

Crisis and Convergence:

How the Combination of a Weak Economy and Mainstream Party Ideological
Depolarisation Fuels Anti-System Support



Zack Grant

St John's College

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Abstract

When do radical parties gain support?

Previous studies cite the importance of economic hardship and mainstream party ideological convergence. Responding to earlier inconsistent findings regarding these two factors, I provide evidence for an interactive approach to understanding the growth of ‘anti-system parties’. These radical outsiders are most likely to succeed when mainstream parties are simultaneously presiding over an ailing economy and failing to provide the diversity of political opinion necessary for the electorate to meaningfully challenge the policies associated with this malaise, through which dissatisfaction with the status quo could otherwise be channelled. The mainstream party establishment is most vulnerable when it is no longer supplying valued outputs *or* inputs to the political process.

This thesis presents four empirical studies designed to test this ‘crisis and convergence’ model. First, drawing on data from over 350 elections in 22 advanced Western democracies across an extended time period, I demonstrate that the anti-system vote is greatest during times of negative economic growth and widespread mainstream party ideological depolarisation. Second, using a combined individual-level dataset of over 70 national-election surveys, I show that personal perceptions of mainstream party convergence are themselves more closely related to anti-system voting when the macroeconomy is sickly. Mainstream party homogeneity radicalises the economic vote and strengthens anti-system challengers. The final two studies corroborate these findings by explicitly testing the crucial underlying assumption that individuals’ perceptions of the uniqueness of mainstream parties are not mere products of partisan rationalisation. Evidence from a multiyear panel dataset in Britain and an original survey experiment conducted in Germany suggests that perceptions of mainstream party similarities are as, if not more, likely to *cause* a reduction in one’s strength of feeling towards mainstream parties than be *caused by* this dealignment.

This thesis concludes with a thorough summary of these results, as well as a discussion of potential caveats and grounds for future research. The ‘crisis and convergence’ model is judged to be worthy of consideration in future conversations about the factors that have led to our current political climate of volatile voters and stuttering centrist parties.

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Introduction

In recent decades, the once high institutionalised party systems of the West have begun to unravel. Relative to their mid-twentieth century predecessors, contemporary voters are less likely to identify with a single political party (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; Dassonneville, Hooghe, and Vanhoutte 2012; Fieldhouse et al. 2020: 51–55; Mair 2013: 35), more likely to switch between parties at successive elections (Bischoff 2013; Dassonneville 2015; Drummond 2006; Fieldhouse et al. 2000: 9-14; Mair 2013: 33), and more prone to negative evaluations of government as a whole (Armingeon and Guthmann 2014; Catterberg and Moreno 2006; OECD 2017).

Who has benefited from these patterns of distrust and dealignment? The exact answer varies from country to country: from populist mavericks in Italy, to the nativists of northern Europe; from secessionists in Scotland and Belgium, to the resurrected radical left in southern Europe; from Eurosceptic challengers in the United Kingdom, to the insurgent Icelandic Pirate Party. Recent elections have been punctuated by the successes of a heterogenous mix of parties who stand outside the governing mainstream, and fundamentally challenge the legitimacy of the dominant norms, values, practices, actors, or boundaries of their political community (Zulianello 2018). While the specific ideology or character of these parties might differ, nearly every advanced Western parliamentary democracy has witnessed the rise of some form of radical political entrepreneur exploiting the growing coolness towards the establishment in the past few decades.

The growth of radical political ‘outsiders’ tends to be problematised, and these recent surges

have been heralded by numerous think pieces warning of imminent threats to democratic institutions and economic stability (e.g. Kyle and Mounk 2018; Isa 2018; Rogoff 2018). Defection to such parties may also be considered troubling, not because of a negative value judgement on their policies per se, but because, without compromise from someone, this will undermine the ability of parties to form workable coalitions. Of course, rising support for anti-system candidates also indicates a growing incongruity between the basic preferences and assumptions of the governing ‘pro-system’ elites and those of the wider electorate. A scenario which could potentially have adverse consequences for the functioning and legitimacy of democratic politics itself.

It is, therefore, important to ask: What exactly determines the popularity of such parties? Most previous attempts to answer this question have two notable limitations. First, they tend to only focus on one particular party family or another and, in particular, there is an overwhelming publication bias towards the so-called ‘radical right’ (Mudde 2016: 2). This does not reflect the true range of alternatives available for voters looking to express their disillusionment with the establishment (Abedi 2002: 557). Second, there is a tendency to analyse the effects of demand- and supply-side factors as separate phenomena (Golder 2016: 490-491). The former are the grievances that stimulate desire for radical shifts in policy or modes of representation; the latter are the political opportunity structures that determine whether these latent sentiments actually coalesce around a viable anti-system party, get co-opted by pre-existing parties, or simply go unrepresented (Eatwell 2003). Simply put, most prior studies examine either socioeconomic disturbances or how parties position themselves in their attempts to attract support (and/or how other political institutions complicate this task). Looking at either of these factors in isolation is problematic.

For example, a demand-side grievance that is often linked to the spread of political radicalism is a weak economy. Recessions tend to be associated with many unpleasant experiences for the electorate, most notably rising unemployment and income stagnation (Hurd and Rohwedder 2010; Singer 2018). These problems may well have the potential to undermine the legitimacy of the established constitutional order as far as more output-oriented citizens are concerned (Przeworski et al. 1996). Conversely, increasing prosperity may well diminish the appeal of attempting sweeping changes to the system, given that the opportunity-costs of any political uncertainty are significantly greater in such circumstances (Brückner and Grüner 2010: 2–3).

However, it is somewhat unclear why downturns should produce mass defections to radical anti-system challengers, rather than the simple rotation of voters from mainstream incumbent to mainstream opposition parties that is described in conventional models of economic voting (e.g. Duch and Stevenson 2008: 50; Key 1966; Kramer 1971; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2000; Whitten and Palmer 1999). In severe recessions, parties without a prior history in government, or the constraining likelihood of actually having to carry out their promises, can more credibly claim non-responsibility for current hardships and be more radical in proposing resolutions (Hobolt and Tilley 2016: 972–74). That said, it seems equally plausible that, given the gravity of the situation, a risk-averse public might simply re-elect established politicians with substantial experience of navigating government, rather than leap into uncharted waters with a political novice. Research comparing radical party performances to economic conditions has yielded mixed results. While some studies report a positive association (Arzheimer 2009; Brückner and Grüner 2010; van der Brug, Fennema, and Tillie 2005; Hobolt and Tilley 2016; March and Rommerskirchen 2015), many others

have found null or even negative relationships (Abedi 2002; Arzheimer and Carter 2006; Knigge 1998; Lubbers, Merove, and Peer 2002; Spies and Franzmann 2011).

Such variation concerning the economy could instead suggest that supply-side factors are crucial, given their role in either affording or denying political entrepreneurs the opportunity to exploit latent anti-establishment sentiment. An obvious example is mainstream party behaviour. Anti-system parties may canvass the electorate more successfully when established politicians reduce the range of their ideological appeals. This logic was memorably laid out by Downs (1957). When established parties of the left and right converge on the median voter, who is usually assumed to be a centrist, they create a vacuum of unrepresented political preferences that can be usurped by parties positioned at the extremes (Hainsworth 1992: 11). However, the evidence that mainstream party depolarisation triggers anti-establishment reactions is, once again, inconclusive. Some studies show a positive association (Abedi 2002; Carter 2005; Hino 2012; Kitschelt and McGann 1995; Spies and Franzmann 2011; Spoon and Klüver 2019), others do not (Arzheimer and Carter 2006; Bustikova 2014; Ignazi 2003; Lubbers, Merove, and Peer 2002; Norris 2005).

Part of the problem is that the existing literature cannot fully explain when factors such as the economy or the ideological convergence of political elites become relevant in terms of the decision to vote for a radical party. In response to this puzzle, I propose a new model of electoral behaviour to help explain variation in support for so-called ‘anti-system parties’. That is, parties that seek fundamental changes to the dominant norms, values, practices, and selection criteria for government, and have never undertaken visible cooperative interactions

with those governing parties (Sartori 1976; Zulianello 2018). To do this, I draw heavily upon both traditional theories of economic voting, as well as regional studies of the Latin American political experience during the late twentieth century, neither of which have been cited much in discussions of recent political radicalism in Europe and other advanced democracies. I premise my model on the idea that contradictory findings concerning the impact of the economy and mainstream policy offers may suggest a yet unappreciated degree of contingency surrounding the link between crisis, mainstream party positions, and the rise of anti-system parties.

