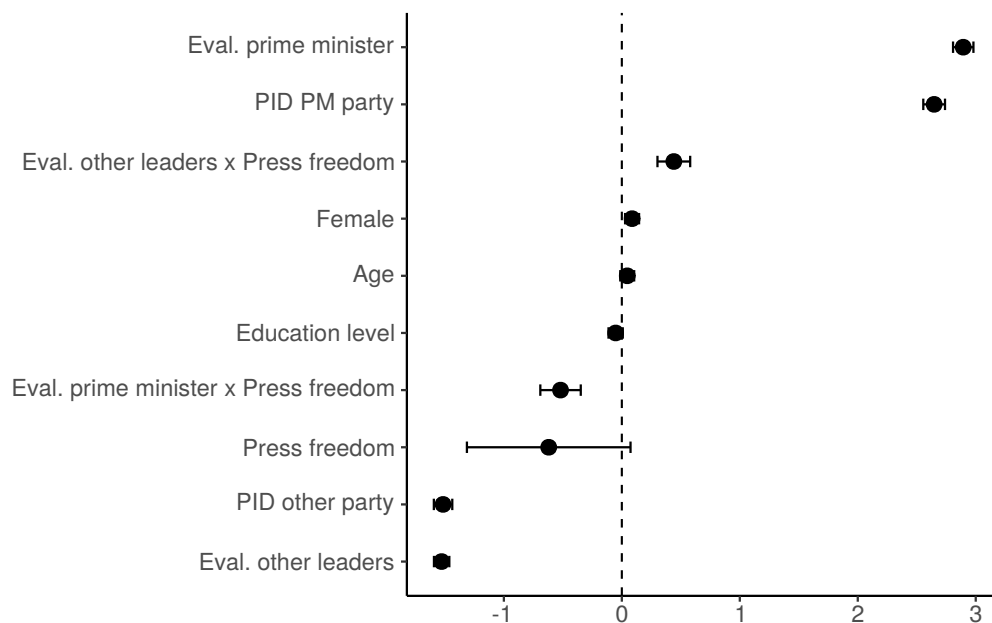


Figure 5.3: Press freedom model. Estimated median effects on vote choice for the prime minister's party, 95 % confidence intervals.

The moderating effect of press freedom on leader effects is provided in Figure 5.3. As visible in the interaction term '*Eval. prime minister x Press freedom*' if countries score one standard deviation higher on press freedom prime ministers have a 0.5 point lower influence on vote choice for their party. Reversely, prime minister exert a stronger influence in countries with lower media freedom. The influence of other leaders is likewise moderated by press freedom. In countries with higher scores of press freedom the effect of other leaders on vote choice for their party is reduced, while their influence increases with decreases in press freedom. I also find that in countries with higher levels of press freedom voters tend to be less likely to vote for the ruling party of the prime minister, although this effect is not significant on the 5% level.

Figure 5.4 shows the results for a moderation by party system closure. The results follow the theorised pattern: The more closed and therefore stabilised party systems are the lower is the influence of prime ministers on vote choice (*Eval. prime minister x System closure*), as well as the influence of other leaders. Unlike the degree of press freedom party system closure shows no tendency to influence vote choice on it's own and only works as moderator.

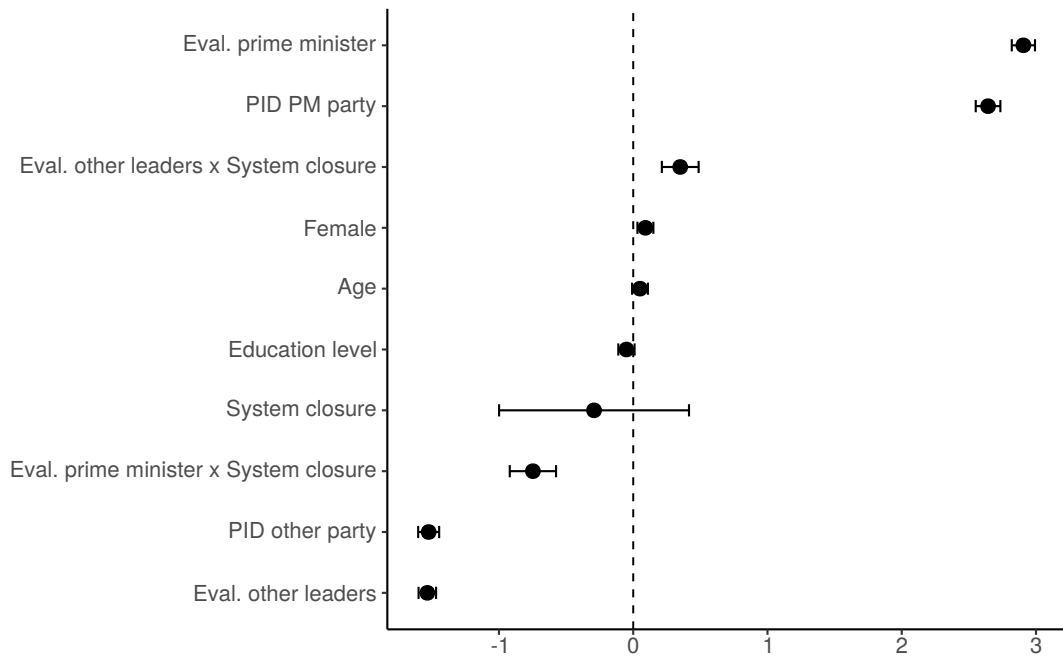


Figure 5.4: Party system closure model. Estimated median effects on vote choice for the prime minister's party, 95% confidence intervals.

I have shown that the leader effects of prime ministers systematically vary between CEE and WE. Prime ministers in CEE have a larger leader effect in parliamentary elections than prime ministers in WE, leading to a more presidential relation between prime ministers and the electorate in CEE than between prime ministers and the electorate in WE. A further analysis shows that drivers of this difference are likely to be caused by differences in party systems and media freedom between CEE and WE. Prime ministers enjoy significantly larger leader effects in countries with lower freedom of the press and less stabilized party systems.

In the following section I test whether my finding on the systematic difference in leader effects between prime ministers in CEE and WE remains robust to additional tests.

Robustness Checks

The tested cross level interaction only entails a small number of cases on the country-level, therefore, I test the robustness of my main model by excluding single countries from my analysis when estimating the cross-level interaction between voters' evaluation of the prime minister and CEE to ensure that the findings are not driven by voting behaviour in a single country. Figure 5.5 shows that the

findings is robust and not driven by a single country under analysis. Excluding the Czech Republic or Hungary from the analysis leads to the strongest reduction in p-values⁶, but the cross-level interaction remains significant.