As I have discussed, research on radical parties often describes bad economic conditions – rising unemployment, low growth, high inflation etc. – to be conducive to the growth of new and extreme parties. However, most descriptions of the economic vote conclude after noting the tendency of citizens to punish incumbent governments by abandoning them at the next election (e.g. Dassonneville and Lewis-Beck 2019; Duch 2007; Duch and Stevenson 2008; Key 1966; Kramer 1971). Little attention is paid to where, specifically, voters then move to (see van der Brug, van der Eijk, and Franklin 2007: 193–194). The implications of the radical party and economic voting literatures are, therefore, somewhat contradictory. One expects radical parties to profit from material hardships; the other expects conventional anti-incumbent voting where, one would assume, the mainstream opposition party is best placed to profit due to their greater visibility and experience in office. Voters can, in fact, respond in many different ways to economic crisis. They can move left, right, to anti-establishment populists, just punish the incumbent, or abstain altogether (Margalit 2019: 284–288). However, there have been few prior attempts to specify the conditions under which voters choose one of these options over the other.

Answers to these questions can, however, be found in the extensive literature on the breakdown of mainstream parties in Latin America during the 1980s and 1990s. To summarise very briefly, after a particularly severe debt crisis, many countries in the region were effectively forced to undertake policies of fiscal consolidation (such as the privatisation of state industries or welfare retrenchment) in return for financial relief by international creditors (Agarwal and Sengupta 1999; Doyle 2012). On some occasions these policies were inconsistent with the traditional appeals made by the incumbent centre-left parties that were entrusted to implement them (Lupu 2016; Morgan 2011; Roberts 1995, 2013; Seawright 2012; Stokes 2001). These actions diluted the ‘party brands’ – the images of what each party stands for – in the minds of their supporters, leading to a mass reduction in partisan attachment to established political actors (Lupu 2014). There were two major consequences. First, parties were no longer offering sufficient electoral choice to allow voters to challenge policies that many saw as economically harmful. Second, these parties could no longer weather economic shocks by relying on the consistent supporter base that had stuck with them through previous difficulties. When the next economic downturn hit, and voters perceived there to be few mainstream actors as on ‘their side’, the door was left open for radical challengers – such as Evo Morales and Hugo Chávez – to almost completely usurp the traditional centre-left and right’s newly dealigned supporters (Lupu 2016).

These patterns of economic hardship, restrictions of political choice, the waning power of establishment forces, and the rise of radical new voices, would be familiar to observers of advanced democracies such as Greece, Spain, and Italy, in the aftermath of the recent financial and Eurozone crises. For instance, there are obvious parallels between the roles played by Washington and International Monetary Fund [IMF] creditors in Latin America, and that of the ‘European troika’ (the European Commission, European Central Bank and,

again, the IMF) in effectively mandating the adoption of austerity policies in the aforementioned countries in exchange for the bailouts and additional loans needed to prop-up their weak national finances (Bosco and Verney 2012; Copelovitch, Frieden, and Walter 2016; Hermann 2014; Roberts 2017). And, once again, in many of these countries it fell to leftist parties to begin implementing these reforms, leading to a ‘neoliberal convergence’ between the traditional parties of government, and few establishment figures voicing opposition to the policies associated with widespread economic pain (Roberts 2017). Subsequent elections in many of these countries saw mainstream parties punished collectively, regardless of whether in office or opposition (Giuliani and Massari 2017; Hernández and Kriesi 2016). Latin America’s past looks, in many ways, like Europe’s present. That said, so far, there has been no systematic large-N study aimed at identifying a combined effect of mainstream depolarisation and economic hardship upon radical party prominence.

In order to understand variation in the success of radical parties, I explicitly specify the impact of economic turmoil and mainstream party convergence in interactive, rather than additive terms. Support for anti-system candidates is a response to an underperforming and irresponsive political system characterised by an ailing economy *and* the absence of the diversity of political opinion needed for the electorate to meaningfully challenge the policies associated with this malaise. The coincidence of these two factors is crucial. Without the appearance of similarity between the traditional ruling parties, dissatisfaction with incumbent policy outputs could simply be channelled through a mainstream opposition party, rather than boosting radicals outside the establishment. If, however, the largest parties are in broad ideological agreement, one’s chances of challenging the policy paradigm that may have led to, exacerbated, or at least failed to alleviate the current crisis are less likely to

be improved by simply moving from one established party to another. In such cases, a voter may become more receptive to a radical actor's message that they are the only 'real opposition' in town¹. This interaction of demand and supply must be appreciated in order to fully distinguish between the conventional economic vote – that is, rotation between established mainstream alternatives – from the 'fleeing of the centre' witnessed in the aftermath of the recent economic and financial crises (Hobolt and Tilley 2016). The statement and test of this theory, which I term the 'crisis and convergence' model of anti-system party success, are the main contributions of this thesis.

After taking time to explicitly define anti-system parties, as well as to sketch out my theory in more detail, the first two empirical chapters of this thesis, Chapters Three and Four overall, test my model using two different datasets. The first models the aggregate anti-system vote in 393 elections in 22 advanced parliamentary democracies in the post-Second World War era. The second analyses the behaviour of individual voters interviewed in four waves of national election surveys overseen by the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems [CSES] project between 1996 and 2016 using multilevel regression. At the aggregate-level, the relationship between low and negative growth in per capita gross domestic product [GDP] and the anti-system vote share is much stronger where mainstream parties have converged ideologically (measured using manifesto data). At the individual-level, those who view mainstream parties as more similar are more likely to vote for an anti-system alternative when the national economy is doing badly. It does not matter whether one measures

¹ This interactive theory also helps explain why mainstream party ideological depolarisation alone might not necessarily boost anti-system parties. If two parties have converged on similar policies but growth remains buoyant, voters may actually appreciate that establishment forces have agreed upon a 'winning formula' for economic management. It is only when the perceived products of this consensus turn stale that voters might look to an outsider to bring new ideas to the table.

mainstream party convergence objectively or subjectively: the pattern and link to anti-system support is the same.

The exact causal relationship between abandoning, for example, an established social democratic party, and coming to believe that said party is not meaningfully different from its long-time conservative rival, is potentially ambiguous. It could be that partisan sentiment leads to a self-deceptive rationalisation, which makes individual voters project their favoured political team towards a ‘special’ or ‘unique’ location in their party system, far away from the sinister spot staked out by their opponents. Once the relationship between party and voter sours (because of the former’s poor economic management, ugly leadership candidate, or any number of reasons exogenous to ideological position), this ‘perceptual screen’ (Campbell et al. 1960) is shattered, and voters come to see their old party as not so very different from the whole host of rivals competing for their support. Perceptions of convergence might lag the breakdown of partisan attachments, rather than precede them.

In the second half of this thesis, I demonstrate that perceptions of ideological depolarisation can be considered a *cause of* weakened attachments to mainstream parties, rather than merely being *caused by* voters falling out of love with the political establishment. In Chapters Five and Six, I make use of a very rich online panel dataset from Great Britain and an original survey experiment from Germany, respectively. The evidence from Britain is emphatic. Observation of the same respondents over several years reveals two things. First, changing perceptions of where the two largest parties in the country stand ideologically clearly affects later levels of support for anti-system alternatives. Second, prior perceptions of mainstream party convergence generally exert a bigger effect on subsequent levels of attachment to those

parties than vice versa. The survey experiment, which randomly exposed certain respondents to information suggesting that the mainstream parties in Germany were more or less similar, does not find evidence for a direct treatment effect on support for populist parties. However, I do find that supporters of the major centre-left party de-emphasise the strength of their attachment once evidence of ideological depolarisation is absorbed, corroborating my findings from the observational datasets.

These four empirical chapters are clearly complementary. The first highlights the broad applicability of my theory. The proposed relationship is not restricted to a specific time-period, sequence of events, or select few countries. The second provides supporting evidence for the robustness of its assumptions by scrutinising the individual-level motivations assumed to be driving the relationship, which aggregate-data alone cannot observe. This is achieved, again, while looking at a wide variety of elections. The third and fourth chapters only look at two particular countries over a short time-period, but they adopt more rigorous research designs and statistical methods that allow me to be more confident the identification of cause and effect.