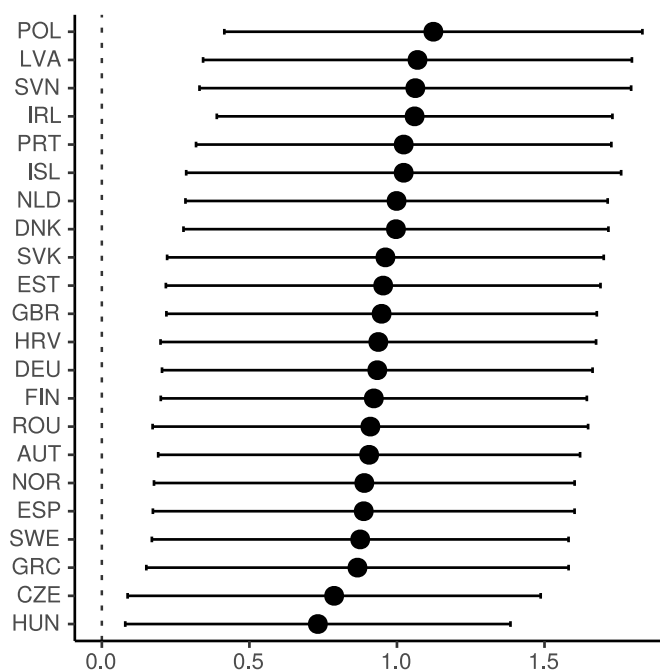


Figure 5.5: Leave-one-out validation of the main model. The estimated median effect of the interaction between prime minister evaluation and Central Eastern Europe on vote choice is displayed by excluded country, 95 % confidence intervals.

I also test whether my finding, that leader effects of opposing leaders are stronger in CEE than in West Europe is equally robust (see Figure 5.6 in the appendix). I find that the interaction is somewhat less robust and turns insignificant when Romania or the Czech Republic are excluded.

In his article Baylis (2007) notes a series of prime ministers in CEE who may be considered exceptions to the prime ministerial weakness rule in the region. Since the CSES data does not cover every election between 1996 and 2016 it may be the case that they include an over proportional amount of prime ministers who are considered to be outliers. In this case these exceptions as identified by Baylis may drive the interaction. However, the selection of CEE prime ministers in the used CSES data only encompasses one of the exceptions identified by Baylis: The

⁶The p-values are 0.036 under the exclusion of the Czech Republic and 0.04 if Hungary is excluded.

parliamentary election in 1996 in which Václav Klaus ran as prime minister. As the robustness test in Figure 5.5 shows the cross-level interaction holds even when the whole country is excluded, therefore, it is unlikely that the finding is driven by a biased selection of prime ministers either.

Overall the finding that prime ministers in CEE have a stronger personal electoral performance than prime ministers in WE remains robust. In the following section I discuss how future studies on prime minister's performance and the presidentialisation of voting behaviour in parliamentary elections may depart from the presented findings.

5.6 Conclusion

How strong are prime ministers in Central Eastern Europe compared to their counterparts in Western Europe? I have addressed this issue by comparing their personal influence on citizens' voting behaviour in parliamentary elections. Comparing European prime ministers over this presidential characteristic, I find that prime ministers in CEE are electorally stronger than prime ministers in WE. This pattern can be explained by the increased influence of prime ministers and other leaders in countries with less stable party systems and lower press freedom.

These findings suggest that judgements about differences in overall prime ministerial strength between CEE and WE should be based on multiple dimension. Prime ministers in CEE may on average have less time to achieve policies, especially in previous decades, but they hold a more presidential position in parliamentary systems which should strengthen their position. Rather than focusing on office duration as sole indicator of strength, this study emphasises that prime ministers have to perform on other dimensions as well and that several dimensions will benefit their policy goals. Such a view does not exclude the consideration of office duration. The time prime ministers spend in office may still limit the amount of policies they can achieve and could be understood as a necessary condition to perform. Other factors, like the here presented personal impact in parliamentary elections, support networks within the party, as well as previous executive or legislative experience may than determine how much prime ministers can achieve during their time in office. Moreover, in times of presidentialised parliamentary elections a prime minister's direct personal impact on voters is an increasingly important performance dimension – independently of policy achievements. The changes caused by presidentialisation could also provide incentives to prime minister to further

reduce media independence of public broadcasters to control their public image during elections – a trend that is already visible in some countries (Rupnik, 2016).

In addition, presented evidence contributes to the study of electoral behaviour and supports two assumptions of the electoral presidentialisation literature. Firstly, the increased importance of leaders in less established party systems in which voters alignment is lower. Secondly, the role of media to give greater weight to leaders in parliamentary elections. Both factors provide leaders in CEE with more favourable conditions to personally affect voting behaviour. Especially prime ministers may benefit from a media system that is more susceptible to the influence of elites and which they can actively pursue to change in their favour.

The presented findings are in line with theoretical arguments of the electoral face of presidentialisation, but also present a puzzle. Even though prime ministers in CEE are electorally stronger, their survival in office is in most cases shorter than the survival of prime ministers in WE. According to the presidentialisation thesis electorally strong prime ministers should be able to use their prominent position in parliamentary elections to gain autonomy within their party and their cabinet. This should plausibly make their survival in office more probable. What explanations may solve this apparent puzzle?

It may be the case that other factors enable or hinder prime ministers to use their electoral strength to gain autonomy within their party and cabinet. These factors are likely to be specific to individual prime ministers and not covered by the present analysis that focuses on differences at the regional- & country-level and does not test how effectively individual prime ministers with a presidential role can gain autonomy. In more institutionalized parties prime ministers could struggle to gain a strong position within their party, even if they have a presidential connection to the electorate. Cabinets composed of coalitions may also moderate the opportunity of prime ministers to gain autonomy within their cabinet. Lastly, personal characteristics of prime ministers could further influence to what extent they are able to use their presidential role in elections to their benefit. Future studies may choose to investigate such mechanisms more closely on the individual level and refine our understanding of how prime ministers use their changing role in parliamentary elections to gain leverage within party and cabinet to pursue policies and remain in office. Studying individual prime ministers in-depth under a comparative research design may provide crucial insights.

This paper has set out to extent our knowledge of systematic differences in prime ministers strength across Europe. Central Eastern European prime ministers

may on average serve shorter terms in office, but they enjoy a more presidential influence in parliamentary elections than prime ministers in Western Europe. The presented evidence highlights that a prime minister's strength is best perceived as a multi-faceted concept in which prime ministers in CEE and WE may hold differing advantages.

5.7 Appendix to Article 4

Model specifications:

– Main model

$$Pr(\text{vote}_{ij} = 1) = \text{logit}^{-1}(\pi_{0j}\text{country}_{ij} + \pi_{1j}\text{evalPM}_{ij} + \pi_{2j}\text{evalOtherLeader}_{ij} + \pi_{3j}\text{PIDprimeministerParty}_{ij} + \pi_{4j}\text{PIDotherParty}_{ij} + \pi_{5j}\text{age}_{ij} + \pi_{6j}\text{gender}_{ij} + \pi_{7j}\text{education}_{ij})$$

$$\pi_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}\text{CEE}_j + \zeta_{0j}$$

$$\pi_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + \gamma_{11}\text{CEE}_j + \zeta_{1j}$$

$$\pi_{2j} = \gamma_{20} + \gamma_{21}\text{CEE}_j + \zeta_{2j}$$

$$\text{where } \zeta_{0j} \sim N(0, \sigma_0^2), \zeta_{1j} \sim N(0, \sigma_1^2) \text{ and } \zeta_{2j} \sim N(0, \sigma_2^2)$$

as well as the covariances $\rho\sigma_0\sigma_1, \rho\sigma_0\sigma_2, \rho\sigma_1\sigma_2$

– Semi-presidential model

$$Pr(\text{vote}_{ij} = 1) = \text{logit}^{-1}(\pi_{0j}\text{country}_{ij} + \pi_{1j}\text{evalPM}_{ij} + \pi_{2j}\text{evalOtherLeader}_{ij} + \pi_{3j}\text{PIDprimeministerParty}_{ij} + \pi_{4j}\text{PIDotherParty}_{ij} + \pi_{5j}\text{age}_{ij} + \pi_{6j}\text{gender}_{ij} + \pi_{7j}\text{education}_{ij})$$

$$\pi_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}\text{CEE}_j + \gamma_{02}\text{semiPresidential}_j + \zeta_{0j}$$

$$\pi_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + \gamma_{11}\text{CEE}_j + \gamma_{12}\text{semiPresidential}_j + \zeta_{1j}$$

$$\pi_{2j} = \gamma_{20} + \gamma_{21}\text{CEE}_j + \gamma_{22}\text{semiPresidential}_j + \zeta_{2j}$$

$$\text{where } \zeta_{0j} \sim N(0, \sigma_0^2), \zeta_{1j} \sim N(0, \sigma_1^2) \text{ and } \zeta_{2j} \sim N(0, \sigma_2^2)$$

as well as the covariances $\rho\sigma_0\sigma_1, \rho\sigma_0\sigma_2, \rho\sigma_1\sigma_2$

Table 5.1: List of countries, elections and prime ministers under study

Country	Election	Prime minister
Austria	2013	Faymann
Croatia	2007	Sanander
Czech Republic	1996	Klaus
	2006	Paroubek
Denmark	1998	N. Rasmussen
	2007	F. Rasmussen
Estonia	2011	Ansip
Finland	2007	Vanhanen
	2011	Kiviniemi
	2015	Stubb
Germany	1998	Kohl
	2005	Schröder
	2009	Merkel
	2013	Merkel
Greece	2009	Karamanlis
	2015	Samaras
Hungary	1998	Horn
Ireland	2007	Ahern
Iceland	1999	Oddsson
	2007	Haarde
	2013	Sigurdardottir
Latvia	2010	Dombrovskis
	2011	Dombrovskis
	2014	Straujuma
Netherlands	1998	Kok
	2006	Balkenende
	2010	Balkenende
Norway	1997	Jagland
	2009	Stoltenberg
	2013	Stoltenberg
Poland	1997	Cimoszewicz
	2007	Kaczyński
	2011	Tusk
Portugal	2002	Guterres
	2009	Sócrates
	2015	Coelho
Romania	2012	Ponta
Slovakia	2010	Fico
	2016	Fico
Slovenia	1996	Drnovsek
	2008	Rop
	2011	Pahor
Spain	1996	González
	2000	Aznar
	2008	Zapatero
Sweden	1998	Persson
	2014	Reinfeldt
United Kingdom	1997	John Major
	2015	Cameron

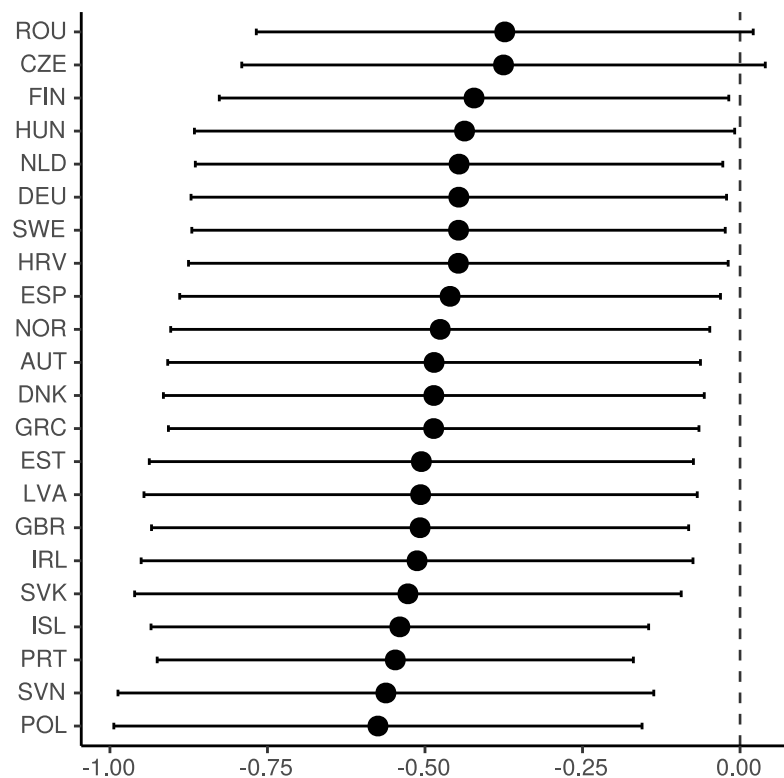


Figure 5.6: Leave-one-out validation of the main model. Estimated median effect of the interaction between other party leaders and Central Eastern Europe on vote choice are displayed by excluded country, 95% confidence intervals.