The data analysed in each chapter move from aggregated election returns, to specific survey respondents, and then to the direct probing of causal mechanisms in an experimental setting. This methodological pluralism ensures that, as each chapter passes, a gain in internal validity (i.e. a reduction in the number of possible confounding variables) compensates any potential loss in external validity (i.e. generalisability) due to the narrower focus on ever smaller groups of individuals. Consequently, this research design offer inferences about anti-system

support which both apply to a great variety of cases, and are highly robust in terms of identifying the underlying causal mechanisms at work.

My hypotheses are not validated by every piece of data in this thesis, and there are, of course, several important caveats to my findings. That said, the majority of my results do provide evidence for, at the very least, the strong plausibility of my ‘crisis and convergence’ theory. This model of political change, together with the literature on economic voting behaviour and Latin American history that inspired it, deserves consideration in future discussions about the decline of mainstream parties and the rise of their radical challengers in advanced democracies. The thesis also raises several normative questions about the generalisability of talk of ‘pernicious polarisation’ (McCoy and Somer 2019), and the dangers to civility, legislative productivity, and trust in government posed by growing distance between parties (Lee 2015), gleaned mainly from the US experience. Perhaps some party systems are instead suffering from ‘too little’ ideological diversity, which can have its own consequences for representation, government responsiveness, and the stability of political competition (particularly during times of external crisis, like an economic downturn). Maybe there is, in fact, a ‘sweet spot’ of party polarisation, in which voters’ hopes and frustrations can be channelled through the political mainstream without a decline in the quality of governance or mass defection to anti-system candidates. I conclude with a detailed discussion of these ideas, as well as highlighting the ways in which this project could be extended by future research.

I begin, however, with a brief discussion of what I mean by an ‘anti-system party’, and chart the rise of these radical outsiders across advanced democracies in the past few decades.

Chapter One – What are Anti-System Parties?

Abstract

In this chapter, I justify my adoption of Zulianello's (2018) typological revision of Sartori's (1976) concept of 'anti-system party'. Zulianello has two independent criteria for 'anti-systemness': '*ideological radicalness*' and a lack of '*systemtic integration*'. That is, seeking changes to the dominant norms, values, practices, and selection criteria for government, rather than merely a change in that government *per se* (Sartori 1976: 132–33), and never having undertaken visible cooperative interactions with mainstream parties. I operationalise this typology and classify all parties competing in advanced Western democracies between 1950 and 2016 accordingly. I present descriptive statistics showing that the ideologically diverse anti-system 'party family' has had, on average, more success in the past several years than at almost any point since the Second World War. Subsequent chapters ask why.

Introduction

What, if anything, connects the One Nation Party of Australia, Canada's Bloc Québécois, the Communist Party of Greece [KKE], De Gaulle's Fourth Republic Rally of the French People [RPF], the German Green Party during the 1980s, and the contemporary Five Star Movement of Italy?

Ideologically, very little. On first appearance, this assortment of radical right, separatist, communist, conservative, Green, and doctrinally amorphous populist parties appear to have far more dividing than uniting them.

Alternatively, perhaps, 'size' or 'newness' is the commonality? However, one cannot easily

draw parallels between the above parties in terms of their historical significance. While some languished in relative obscurity and isolation for decades (the KKE), others made a rapid breakthrough before fading away gradually (Bloc Québécois) or swiftly (One Nation); the remainder joined the political mainstream, either by reshaping it to their will (RPF), or through compromise and acquiescence to the logic, norms, and values of the pre-existing establishment (the German Greens). Indeed, variation in the success rate of these ‘types’ of parties is the central question of this thesis.

The connection could, instead, be an origin outside of the mainstream party establishment. That said, does this entail no difference from any of the other long-standing entrepreneurial parties dedicated to pensioners, centrism, agrarian workers, or ethno-linguistic minorities - to say nothing of the aptly named, single-issue Australian ‘HEMP’ and ‘Sex’ parties - hoovering up modest vote shares throughout Western party systems? Why were the aforementioned parties all treated as a threat to the established political order (see Abedi 2004: 33-34; 39-40; 44; 48; Bordignon and Ceccarini 2013; Tsakatika and Eleftheriou 2013) while other small, young, non-mainstream actors escaped these suspicions?

Some combination of ‘non-establishment’ status and the ‘radicalness’ of their goals unites these parties. That is not to say that these goals are necessarily the same; merely that they all pose fundamental challenges to the prevailing assumptions, norms, priorities, and values of their political systems to an extent that other ‘non-mainstream’ parties that just aim to represent certain occupational or ethnic minority groups or alter specific policies, clearly do not. Their aim is transformation rather than adaptation.

Empirical studies of the support for such parties require practical and transparent methods of operationalising ‘anti-’ (as opposed to merely ‘non-’) mainstream sentiment. This chapter reviews previous attempts, before adopting and defending Zulianello’s (2018) extension of Sartori’s (1976) conception of the ‘anti-system party’. I then present variation in the over-time and inter-country popularity of these radicals, before providing a theoretical explanation for these inequalities and submitting this hypothesis to empirical testing in future chapters.

Previous Approaches to Defining Radicals Parties

There have been two main approaches to distinguishing the establishment from its various opponents. You can divide parties into ideological subgroups or, more holistically, you can separate them on the basis of non-ideological properties or functional similarities.

The party family approach

The conventional approach to the study of unconventional parties is to disaggregate them into ‘families’ based on perceived shared ideology or foundational heritage (Von Beyme 1985; Mair and Mudde 1998). ‘Unconventionality’ here usually denotes a party’s exogeneity to the social cleavages and historical processes that gave birth to most of the liberal, conservative, social democratic, Christian democratic, and agrarian party families that long dominated Western party systems (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Rose and Unwin 1970). The terms ‘Green’, ‘radical left’, and ‘radical right’ are the most commonly used groupings, which denote those parties which afford the greatest salience to issues relating to the environment, the failures of contemporary capitalism, and immigration and national identity, respectively. Germany’s Green Party, Greece’s SYRIZA, and France’s National Front are archetypes of each.

The ‘party family’ approach has its merits. Many studies suggest that the supporters of, say, the radical left and right are actually quite different in respect to their education, gender, occupational class, and social attitudes (Gomez, Morales, and Ramiro 2016; Hieda 2018; Rooduijn et al. 2017). These distinctions are reflected in some notable policy disagreements. For instance, the radical right are well-known for their dislike of multiculturalism and support for restrictive immigration policies (Mudde 2007); the Greens (Poguntke 1987: 9) and radical left (Keith and McGowan 2014) are far more liberal. Focusing on individual party families necessitates fewer assumptions about heterogeneity in the motivations of supporters.

That said, a more unified approach could prove useful. Firstly, there is a degree of simultaneity to the recent rise of all these types of parties. For historical reasons, media attention has largely focused on the ascension of the radical right to cabinet-level positions in countries such as Austria, Finland, Italy, Switzerland, and New Zealand (and, via confidence-and-supply agreements, direct influence on policy in many others). However, the concurrent rise of the radical left in Spain, Greece, the Netherlands, and Portugal, as well as ethno-territorial separatist movements in the UK, Belgium, and Spain (again), suggests that a search for common causes of all these ‘radical’ political trends may be worthwhile.

Secondly, while the underlying ideology of these types of parties may differ, and the specific policies that they want to enact might be mutually exclusive in some cases, there are certain similarities in their evaluations of the functioning of their own political systems. Regardless of their narrow policy preferences, there are shared assumptions that the current ‘system’ of representative democracy within an increasingly deep network of intergovernmental

organisations – a situation which more established mainstream parties tend to accept – is defective, and in need of a radical overhaul. Such anxieties have been demonstrated by different non-establishment parties in three major ways: an inclination towards direct democracy, a proclivity for populist rhetoric, and hostility towards intergovernmental organisations like the European Union [EU].