Table 5.2: Regression Results, generalized linear model with logit link

	Main model	Semi pres. model
Fixed effects		
(Intercept)	-1.30*** (0.27)	-1.52*** (0.30)
Eval. prime minister	2.76*** (0.23)	2.71*** (0.27)
Eval. other leaders	-1.52*** (0.13)	-1.49*** (0.15)
PID PM party	2.64*** (0.05)	2.64*** (0.05)
PID other party	-1.52*** (0.04)	-1.52*** (0.04)
Age	0.05 (0.03)	0.05 (0.03)
Female	0.09** (0.03)	0.09** (0.03)
Education level	-0.06 (0.03)	-0.06 (0.03)
CEE	0.27 (0.42)	0.17 (0.41)
CEE x Eval. prime minister	0.96** (0.37)	0.94* (0.37)
Eval. other leaders x CEE	-0.48* (0.21)	-0.47* (0.22)
Semi pres.		0.58 (0.41)
Eval. prime minister x Semi pres.		0.12 (0.37)
Eval. other leaders x Semi pres.		-0.08 (0.21)
Random effects		
Var: Country (Intercept)	0.95	0.87
Var: Country Eval. prime minister	0.63	0.63
Var: Country Eval. other leaders	0.20	0.19
AIC	29650.31	29654.07
BIC	29800.42	29830.68
Log Likelihood	-14808.15	-14807.04
Num. obs.	50532	50532
Num. countries	22	22

Standard errors in parentheses, *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 5.3: Regression Results, generalized linear model with logit link

	Press freedom model	Party system model
Fixed effects		
(Intercept)	-1.27*** (0.20)	-1.22*** (0.21)
Eval. prime minister	2.89*** (0.04)	2.91*** (0.04)
Eval. other leaders	-1.53*** (0.03)	-1.53*** (0.03)
PID PM party	2.64*** (0.05)	2.64*** (0.05)
PID other party	-1.52*** (0.04)	-1.52*** (0.04)
Age	0.04 (0.03)	0.05 (0.03)
Female	0.09** (0.03)	0.09** (0.03)
Education level	-0.05 (0.03)	-0.05 (0.03)
Press freedom	-0.63 (0.34)	
Eval. prime minister x Press freedom	-0.52*** (0.09)	
Eval. other leaders x Press freedom	0.44*** (0.07)	
System closure		-0.30 (0.35)
Eval. prime minister x System closure		-0.75*** (0.09)
Eval. other leaders x System closure		0.35*** (0.07)
Random effects		
Var: Country (Intercept)	0.77	0.87
AIC	29905.76	29884.53
BIC	30011.73	29990.50
Log Likelihood	-14940.88	-14930.27
Num. obs.	50532	50532
Num. countries	22	22

Standard errors in parantheses, *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Table 5.4: Mean evaluation of prime ministers in the regions (0, dislike - 10, like)

Region	Mean	Standard deviation	Min	Max
Central Eastern Europe	5.04	0.78	3.26	6.44
Western Europe	5.61	0.89	2.32	7.25

Table 5.5: Mean score of media freedom in the regions (0, not free - 1, free)

Region	Mean	Standard deviation	Min	Max
Central Eastern Europe	0.71	0.07	0.58	0.82
Western Europe	0.85	0.08	0.62	0.92

Table 5.6: Mean party system closure score in the regions (0, open - 100, closed)

Region	Mean	Standard deviation	Min	Max
Central Eastern Europe	38.22	9.63	21	53
Western Europe	94.62	2.71	88.5	98.4

Chapter 6

Conclusion

VOTERS hold PMs personally accountable for the government's performance. First, voters change their perception of PMs depending on their perception of government performance, because government performance serves as a valence signal of the PM's governing capabilities. This already leads voters to reward or punish PMs for performance in office. Second, the issue stance of leaders matters, meaning that voters' opinion of PMs and other leaders depend on the likely policy decisions that PMs will make in office. Third, the influence of PMs in parliamentary elections is partly confounded by their performance in office, meaning that voters' choices are partly guided by their motivation to hold PMs accountable at the ballot box.

The central conclusions of this thesis present welcome findings for electoral accountability in parliamentary systems, but also have consequences for our general understanding of electoral behaviour, competition and accountability in these systems. PMs and presidents are more alike than commonly perceived, as their perception among the electorate is driven by evaluations of their performance in office and capability to govern well. In this concluding chapter I describe the consequences of my findings for the existing literature and give an outlook on further research related to electoral behaviour and parliamentary governments.

I divide my conclusion into three thematic sections in which I discuss the implications of my findings for current research, the limitation of these findings and new avenues for research based on the presented evidence. First, I discuss my contribution to the literature on the presidentialisation of voting behaviour in parliamentary elections. Second, I consider the implications of my findings for research on the role of electoral campaigns in presidentialised voting behaviour,

with a specific emphasis on the different incentives for PMs and the competing opposition candidates, as well as what type of leading candidate rational parties may select. Third, I draw my attention to other possible effects of presidentialisation on accountability in parliamentary system – especially with regard to intra-cabinet accountability – and discuss further research on the presidentialisation of prime ministerial accountability.

6.1 Presidentialised Electoral Behaviour

This thesis adds to the ever growing empirical evidence on the influential role of leading candidates in parliamentary elections. Similar to previous studies, I find very considerable effects of voters' perceptions of leading candidates on the propensity to vote for a leader's party. Even accounting for dominant drivers of voting behaviour: party identifications, ideological closeness, feelings towards parties, as well as adding performance assessments of the government that have so far not been considered by the literature, PMs affect vote choices in parliamentary elections. Therefore, the central conclusion of the existing literature on electoral presidentialisation – that leading candidates matter – remains untouched; although my findings suggest that leader effects of PMs might have been overestimated in previous studies. This could in theory affect some of the adjacent conclusions of the literature. For example the finding that leaders of catch-all parties have a higher electoral impact than leaders of mass-based parties, since it is probable that most PMs belong to modern catch-all parties in the ideological centre of the party system. A reassessment could reveal that some of these between-party differences are driven by the overestimated leader effects of PMs. My results also support the prevalent hypothesis in the literature that leading candidates matter more in countries with less institutionalised party systems, in which parties are weaker and voters are less aligned. Studies of presidentialised electoral behaviour have predominantly focused on countries in Western Europe who in general change from an aligned electorate to a dealigned electorate. In contrast, countries in CEE started from dealigned electorates and only some countries in the region have been able to strengthen alignment over time. Therefore, the differences between the two European regions offer further opportunities to assess the role of dealignment and changes in party systems in electoral presidentialisation over time.

The presented evidence also supports the theory that leading candidates matter to voters due to their expected behaviour and performance in office. Voters

will observe the track record of PMs to inform themselves about their governing capabilities. This posits the interesting question what information voters use to assess this character valence in other leading candidates who currently do not hold the position at the top of the cabinet and have in most cases never been PM. Which sources provide voters with a reliable and relatively low-cost signals of the governing capabilities of these candidates? In all likelihood other executive positions like the position as cabinet minister or mayor may provide such signals. Also other positions that involve leadership like a top-level job in business could signal governing capability to voters. In some countries future research might also focus on the prior sub-national political career of leading candidates which might have already led them to executive offices on the state-level. However, these will provide weaker signals, because a political position as major only very roughly resembles a prime ministerial position and in case of prime ministerial positions in sub-national states offices only a portion of the electorate will have first-hand experience of the candidate's performance in the sub-national office.

Previous studies on media and presidentialisation, as well as personalisation, agree that specifically television helps to increase the influence of political persona like PMs and leading candidates; while conclusive evidence on social and other internet-based media is still missing. In light of this moderating factor, the development of more extensive government control over public broadcasters and other outlets of mass communication in CEE is worrying and the presented evidence in Chapter Five provides some first evidence of this problem from the perspective of presidentialised electoral behaviour. Future studies might investigate how media coverage of PMs changes when state control over the media increases in functioning democracies and whether voters who rely heavily on state controlled media sources for their political information, start to differ in their assessment of the PM. It might be possible that in the long-term an increase in governmental control is met by a reverse reaction of citizens to consume more alternative media outlets, especially newer outlets that communicate solely via the internet. Therefore, some of the negative effect of governmental control over state television and other established media outlets might be negated. The recent developments in CEE will certainly provide the empirical data for interesting case and comparative studies on this subject.

However, the drawn conclusions on presidentialised electoral behaviour also face some limitations. First, they mostly rely on observational data and pursuing an

even closer examination of the presented causal mechanism should be the goal of future studies; preferably using natural experiments or other experimental designs. A further path to an even deeper understanding of presidentialised prime ministerial accountability may be provided by qualitative evidence, for example from in-depth interviews which further investigate the reasons for voters' perceptions of PMs and to what extent voters are motivated to hold them to account when they cast their vote at the ballot box.

Second, like many other contributions in the electoral presidentialisation literature this thesis does not provide a solution for the unresolved causal relationship between voters' perceptions of a party – especially when they hold an emotional identification with a party – and their perception of the leading candidate of said party. Consequently, like in many existing studies of presidentialised electoral behaviour the effects of either party identifications, or leading candidates, on vote choice could be overestimated.

On a general level this thesis provides food for thought on the explanatory power of the socio-psychological model of voting behaviour (Campbell et al., 1966). If voting behaviour continues to presidentialise, in the sense that voters' attachment to parties become less important relative to their attachment to and perception of leading candidates, then the socio-psychological model of voting will also continue to lose relevance. The clear benefit of the socio-psychological model rests with its straightforward causal ordering of variables: first voters' socialisation and social background, followed by voters' party identification and lastly short-term factors like issues and candidates. However, this theoretical model offers fewer insights on issues and candidates than rational choice theories of voting. Since party identifications are becoming increasingly less important and candidates more important, these theories of voting – especially valence theories that consider candidate characteristics, campaign aspects and political issues – will provide better explanatory power, because these theories offer a more fine-grained theoretical conception of relevant short-term forces. The erosion of long-term party identifications, even if they are replaced by leader-based 'party' identifications which are likely to be less stable than party identifications based on socialisation, should especially lead to an increased importance of electoral campaigns. In presidentialised elections most voters will be engaged by leading candidates and salient issues during the time of national election campaigns. I have provided evidence on the increased influence of economic issues during campaigns, on strong

changes in issue effects on the perception of leading candidates as well as strong influences of campaigns themselves. Theories of spatial and valence voting provide more developed hypotheses on these campaign related short-term forces than the socio-psychological model. Especially the valence literature, with its findings on candidate characteristics and campaign valence, is well suited to be applied to PMs and leading candidates.

However, to the knowledge of the author, only a few studies have focused on leading candidates and electoral campaigns (Aaldering, 2018; Banducci et al., 2018; Peterson, 2018). Therefore, I discuss the possible directions for further studies on leaders in electoral campaigns in the next section; taking into account the novel findings presented in this thesis.

6.2 Electoral Campaigns and the Prime Minister's Competitors

With regard to the study of leading candidates in electoral campaigns the presented findings strongly suggest that leading candidates can not be viewed as a homogeneous group, but that differences between PMs and the other competing leading candidates have to be taken into account. Unlike PMs other candidates are not directly affected by voters' views on the state of the economy, since they do not provide voters with a signal of their valence. This asymmetric behaviour by voters will make it difficult for opponents of PMs to gain a popularity advantage, when the economy is doing well, since a considerable portion of the electorate will likely hold a positive view of the PM. However, if the majority of voters agree that the economy is failing them, then leading candidates will in all likelihood have an easy time to gain an advantage over the PM. Yet, even under such, for the opposition beneficial economic circumstances, leading candidates can not simply count on a bad economic track record to guarantee such a comparative advantage, because voters will not view them more favourably simply because the economy is not doing well.

This asymmetric situation should provide incentives to PMs to increase the salience of economic issues during economic upturns and decrease their salience during economic downturns, similar to presidential candidates (Hart, 2016). Their opposing candidates should have the reverse interest. Even if they do not benefit directly from the state of the economy they can at least affect voters' perception

of their competitor. Future studies may therefore investigate whether PMs and leading candidates operate strategically, conditional on the economic context, with the selection of issues that they choose to emphasize during the campaign.

The goal of voters is to sanction PMs with bad performance, but their only possibility to achieve this goal is to select an alternative at election day. Consequently, voters' options to actually sanction the current PM are dependent on whether there are actually good alternatives. To ensure electoral accountability it will therefore also be crucial that another leading candidate presents a good alternative to the current PM and that voters are sufficiently able to identify whether another leading candidate would be a good PM. In which way voters can make this judgement about candidates who are currently not PM will influence how efficient presidentialised prime ministerial accountability functions.¹ Therefore, if PMs are able to create enough doubt over the governing capabilities of their opponents among the electorate, or are lucky because their opponents are relatively incompetent, then consequently they might avoid electoral scrutiny to some degree. Future studies might explore whether the degree to which prime ministerial accountability is presidentialised also depends on the electorate's perception of the competence of candidates who would replace the current PM.