Non-establishment parties of all hues have long shared a suspicion and hostility towards traditional institutions of representative democracy. For example, in the Netherlands, at various stages the liberal Democrats 66, green-socialist GreenLeft, radical right Party for Freedom, and radical left Socialist Party, have all demonstrated strong support for substituting that country's traditional parliamentary format with binding direct democracy (den Ridder, Dekker, and van Houwelingen 2016: 34–35). Regarding the referenda, Mudde (2007: 152) notes that “*virtually all populist radical right parties call for its introduction or increased use*”. However, Ivaldi, Lanzone, and Woods (2017: 368-370) note a predilection for more participatory forms of democracy in the campaign material and speeches of various types of populists with left (Podemos), right (Lega Nord) or unclassifiable (Italy's Five Star Movement) core ideologies. One should also not forget the equivalent sympathy for greater direct citizen participation in politics that has pervaded the rhetoric, constitutions, and manifestos of certain Green parties. Many Greens laid great emphasis on grassroots decision making, the frequent office rotation of party leaders, and extra-parliamentary protest upon their arrival in Western party systems from the 1970s to 1990s (O'Neill 1996; Poguntke 1987; Richardson and Rootes 1995). This radical heritage should not be forgotten, even if many of the most successful parties have since been ‘mainstreamed’ by distancing

themselves from these earlier positions (Müller-Rommel and Poguntke 2002; Price-Thomas 2016; Rudig and Sajuria 2018)².

The concern to bring politics closer to ‘the people’ via direct democracy has been operationalised as a core feature of a more general ‘populist’ worldview (e.g. Leschke 2017), which pervades many non-establishment parties. Though contested, Mudde’s (2004: 543) ideational definition, which considers populism to be a moralised and Manichaeian ideology which views the dominant societal cleavage as that between “*two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’*”, and contends that politics “*should be an expression of the general will of the people*”, has gained widespread acceptance (Moffitt and Tormey 2014: 83). Accordingly, a populist worldview tends to beget rhetorical attacks on the legitimacy of established political parties and other ‘elites’, a distrust of traditional government institutions, a lionisation of the wisdom of the common man, and a tendency to treat political transactions as essentially zero-sum.

While European populism has historically been associated with right-wing politics, this has not been the case in other regions such as Latin America (Laclau 2005), and with the recent (re-)emergence of the post-Marxist European radical left, there is growing realisation that populist worldviews, themes, and rhetoric can be adopted by parties of both the left and right. This has been empirically demonstrated by Rooduijn and Akkerman (2017), whose content analysis of the manifestos of 32 parties in France, Italy, Germany, the UK, and the

² Pirate parties, which are amongst the largest anti-establishment actors in certain Nordic countries, are very similar. They are widely known for their preference for greater participation of the people in politics via the medium of new technology (e-democracy), which is a radical break from existing structures of representative decision-making (Cammaerts 2015).

Netherlands between 1989 and 2008 revealed that populist rhetoric was common to both the radical right and left; the political centre was, in contrast, decidedly un-populist. Similarly, populist values have also been detected amongst the supporters of both non-establishment right and left parties. For example, voters for both the radical right Party for Freedom and the radical left Socialist Party display higher than average levels of agreement with a series of statements regarding moralistic attitudes to politics, aversion to compromise, and a desire to replace distrusted aspects of parliamentary procedure with direct decision-making by citizens themselves (Akkerman, Mudde, and Zaslove 2014). It is therefore extremely plausible that similar trends could drive the erosion of trust in the existing systems of representation and subsequent support for both the radical left *and* right.

Finally, just as they tend to be in favour of many fundamental democratic reforms at the state level, many non-establishment parties have views on international integration and the ‘pooling’ of state sovereignty that place them at odds with most mainstream parties. This is most evident in the debate over the EU, where Euroscepticism has gradually become a common denominator of radical parties and voters of both the left and right (van Elsas and van der Brug 2015; Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson 2002; Ivaldi, Lanzone, and Woods 2017: 365–67). Some distinguish between a supposed Euroscepticism of the radical left – derived from anti-neoliberalism – and that of the radical right – derived from nativism (e.g. Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson 2002; Meijers 2017: 4–8); however, whatever the origins, Euroscepticism is a shibboleth shared by parties on both the radical left and right, but rarely of the political centre³. It relates to the general critique of the responsiveness and functioning

³ Though most contemporary Green parties are largely pro-European, historically many were far more ambivalent towards the EU, viewing it as a threat to grassroots democracy and insufficiently concerned with environmental standards. The journey of the Irish Green Party, which went from dismissing the organisation

of the established political system, of which international governance is a core part, which tends to pervade the consciousness of non-establishment parties.

Therefore, while specific policy preferences on, for example, the environment or immigration distinguish these types of parties, there is a clear underlying tendency for different types of anti-establishment parties to make very similar criticisms of the functioning of their respective political systems, and propose similar remedies. Support for many ‘anti-system’ positions is best conceptualised as an inverted horseshoe: support is weakest at the centre (the purview of traditionally governing mainstream parties), and greatest at the extremes. Are left- and right-wing radical parties, to quote Taggart (1996: 46), “*the mirror images of each other, taking divergent paths to the same place*”? If so, it would seem prudent to study of the full range of alternatives available for (different types of) voters looking to express their anti-establishment sentiment (Abedi 2002: 557).

Holistic approaches

While less common than party family-specific efforts, a plethora of academic papers dedicated to typologising, classifying, and empirically studying a broad range of these ‘non-establishment’ actors have emerged in the last few decades. The two most influential approaches are that of the ‘niche party’, which is based on whether or not the party primarily competes on issues outside the traditional left-right political dimension or else takes a more extreme position on it than usual (Adams et al. 2006; Meguid 2005), and the ‘challenger party’, which is usually defined as any party that has yet to serve in a national government

as an undemocratic, centralised super-state incompatible with localism, to supporting of the Lisbon Treaty in a 2008 referendum (Bolleyer and Panke 2009: 552–53), is exemplary of the broader trend amongst this party family over the last decade or so (Edwards et al. 2012: 145).

(Hobolt and Tilley 2016; Hobolt and de Vries 2015).

One problem with these approaches is their tendency towards dichotomising parties as either mainstream or not. For example, if parties are defined as non-mainstream solely because they raise a limited number of issues outside the traditional left-right dimension (Meguid 2005), then no distinction is made between a very radical ‘outsider’ party that wishes to change the entire format and structure of government (such as the post-war neo-fascist Italian Social Movement), and one that merely wishes for the government to pay more attention to specific neglected areas of policy, such as animal welfare (the Dutch Party for the Animals), state healthcare (the British National Health Action Party) or cannabis legalisation (Australia’s ‘HEMP’ party). Likewise, if one’s criteria is just whether or not the party has ever served in government (Hobolt and de Vries 2015), then no distinction is made between small centrist parties that have always lacked the necessary electoral arithmetic, and larger radical parties who mainstream parties actively commit to keeping out of government. For instance, the Italian Communist Party during most of the mid-twentieth century, or, more recently, radical right parties such as Belgium’s Flemish Interest.

Another issue is that these classifications are rarely updated to reflect changes in the nature of parties as they age. While a party might very well start off as ‘radical’ or ‘niche’, it is highly likely that, if it survives, the party will gradually add other issues to its repertoire and move beyond this early profile. Particularly if forced to by the pressures of government office and cabinet positions which do not deal directly with their core *raison d’être*. Müller-Rommel and Poguntke (2002) note the trend towards an expanded (and moderate) policy platform amongst Green parties that entered national government, for instance.

Also, it would be better to focus on both participation in government *and* having a radical ideology that departs from the shared assumptions about government held by other parties in one's country, rather than either or. Both are likely to affect the ability of a party to cultivate an anti-establishment appeal during elections. Tangible opposition to widely-held political norms creates a rebellious aura about a party, allowing it to reap the benefit of a disillusioned public. The absence of government participation probably boosts the ability of parties to credibly offer these appeals and present themselves as agents of change (Barr 2009: 44)⁴, as well as underlining "*the degree to which a party has (non-) responsibility for (negative) political outcomes for which they can be held to account*" (Hobolt and Tilley 2016: 974).

A good classificatory schema should, therefore, say something about both a party's level of integration within their country's governing 'system', and about whether said party's policy and rhetoric challenges the legitimacy of that system at any given time point. Only in the case of defections to the latter can one really raise concerns over the stability of the conventional governing actors and institutions. It would be wise, then, to distinguish between multiple types of parties depending on their relationship with, and attitude towards, their political system. We should differentiate those that are relatively happy with the current functioning of the political community; those that are potentially loyal supporters but currently locked outside its governing bodies; and those that reject the current state of affairs and propose deeper root-and-branch reform.