In short, the evidence presented in this thesis provides good reasons to expect strategic behaviour patterns of PMs and the opposing leading candidates during parliamentary elections. However, this aspect of presidentialised electoral behaviour has so far not been systematically studied. The subject of leading candidates in election campaigns is especially relevant when one considers the findings presented in Chapter 2: that public perceptions of leading candidates can change quickly and considerably during electoral campaigns, even when controlling for a variety of other explanatory factors. This suggests that significant contributions to the literature on electoral presidentialisation can be made by studying the campaign strategy and behaviour of leading candidates. Nevertheless, the presented evidence on PMs and leading candidates in campaigns should be generalised with caution, because it is derived from the study of campaigns in one European country; although with extensive British panel data. In addition, while Brexit serves as an excellent issue

¹Prime ministerial accountability in parliament faces a similar issue with regard to motions of no confidence, whose effectiveness are de-facto dependent on the availability of a politician who can command the majority in parliament and is willing to become PM. Otherwise the mechanism of no confidence will be in practice irrelevant, because in most countries PMs are only replaced once a successor is selected (Laver and Shepsle, 1999).

to identify time-varying effects in the studied campaigns, in many other campaigns issues will likely be less salient than Brexit. Potentially this leaves more room for party leaders to influence the opinions voters hold on no-salient issues (Bisgaard and Slothuus, 2018), because voters will be more susceptible to elite cues which will influence their opinion on issues that are less salient to them (Mader and Schoen, 2019).

The presented effects of perceived government performance and state of the economy on the perception of PMs suggest that it might be quite beneficial for parties to field a new leading candidate as designated successor of the current PM if performance evaluations of the current government are low. Such a strategy will certainly not help with the party's bad track record among voters, but a new face at the top of the party, most likely from outside the current cabinet, should help to soften the sanctioning vote by the electorate. A new leading candidate who did not participate in the past cabinet might be perceived as more capable among the electorate than the current PM and other members of the past cabinet who performed badly.

One might therefore pose the general question to what extent voters' perception of new leading candidates depend on their party's previous track record in office? If the current PM chooses to not run for another term in office – even though the government is performing satisfactorily – parties might be well advised to either select a successor from the current cabinet members or elect the designated successor of the PM into a cabinet position in order to influence their evaluation among the electorate positively. In contrast, political parties could be more likely to refrain from such actions when the perception of government performance among the electorate is poor. However, a cabinet position may itself be a valence signal to the electorate, because the position signals that the candidate is capable of executive management and the prior office allows leading candidates to point towards their executive experience in an upcoming campaign.

Furthermore, in contrast to PMs, cabinet ministers will not necessarily be perceived as agenda-setters (Angelova, König and Proksch, 2016; Duch and Stevenson, 2013) by voters. In turn, voters will not necessarily reward or punish them for government performance, meaning that parties might select a new prime ministerial candidate into executive office independently of performance. Regardless of the actual mechanism the results of this thesis provide novel departing points to study and explain not only the selection of prime ministerial candidates by parties, but

also the political career of these candidates in the run up to parliamentary elections. The federal system of Germany might grant especially beneficial conditions to test these hypotheses, because a prime ministerial successor for the federal level can also be recruited from the pool of state-level executives in the German states, therefore only a part of the electorate is treated by the performance of the candidate in government at the state level, but all voters should be affected by the general valence signal of past executive experience. Future studies might, in addition, focus on whether political parties and leading candidates seek to shift blame for specific government shortcomings to the outgoing PM and praise for certain successful government policies to the successor. In contrast to the appointment of successors to cabinet positions, such blame shifting behaviour should be conditional on government performance (with an increase of such behaviour under poor performance and a decline under good performance).

6.3 Prime Ministerial Accountability in Parliamentary Systems

In this thesis I have expanded our understanding of the ways in which governments and their members are held to account in parliamentary systems. Therefore, I have addressed concerns stemming from the presidentialisation of parliamentary systems – and more specifically from the presidentialisation of parliamentary elections. Governmental accountability in parliamentary systems has been commonly assessed on the level of political parties as central actors. However, as presidentialisation, as well as personalisation, weaken the central role of parties in these systems, it also becomes necessary for scholars to investigate the accountability of the individual actors, most of all PMs, who take over their central role. With regard to PMs I have shown that electoral accountability in presidential and parliamentary systems works more similarly than is commonly conceptualised. However, the presented findings on the presidentialisation of prime ministerial accountability also face limitations.

First, the relatively short time-frame of this thesis: the earliest studied elections occurred in the 1980s which does not allow to test the presence or absence of a general time-trend of presidentialised prime ministerial accountability. One might rightly ask whether presidentialised prime ministerial accountability is a

reaction of voters to the increasing autonomy and power of PMs in presidentialised parliamentary systems, which should increase their perceived agenda-setting power among voters, or if it the behaviour is inherent to those parliamentary systems in which PMs have always yielded significant influence over government decision making? On the one hand we know from evidence on local executives (Larsen, 2018) that changes in the policy responsibility of local mayors leads voters to also hold them accountable for performance in a new policy field.

Applying this logic to PMs would suggest that over the recent decades voters have reacted to the increasing presidentialisation of parliamentary systems, for example to the rising power of PMs in international negotiations, and that prior to presidentialisation PMs have not been held personally accountable for government performance, because their perceived or real influence over the government's agenda was lower. With regard to this question Norpoth and Gschwend (2003) make the interesting observation that in German federal elections the chancellor bonus (the difference between voters' intention to hypothetically vote the PM directly into office and their intention to vote for the party of the PM) changed from a more or less constant bonus prior to the 1970s to varying bonuses and sometimes to a chancellor 'penalty' beginning in the 1970s. This indicates that German PMs have been constantly evaluated more positively than their parties in earlier decades, but that their perception has become more mutable in recent decades. Such a change could be well explained by an increase in presidentialisation that led to a performance dependent perception of German chancellors among the electorate and therefore to more fluctuation in these perceptions.