⁴ Van Spanje (2011) has demonstrated that anti-political establishment parties tend to suffer unusually large electoral 'costs of governing', probably because entering a coalition causes the 'outsider' to lose the purity of its message by being seen to cooperate (and inevitably compromise) with the political establishment.

The ‘Anti-System’ Party

In Sartori’s seminal *Parties and Party Systems*, a specific residual category of parties was identified as essentially “*alien to the system in which they are found*” (1976: 132). These were parties which, to use Sartori’s broad definition, undermined the fundamental legitimacy of their own regime, and had a polarising impact on the relations between other actors in their political system. This meant those who, though appearing to play by the electoral rules of their country, either delegitimised the system through their rhetoric and propaganda, or else represented an ‘extraneous’ ideology which suggested that they would change, if they could, not just the current incumbent government (like ‘normal’ parliamentary opposition), but the very system of government in general (Sartori 1976: 132–34). In other words, such parties offered ‘opposition of principle’. That is, rejecting the constitutional rules of the game rather than merely providing opposition on specific issues (Kirchheimer 1966).

Sartori was not referring solely to the totalitarian movements of the inter-war years and his native Italy (in which, together, the Communists and the neo-fascist Italian Social Movement routinely collected over a third of the vote). Populists like Pierre Poujade’s Union of Shopkeepers and Craftsmen, anti-tax protest movements like the Norwegian Progress Party, and ideologically conservative movements like De Gaulle’s anti-Fourth Republic Rally of the French People were also namechecked (Sartori 1976: 150–59). They all demonstrated enough delegitimising rhetoric, maximal ideological distance, and support for extremely radical constitutional upheaval, respectively.

As a dichotomous concept, this sketch has similar problems to the alternative frameworks that I have already discussed. Sartori's typical anti-system party was assumed to be both opposed to the current system of governance *and* shut out from opportunities to govern themselves. Shortly after publication, this assumption would be tested as the Italian Communist Party began its 'historic compromise' (a confidence-and-supply deal) with the centre-right Christian Democracy party. The party, in Sartori's terms, would continue to reject the fundamental values of the political order in which it found itself, but, for four years, provided relative stability, safety, and even legitimacy, for a prototypical establishment party that did not share its radical anti-system sentiment. While Sartori had long doubted whether communist parties could ever be fully absorbed into the west European political order given his suspicion that they would not actually concede power if required (1976: 141–42), he lacked specific terminology for these compromised radicals, and their mismatch of rhetoric and behaviour.

Subsequent revisits to Sartori's theory have corrected for this omission. Zulianello (2018) presents a multidimensional schema for distinguishing 'anti-systemness', which is based on a party demonstrating two necessary criteria: an ideological aversion towards the policy status quo, and the absence of visible cooperative relationships with mainstream parties. A combination of what parties believe, and how they behave.

The first is evidenced by programmes that go beyond the articulation of conventional anti-incumbent and policy-oriented statements, but also demonstrate 'ideological radicalism' by questioning a country's established 'metapolicies'. That is, "*choices that concern the basic arrangements of the political regime, political community, social and economic system or*

country's location in an international system of alliances" (Cotta 1996: 29). The second by an absence of 'systemic integration', or, visible national-level cooperation with '*typically governing actors*' (Meguid 2008: 46). A party is unintegrated when it either rejects relations with mainstream parties, or else is not seen as a legitimate or acceptable coalition partner by those in a position to form governments.

Given that a party might have one of these criteria but not both (as with fully mainstream parties), Zulianello recognises two other types of party. Those that lack systemic integration, but are not ideologically radical, are 'complementary parties'. For example, liberal entities such as Spain's Ciudadanos or minor single-issue actors such as the Dutch Party for the Animals or German pensioners' party (The Greys). These may also be able to exploit anti-incumbency sentiment due to their obvious lack of culpability (past or present) for government outcomes, but their ability to do this may be undermined by a lack of any fundamental critique of dominant norms, values, and practices of their political system. In contrast, 'system-critical'⁵ parties are indeed ideologically radical, but have entered government on occasion. The classic example of this is Italy's Lega Nord. The party served in multiple cabinets under Silvio Berlusconi but maintained (up until very recently) formal support for an independent Padania, and continues to trade in populist rhetoric. Sweden's Left Party, which from 1998 to 2006 provided parliamentary support to the mainstream Social Democratic Worker's Party despite maintaining a highly critical stance towards global capitalism and the EU, is another. The rhetoric and policies of these parties offers vociferously opposition to aspects of the status quo, but they are still willing to cooperate with other mainstream parties, meaning that they do not pose the threats to cabinet formation

⁵ I prefer this term to Zulianello's use of 'half-way house' parties, but the definition is the same.

or government stability that true anti-system parties do. More importantly for my own theory, they also may be seen as more culpable for any negative outcomes produced during this engagement with the establishment.

Conflating either complementary or system-critical parties with fully mainstream or anti-system parties will, respectively, artificially inflate the amount of ideological diversity among traditionally governing parties, or underestimate the degree to which ‘outsider’ radical parties might benefit from a government’s poor performance. Hence it is important to distinguish between them in empirical studies.

While Zulianello makes an important contribution in introducing this typology, his research goals did not extend to formulating a theory of when certain types of party will be more or less successful. Because of this, he did not attempt to create a comprehensive list of the parties in each of his four analytical categories. As a result, I have designed and implemented a transparent operationalisation procedure myself. The approach that I used is as follows.

Criterion 1# A Lack of Systemic Integration

The coding of systemic integration can be made relatively transparent. Any party that has *formed a national government*, whether alone or in coalition, has clearly shed its outsider status to a degree. Furthermore, I also coded a party as ‘integrated’ once it has entered a *pre-electoral agreement* (standing aside in certain seats or using a common platform or electoral list) or *confidence-and-supply bargain* at the national level with any mainstream party. Although the party will not have gained formal access to the levers of power in such

instances, it will have demonstrated a willingness to uphold the existing party establishment, and thereby ‘the system’ itself. Anti-system parties and complementary parties, therefore, neither support nor participate in government, whereas mainstream and system-critical parties do⁶.

That said, there are certain instances of parties that had previously been integrated into the system reneging on their past moderation and deliberately undertaking a return to the margin of the party system. Zulianello describes this process as ‘radical disembedding’ (Zulianello 2018: 665-666). Exactly what constitutes this is not explicitly laid out, but the actions of the Freedom Party of Austria following the departure of the (by then) comparatively more

⁶ To reiterate, this rule only applies to participation in national government and would not preclude nominally radical parties that have participated in regional governments from anti-system status. For example, the Scottish National Party, which campaigns for an independent Scotland and has never participated in a Westminster government, is still classed as ‘anti-system’ despite ruling at the devolved Scottish Parliament at Holyrood since 2007. While these types of parties, which remain ‘outsiders’ nationally but form the political mainstream locally, do introduce complications for my schema, there remain good reasons for treating them in this manner. Given that they play no role in deciding the identity of the national executive – with their more far-reaching powers over taxation, monetary policy, and foreign relations – elections for devolved bodies are likely to be treated as ‘second-order’ contests by the electorate (Reif and Schmitt 1980). As a consequence, voters may simply be more willing to trust an anti-system party with this more limited selection of competences, or, alternatively, to use these less consequential elections to ‘send a message’ to mainstream parties by casting a protest vote for a candidate on the periphery of the national party system (Reif and Schmitt 1980). Focusing on high-stakes national elections, by contrast, is more likely to illuminate the factors that catalyse the rise and fall of a more full-blooded and less-instrumental radical spirit amongst Western electorates. Given that the actual extent of devolved powers varies tremendously by country (Hooghe et al. 2016), some critics may of course argue that the ‘second-order’ tag is less appropriate for some regional parliaments than others. However, given that this present comparative study covers a very large number of states and time periods, it seems better to have a clear and transparent coding procedure focusing on the threshold of national government, rather than engage in an extensive (and ultimately unresolvable) debate about the relative gap in the importance that voters would ascribe to national versus regional elections in each case. Therefore, using only participation in national cabinets can be justified on both theoretical and pragmatic grounds.

conciliatory Jörg Haider and other ‘moderates’ in 2005 are held to be exemplary (Zulianello 2018: 665-666). I therefore understand disembedding to constitute rejecting further alliances with mainstream political parties and reinstating populist-style attacks against previous coalition partners (Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn 2016).

Criterion 2# Ideological Radicalism

The coding of whether or not a party rejects the contemporary ‘metapolicies’ of advanced west European democracies is more difficult. What is it to be ideologically anti-system? The criteria that I use here is whether or not the party accepts for the post-1945 territorial division of Europe, freedom of religion, and the legitimacy of liberal economics, representative institutions, and the pursuit of economic growth, as well as the intergovernmental organisations that have been formed by mainstream parties to uphold these values. An acceptance of the essential legitimacy of all other parties who also uphold these tenants is another consideration in classification.

Accordingly, explicitly anti-capitalist, fascist, secessionist, irredentist, hard Eurosceptic, ‘dark-green’ – that is, placing environmentalism beyond human freedom and economic growth – or religious fundamentalist parties, all demonstrate anti-system tendencies. So too do all those who trade on populist ideologies and rhetoric that depict a moralistic and fundamentally Manichean divide between two homogenous entities – the ‘good people’ and the ‘corrupt elite’ (Mudde 2004: 543) – and assert that politics should be an expression of the unmediated will of the former. The consequences for specific minority protections or property rights usually differ depending on whether we speak of right or left-leaning populists (March 2011; Mudde 2007), but increasingly these moralised forms of anti-

pluralism are deemed in conflict with liberal democratic norms regardless of the ‘core’ ideology of the populist in question (Müller 2017)⁷. In contrast, certain parties that other scholars consider ‘populist’ or ‘radical’, yet nonetheless achieved government participation – such as the Norwegian Progress Party (after 2001) and the Swiss People’s Party – are instead viewed as only ‘system-critical’, given that they have demonstrated a willingness to support the establishment in their behaviour, even if they maintain specific outlying policy preferences on certain issues.

The operationalisation of party ideology was conducted based on discussions in the secondary literature, following the similar approach of Abedi (2002: 576) and Powell (1982: 273-276). I consulted various texts that gave information about the appeals of particular parties, as well as descriptions of specific national party systems. Appendix A lists these sources, and presents my classification of each party in every country featured in this study.

This approach has multiple advantages. It is dynamic, and allows a party’s classification to vary over time; it incorporates both elements of ‘anti-systemness’ rather than just one; it does not focus on a particular subset of party family, but is located one rung up the ‘ladder

⁷ There are a few cases of non-populist parties supporting constitutional reform that would fundamentally reshape the practice of democratic decision-making in their countries. The best example of this would be the Netherlands’ liberal Democrats 66 party, which has long aspired to radically democratise and restructure the national political system through the introduction of the public referenda at all levels of decision-making (Abedi 2004: 60–61). Another example would be the host of new parties that emerged in Iceland following the major parties’ attempts to stall the introduction of a radical new constitution that had received backing in a referendum following the unrest that accompanied the 2008-2009 financial crisis (Newhouse 2017). Such parties are duly classified as anti-system upon their emergence.

of abstraction’ (Sartori 1970) to allow for wider analysis of the broader causes of ‘anti-systemness’.

‘Anti-system parties’ are, therefore, both the classic mid-century Communist and neo-fascist examples, as well all unintegrated parties that are also secessionists (e.g. the Scottish National Party, Sinn Fein, Basque nationalists etc.), populists, (e.g. the French National Front, Italian Five Star Movement or Spain’s Podemos), religious fundamentalists (the Dutch Reformed Political Party), or else fundamentally question the conventional institutions and procedures of their respective representative democracies (e.g. certain Pirate or Green parties which promote direct- or ‘e’-democracy). Figure 1.1 summarises my four-category typology.

The importance of such a dynamic and non-dichotomous approach is highlighted by the history of the German Green Party. ‘Die Grünen’ began life in 1979 as a bona-fide anti-system party. Its “left libertarian” (Kitschelt 1988) internal structures (‘basisdemokratie’) and conception of politics – which emphasised decentralisation, strict term limits for party officials, citizen initiatives, and support for direct extra-parliamentary action (Poguntke 1987: 610–11) – posed a “*fundamental challenge*” (Chandler and Siaroff 1986: 303) or “*radical opposition*” (Müller-Rommel 1985: 491) to the long-established structures of West German party politics. It was, in the words of co-founder Petra Kelly, an “*anti-party party*”. Similarly, its attitudes and behaviour towards other parties demonstrated a distinct lack of inclination to become ‘integrated’ into the political system. The party famously self-positioned itself “*beyond left and right*”, and avoided direct overtures to its potential natural allies, the Social Democratic Party (Müller-Rommel 1985: 491; O’Neill 1996: 32). Indeed,

Figure 1.1: Anti-System Party Typology

SYSTEMIC INTEGRATION		<i>Integrated into Government</i>	<i>Not Integrated into Government</i>
IDEOLOGY	<i>Mainstream</i>	Mainstream Parties E.g. UK Labour Party; Austrian People's Party; German Green Party (post-1998)	Complementary Parties E.g. Ciudadanos; Australian Democrats; Dutch Party for the Animals
	<i>Radical</i>	System-Critical Parties E.g. Swiss People's Party (post-1995); Italian Communist Party (1976-80); Danish People's Party (post-2001)	Anti-System Parties E.g. French National Front; Five Star Movement; Communist Party of Greece

Note: Based on Zulianello (2018: 667)

Note: Integration into government also includes confidence-and-supply arrangements and pre-electoral pacts with governing mainstream parties, as well as formally holding cabinet positions.

rhetoric towards senior representatives of mainstream parties was usually far from cordial. Perhaps the most infamous example of the Greens' scepticism regarding the legitimacy of their new parliamentary peers came in a 1984 Bundestag plenary debate, where one MP accused the incumbent Chancellor as being "*bought*" by a notable industrialist and, following that legislator's expulsion from the chamber, a second referred to the presiding Speaker as "*an asshole*" (Hofmann 1984).

However, the idea that the Greens should still be classified as 'anti-system' on account of their origins does not stand up to scrutiny. Following the failure to re-enter the Bundestag at the 1990 election, pragmatists ('realos') within the party swiftly began displacing idealists ('fundis'), leading to a general reorientation towards the normal procedures and compromises of the liberal democratic 'game' (O'Neill 1996: 26). The most radical and democratic parts of the original Green constitution and manifestos were largely jettisoned, and the party began to make overtures towards mainstream parties, having begun to grow weary of the 'marginalisation' (O'Neill 1996: 20) and 'dysfunctionality' (Poguntke 1987) that their earlier stances had reaped. Hence, by the 1994 election, the party is classed as 'complementary' rather than anti-system. Following the 1998 election, this centripetal trajectory was completed as the Greens entered national government alongside the Social Democrats. Their subsequent status as a mainstream party was underlined by a contentious policy record that led them to abandon pacifism by supporting NATO intervention in Kosovo and Afghanistan, and make huge compromises over the timetable for de-nuclearisation (Poguntke 2002: 12–13). The former decision caused a third of their membership to leave in 1999 (Jachnow 2013); the latter led to a high-profile standoff with local protest groups of the sort that they had once been so heavily associated with (Poguntke 2002: 6). Subsequent manifestos have largely abandoned the 'de-growth' economics of the

1980s, and largely favoured market-based technological solutions for combating climate change (Price-Thomas 2016: 11). The record shows that the party did not manage to escape Michel's (1915) 'iron law of (party) oligarchy', and that the leadership eventually managed to orientate the party towards the establishment, against the wishes of the grassroots (Frankland, Lucardie, and Rihoux 2008).

Similar stories could be told about erstwhile members of the radical left. For instance, the two-decade long transition of Finland's post-communist Left Alliance from a radical anti-EU, anti-NATO, and anti-system party (1991); to a system-critical coalition partner of the Social Democrats (1995); to, by 2015, a fully-fledged pro-system member of the establishment class, that had ditched most of its previous Eurosceptic and anti-NATO wings (Dunphy 2007: 48), and participated in a centre-right-led, pro-austerity government. On the populist right, the Norwegian Progress Party's journey from anti-establishment rhetoric, conspiracy theories, and uncompromising libertarianism in the 1970s and 1980s; to a confidence-and-supply agreement (2001); and then a gradual mellowing of rhetoric and policy following the leadership of the moderate Siv Jensen after 2006, is a similar anti-system–system-critical–mainstream trajectory (Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn 2016; Bjerkem 2016). The election-by-election approach to classification aims to accurately reflect these real centripetal tendencies in party's relationships to their political system.