On the other hand the reward and punishment mechanism of voting discussed in this thesis is not necessarily tied to any development over time and considering studies that show that leading candidates have always been important (Bittner, 2018a; Garzia, Ferreira da Silva and De Angelis, 2018) would suggest that prime ministerial accountability in parliamentary systems might have always been presidentialised to some degree. Even before television, as major source of political information, and dealignment have contributed to the presidentialisation of electoral behaviour, government performance may have signalled governing capabilities of PMs to the electorate. After all the success of a PM's government, in terms of economic performance and policy enactment, should be one of the more direct and low-cost signals of their capabilities. However, it might be possible that in previous decades voters have either predominantly relied on other signals of PM's governing capabilities like their political career or professional background – characteristics

which are time-invariant – and to lesser extent on the track record of their government, or they have not seen PMs as major agenda-setters and have therefore refrained from using government performance as a valence signal. Even with the often limited number of parliamentary election surveys in the 1950s and 1960s future research may try to investigate how far back in time PMs have been held personally accountable for the performance of their government.

In addition, in Chapter 4 I have provided indicative evidence, that the degree of presidentialised prime ministerial accountability depends on the institutional powers of PMs. This is plausible, as voters would likely adapt the degree to which they perceive the agenda-setting power of PMs based on the constitutionally enshrined powers of PMs over their cabinet and therefore control over government performance. In turn, the degree to which governmental performance signals the PM's capabilities is adjusted. However, these initial results should be extended to a greater variety of countries. For such studies categorizations of prime ministerial power provided for example by King (1994) and O'Malley (2007) will be useful. Nevertheless, voters' perceptions of prime ministerial power over the agenda of the government may differ from the experts' judgements or constitutional rules employed in such studies.

If the debate is to be moved forward, a better understanding of how voters form their perception of agenda-setting power needs to be developed. Previous studies have predominantly focused on what determines the perceived agenda-setting power of political parties (Duch, Przepiorka and Stevenson, 2015; Duch and Stevenson, 2013). It would also be fruitful to implement a valid and reliable survey measure of voters' perception of agenda-setting power by the PM. With regard to the perceived agenda-setting power of PMs in the electorate various factors could matter. For instance the frequency of questioning of the PM by the legislature as well as the format may matter. A large public plenary scrutiny of PMs in parliament which provides television networks with ample footage of the PM may contribute to their perceived agenda power. Currently, only in some European democracies are PMs questioned as individuals by parliamentary plenaries or committees. In many other European democracies the government is questioned collectively, meaning that PMs often have the possibility to avoid attendance or let other cabinet members answer questions (Serban, 2019). For instance the attendance of the German chancellor for questioning by parliament was not obligatory until very recently (2018), and in comparison to the PM's questions in the British parliament the prime ministerial

questioning of the German chancellor is very infrequent (three times a year). It is plausible to expect that a direct questioning of the PM in parliament will strengthen voters' impressions of the PM's agenda-setting powers. Lastly, the content of public questioning of the PM will matter as well. Bates et al. (2012) provide evidence that over time PMs in the United Kingdom have to answer question on a greater variety of policy issues. In all likelihood the questioning of PMs on a greater variety of policies will increase the chance that voters form the impression that PMs hold extensive control over the government's agenda.

A further important factor that could plausibly influence the public perception of PM's agenda-setting power is their control over their party – best exemplified by party leadership. Many PMs simultaneously hold the position of formal head of their party, but this is not the case for all PMs and in a few instances PMs also lose their position as party head at some point in their prime ministerial tenure. If PMs lose their position as party head, while remaining in office, then they may also lose power over the agenda of their government, either in real terms or at least in the perception of voters, because the new head of their political party will seek to exert some influence over the agenda pursued by their party in government which will lower voters' perception of the PM's agenda-setting power.

In short, similar to the presidentialisation in cabinets, parties and parliamentary elections, the presidentialisation of prime ministerial accountability is likely to be constrained by the constitutional setting, but the degree might very well vary over time as voters' perception of prime ministerial agenda-setting powers will vary between individual PMs and due to the presidentialisation of parliamentary systems could have increased over time. Future studies should gather data on voters' perception of agenda-setting powers of individual members of parliamentary cabinets to move research on electoral accountability forward.

Second, Tony Blair remains as a rather deviant case for which only a limited explanation could be provided. A more detailed, comparative analysis of Blair faces the difficulty to find comparable PMs with plausibly similar degrees of presidentialisation. However, so far the literature does not provide a clear measurement of the actual influence PMs yield over decision making in cabinets and political parties and does not as clearly identify other PMs as presidential as in the case of Blair. On the electoral level Blair clearly deviates by the fact that the inclusion of voters' feelings towards him leads to statistically insignificant effects of government performance on vote choice – a pattern that is unusual and not observed for any other PM under

study. Therefore, I remain confident that the absence of a confounding effect of government performance on voters' evaluation of Blair does not necessarily mean that Blair was not held to account for government performance. Nevertheless, the fact that a clear comparative case could not be identified means that caution has to be applied to this conclusion.

Third, one minor assumption of the presented evidence on presidentialised prime ministerial accountability is that voters can more or less clearly identify that the PM's party will also choose to re-elect the PM. However, in some cases this assumption may not be met, for example when intra-party factions are strongly divided over the candidate for the next parliamentary election. Since voters' expectation of this behaviour could not be included in the analysis, some lower degrees in presidentialised accountability (e.g. Denmark) could in theory be ascribed to such uncertainty. Nevertheless, in all likelihood these intra-party conflicts will be resolved at the election day and voters will have a relatively clear expectation of the politician a party will bring forward as PM after the election.

Fourth, Chapter 3 & 4 pose the question whether voters use of government performance as a signal of governing capability will lead to adequate results? After all voters might over- or underestimate the actual influence of PMs on governmental outcomes. Government performance might in reality largely depend on the work and the qualities of cabinet ministers, even if voters are under the impression that PMs contribute substantially to the government's performance. Investigations into the adequacy of presidentialised prime ministerial accountability should be of considerably interest and an adequate assignment will undoubtedly foster the functioning of electoral accountability. However, such assignments of adequacy face multiple problems: decision making in cabinets can not be observed directly and minutes from cabinet meetings only give very scarce information on the origins of government outcomes and actual prime ministerial influence on these outcomes. This makes the individual contribution of PMs to the passing of government legislation difficult to assess. As Schumpeter (2003, 251) already alludes PMs can also be seen as 'scapegoats' to which voters or intra-party rivals can attach blame for negative governmental outcomes, because the public would only have incomplete knowledge about the actual culprits.