The Rise of Anti-System Parties, 1950 – 2016

To what extent does anti-system party success vary by time and space? Before I begin, I must note that in this thesis I am restricting all of my analysis to advanced western parliamentary democracies. By this I mean those countries that have a reasonably long tradition of democracy and reasonably high levels of material affluence. Accordingly all

experienced some form of democratic elections prior to the Second World War, and all are members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD]. They also share relatively liberal economies and a predominantly Christian heritage. This makes for a case selection of all the pre-1989 parliamentary democracies of Europe, in addition to the ex-European settler states of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand⁸. Observing these cases holds constant, in a broad sense, levels of economic development, familiarity with democratic elections, cultural assumptions, and government regime type.

Studying newer democracies would invite a unique set of theoretical and practical complications that would probably obscure my findings and undermine the assumptions upon which they are built. Testing my hypotheses about the crucial role of existing mainstream political choice sets presupposes being able to identify a relatively stable ‘core’ of established parties that can be said to have converged. This is not possible where the ‘parties of government’ rise and fall with the rapidity and totality in which they did throughout the 1990s and early 2000s in post-communist Europe, and continue to do so to this day in certain countries. Studies of net electoral volatility, the variation of party vote shares between elections, have revealed that central and eastern European countries have average rates of fluctuations between two to four times greater than those in western Europe during any given year (Dassonneville and Hooghe 2011: 15–24; Lane and Ersson 2007: 100; Powell and Tucker 2013; cf. Bartolini and Mair 1990). More troublingly, whereas in western Europe this volatility is mostly driven by existing parties exchanging voters between contests, in eastern Europe this instability is mainly driven by entirely new parties emerging

⁸ I am forced to exclude Malta from my analysis due to it being unrepresented in many of the key social science datasets that I make use of in this dissertation. It does not feature in any of the cross-national voter surveys that I use, nor is it featured in the manifesto database that I rely on from my measurements of party positions.

and replacing older parties at each election (Birch 2001; Powell and Tucker 2014). Focusing on more long-standing democracies allows for a much clearer delineation between the political mainstream and ‘outsiders’.

I also limit my case selection to those countries with parliamentary, or at least semi-parliamentary, political institutions. Presidentialism, a regime type defined by the independent origin and dissolution of the executive and legislature (Shugart and Carey 1992), exerts a downward pressure on the number of parties in a given political system (Golosov and Kalinin 2017; Lijphart 1994). Probably because it incentivises elites to join only those few parties capable of competing in a winner-take-all executive contest conducted under majoritarian electoral rules (Shugart and Carey 1992). Furthermore, Strøm (2000: 271-278) notes that, in the field of leader selection, presidential regimes lack the screening mechanisms available in parliamentary systems, where a prime minister must be an elected member of the legislature and maintain the support of the majority of their party’s representatives. As a consequence, the way in which ‘populist sentiment’ expresses itself in such systems is more likely to occur through the hostile takeover of a large pre-existing political party, rather than a new external challenger.

This is the principal reasons for the exclusion of the United States from my study; however, I do include the semi-presidential regime of France, where a prime minister exists alongside a popularly elected president. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, open presidential primaries (i.e. those governed by a general popular vote), which could lead to the party candidacy being conferred upon a Trumpian candidate opposed by the majority of high-ranking party members, are a much more recent phenomena in France. In fact, the

mainstream centre-right party did not run open primaries at all until the 2017 contest. Secondly, the relative power balance between president and prime minister in the French system has drifted over time. In some periods, notably when the president lacks a majority in the National Assembly and cannot appoint a co-partisan, the prime minister actually has taken precedence in formulating domestic policy (Elgie 1998: 231-232). This means that, during, for example, the Mitterrand-Chirac (1986-88) and Chirac-Jospin (1997-2002) eras, French politics has actually functioned somewhat closer to the parliamentary model, where strong, cohesive, parties are important for the prime minister to maintain their position. During such periods, the main legislative agenda-setter in the country, as with the Prime Minister of the Netherlands or the German Chancellor, is one that cannot depart too far from the ideology and consent of the median party parliamentary representative without risking censure and removal. It is for these reasons that radicalism in France is most likely to emanate from a new, specifically anti-system party beginning to contest elections (such as the National Front or Jean-Luc Mélenchon's radical left initiatives) than from a renegade maverick taking over an existing mainstream party and reshaping it in their own image. Consequently, I consider French party politics to be closer to the European norm, and there to be less justification for excluding the country from my study.

Figure 1.2 plots the vote share for mainstream, complementary, system-critical, and anti-system parties in the 391 general elections in the chosen 22 countries from 1950 to the end of 2016⁹. I sourced election results primarily from Dieter Nohlen's compendiums for North

⁹ Belgium is split into the separate party systems of Wallonia and Flanders; Malta is excluded due to missing data. I use 1950 as the starting point because of the lack of reliable comparative data on economic and institutional conditions before then. This era is also something of a watershed in the development of ideological anti-systemness. With the onset of the Cold War in the late 1940s, national unity or popular front alliances and coalitions between mainstream parties and communists in countries such as Austria, Belgium,

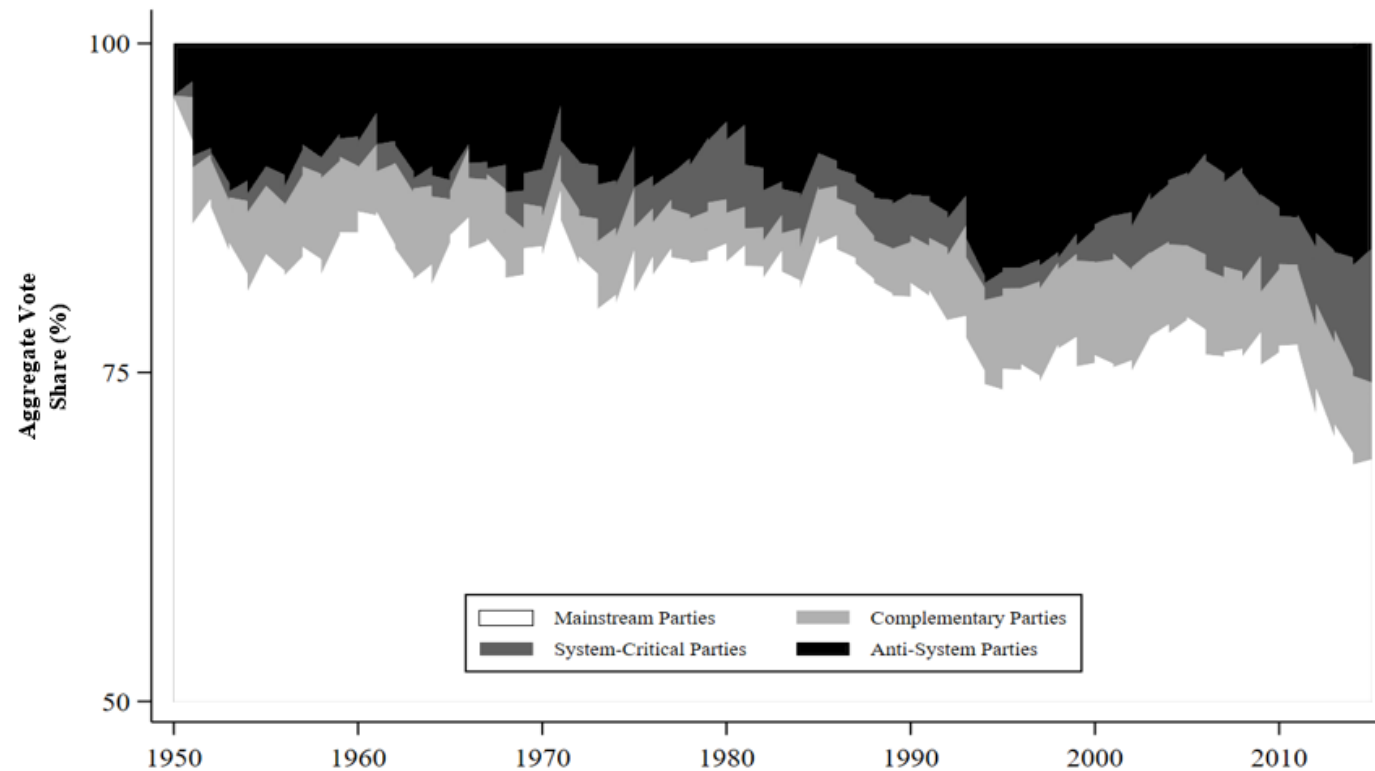
America (2005), Europe (with Stöver 2010), and Asia and the Pacific (with Grotz and Hartmann 2001), though I used official national parliament websites for more recent elections. The results refer to the percentage of all votes cast in first-round elections in the decisive electoral tier. The first few elections following an authoritarian interlude were omitted to better distinguish the reformation of older ‘mainstream’ parties after the restoration of democracy from genuinely ‘new’ parties.¹⁰ Formal successor parties are classified the same as their predecessors, so long as there was no extensive revision of party ideology or attitudes to other parties. Appendix A details classifications for each party in every country featured in this study.