While I argue that in the face of presidentialised elections the presidentialisation of prime ministerial accountability should be seen as a positive aspect, it could in

theory also lead to the unjustified punishment of PMs. However, especially voters' punishment of PMs with poor government performance should likely be adequate and foster electoral accountability, because even if PMs are not responsible for poor performance or the misbehaviour of individual cabinet members, they should certainly be judged on how well they deal with such situations. If PMs do not prevent misbehaviour of individual cabinet members or avoid negative outcomes for the electorate – even if these outcomes do not originate from the PM's agenda – by controlling their cabinet, or even dismissing cabinet ministers who misuse their office for their own private benefit, then we expect rational voters to re-assess the capability of the PM for office.

More generally some findings from this thesis may be applied to the concept of *personalisation* and therefore extend beyond PMs to members of parliament or cabinet ministers. If under a general personalisation of politics in elections and within political parties, individual members of parties are perceived as individuals with influence over decision making in the cabinet, or over legislative outcomes in general, by various electorates, then personalisation may also lead to increased personalised accountability. For example, local constituents might be more likely to hold their locally elected MP accountable for a wider set of party policies or citizens will be more likely to hold individual cabinet ministers to account – opposed to holding the political party collectively to account. In all likelihood media reporting will play a major role in such cases to shape voters' expectations of actors with power over political agendas. If media institutions often report on particular cabinet ministers and their policy projects, especially if ministers encourage this behaviour in order to highlight their own influential status in national politics for potential electoral or career advantages. It will be likely that many, especially less politically sophisticated, voters do not actually know the politicians who hold a post as cabinet minister, and are only familiar with the PM and the cabinet parties. Therefore, whether individual cabinet ministers are held to account may predominantly depend on the presence of widely visible media reporting. For example, when scandals or particular grievous mismanagements of cabinet ministers are uncovered. In such cases voters are likely to know the involved ministers.

Future studies that investigate voters' assignment of accountability to individual cabinet ministers would constitute a significant contribution to the issue of governmental accountability. Few is known about how voters assign responsibility to the individual ministers in parliamentary governments and under what conditions

voters might assign more responsibility to them than to the other members of the cabinet. To date research has almost exclusively focused on responsibility attribution to parliamentary parties, and the moderating effects of coalition contexts, but neglected which individual politicians voters identify as responsible actors.

It might also be worthwhile to leverage the specific institutional design of semi-parliamentary systems, for example Australia, for further insights on voters' desire to hold PMs to account. In these types of parliamentary systems one may compare voters' behaviour in elections for the legislative chamber which has to provide confidence to the PM with their behaviour in elections to the other legislative chamber which does not have to provide confidence to the PM. These settings provide the opportunity to analyse within-person voting behaviour under two institutional settings of which only one allows voters to influence the selection of the PM. Contrasting individual assignment of accountability to cabinet members with assignment of collective accountability to government parties and the correlation between both will help us to better understand voters' behaviour in parliamentary elections.

In this thesis I have focused on prime ministerial accountability in the electoral arena to address concerns over the presidentialisation of parliamentary systems. However, there are other arenas of prime ministerial accountability in which PMs can be deselected or face consequences for their actions in office: within parliament, within the PM's party, within the cabinet by coalition partners and by the media. Since presidentialisation hypothesises an increasing autonomy of PMs in their own party and in their cabinet it may be the case that accountability will be progressively challenged in these arenas, similar to the discussed challenge by charismatic PMs in the electoral arena. Analysing the various arenas in which PMs can be held to account jointly under the framework of presidentialisation could provide fruitful extensions of our understanding of contemporary changes in parliamentary systems. Members of parliament for instance should be more likely to withdraw support from the PM if the likelihood that they will face electoral consequences by the electorate for supporting the PM increases. This likelihood itself should be correlated with the degree of presidentialised prime ministerial accountability, because the greater voters' motivation to hold the PM to account, the greater the likelihood of electoral consequences for members of parliament who support the PM. This will most likely be the case if members of parliament are elected in districts, opposed to party lists.

The presidentialisation of prime ministerial accountability and parliamentary

elections should also make the de-selection of PMs without a simultaneous change in the composition of government parties more likely. If PMs are progressively seen as central electoral appeal in elections, as well as responsible for the performance of their government, than the de-selection of PMs who are not liked by voters and whose government performance is evaluated poorly can be electorally beneficial for parties at the next election – while at the same time parties can avoid to prematurely loose control over their government offices. However, since in presidentialised democracies PMs will also gain more autonomy within their political party, often fostered by the popular selection of prime ministerial candidates by all party members, they might counteract these increasing electoral incentives connected with their de selection.

Besides prime ministerial questioning in the plenary, parliaments may design further, or reform current, means through which they can hold PMs to account, for example by designating a parliamentary committee to scrutinize the PM and making the appearance of the PM obligatory (Kelso, Bennister and Larkin, 2016). This could – especially in a non-public setting in which members of the PM's party do not feel pressured to maintain the image of party unity for the benefit of the media – help members of parliament to scrutinise PMs with increasing autonomy from their party and cabinet.

The media is a further arena that will affect the extent of presidentialised prime ministerial accountability. Media outlets inform voters on the policy and economic performance of the government. In this regard increased government control over the media is worrying and could reduce electoral accountability, because government will seek positive media reporting, regardless of actual performance. If such increased media control detaches voters' perception of PMs from government performance, or perceptions of government performance from actual government outcomes, electoral accountability will be disrupted. The recent developments in CEE discussed in this thesis are especially worrying and deserve further detailed investigations. Presidentialisation paired with governmental media control will likely provide windows of opportunity to PMs with authoritarian tendencies to de-democratise their countries.

Notwithstanding the limitations discussed in the preceding paragraphs, a key strength of this thesis is its use of a variety of electoral surveys that enable a comparison of different elections in a large number of European countries to limit the danger of a selection bias. Furthermore, the presented evidence is not only

based on cross-sectional data, but also uses panel data that covers considerable time periods, as well as the use of a natural experiment to support the assumed causal direction between voters' evaluations of PMs and government performance. Therefore, this thesis offers a significant and empirically well-founded contribution to our understanding of electoral accountability in parliamentary systems.

This thesis lays the groundwork for future research into the relationship between electoral presidentialisation and prime ministerial accountability. I have developed and tested the concept of presidentialised prime ministerial accountability: the degree to which voters hold PMs personally to account for government performance. While this extension of prime ministerial accountability is a welcome finding for the working of representative democracy, more work will need to be done to assess the challenges of presidentialisation to party government and accountability in parliamentary systems.

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