The pattern during the Cold War era is largely one of stability. While the mainstream party vote declined somewhat following its 1950 peak, it stabilised at just under 85% of the electorate by the mid-1950s. This is an average which, notwithstanding minor fluctuations, went largely undisturbed for the next few decades. Throughout this period, support for complementary parties oscillated around the 5% mark, meaning that, on average, only around one in ten voters in these countries chose parties that rejected the fundamental assumptions, values, and procedures of their respective political systems. Support for system-critical parties was notably weak for most of this period, reflecting a general consen-

Finland, France, Italy, and Norway were swiftly and clearly annulled, in many cases never again to be revived (Sassoon 1996: 97).

¹⁰ Greece, Spain, and Portugal only returned to competitive elections in the mid-1970s. Initial elections were characterised by significant levels of volatility and a lack of clarity about exactly which parties constituted the ‘establishment’. Defining the ‘post-authoritarian’ period is somewhat arbitrary, but I use the point of each country’s ascension to the European Economic Community (1981 in Greece, 1986 for Spain and Portugal). Afterwards democracy looked increasingly secure and, in most cases, a set of assumptions about the legitimate scope and character of the state came to be shared amongst the largest governing parties.

Figure 1.2: Average Vote Shares for Mainstream, Complementary, System-Critical, and Anti-System Parties Across 22 Advanced Democracies, 1950 - 2016



Note: The shadings indicate the share of the vote going to each type of party over time, according to a three-year moving average across all 22 countries. Results refer to the percentage of all votes cast in the first round of general elections (in the electoral tier apportioning the greatest number of lower house seats). Post-authoritarian elections were excluded. Countries were not weighted by population size. N = 393 general elections.

Data Source: Nohlen (2005); Nohlen, Grotz, and Hartmann (2001); Nohlen and Stover (2010); various official national parliamentary websites. Individual parties were categorised by the author in accordance with the principles laid out in Figure 1.1. Classifications by country are given in Appendix A.

-sus amongst mainstream parties not to engage with (and potentially legitimate) actors who might harbour anti-liberal democratic sentiments. This consensus did begin to breakdown slightly during the late 1960s and 1970s, when mainstream social democratic parties in France, Iceland, and Italy began a rapprochement with their countries' unusually large communist parties; however, the resulting increase in system-critical party support was not at the expense of the mainstream establishment, whose support remained strong until the end of the Cold War.

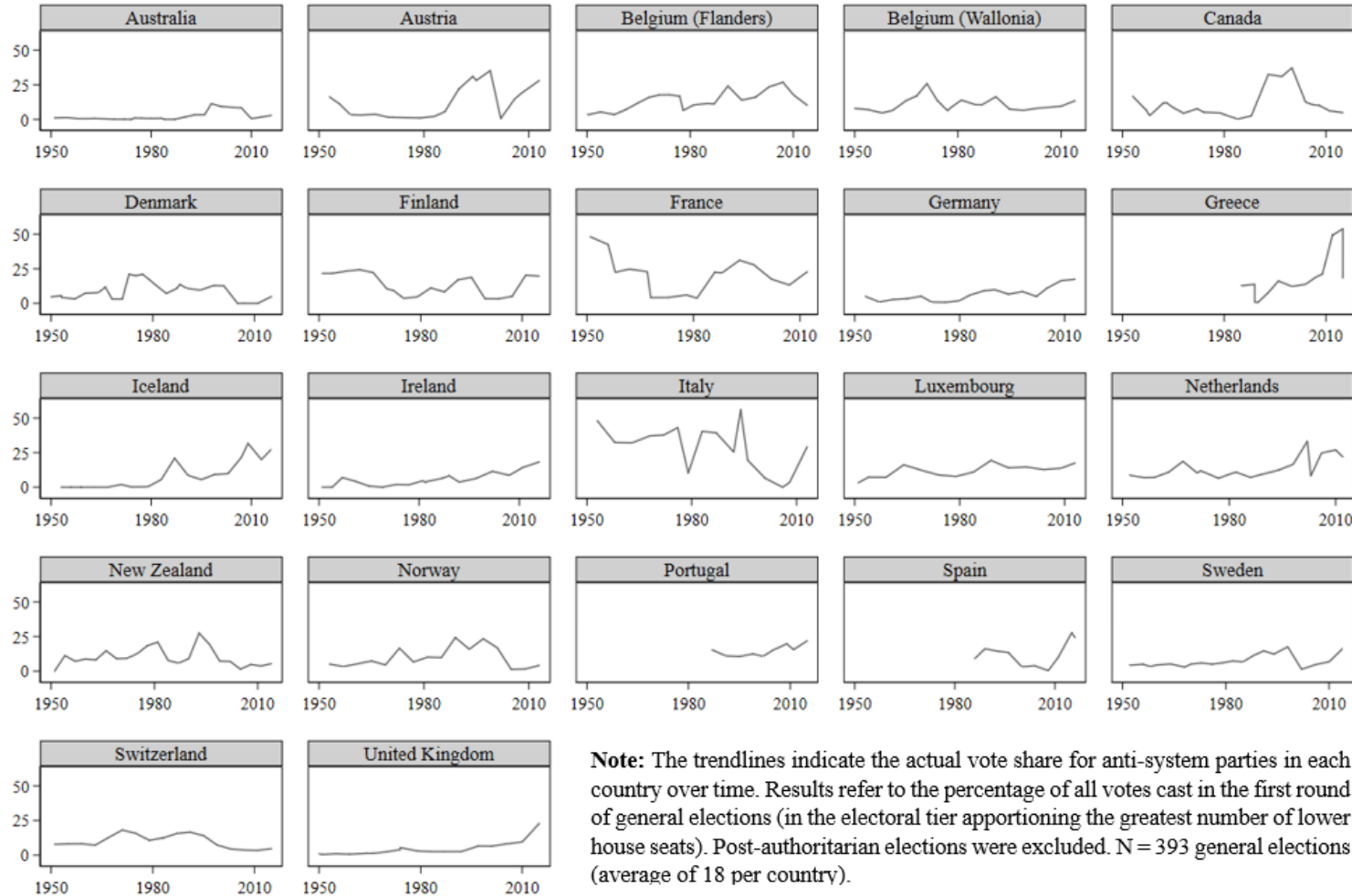
The rest of the time-series is punctured by two major declines for mainstream parties, and corresponding spikes in the popularity of the anti-system opposition. A first sharp spike (fall) in support for anti(pro)-system parties is evident in the early 1990s. This trend is largely driven by the near wholesale transformation of the Canadian and Italian party systems following the scandal-driven collapse of their traditional centre-right parties; however, the first major 'wave' in support for the radical right in Austria, France, New Zealand, and Norway, as well as the continued lack of integration of many Green parties, is also contributory. That said, this momentum was fairly short-lived: anti-system forces largely receded throughout the 1990s as certain party families began to either decline (the communists) or become integrated into the political mainstream (the Greens).

By far the most dramatic trends have been witnessed in the last decade or so. From the mid-to-late 2000s one observes a fairly secular rise in the average vote share going to wholly anti-system parties, and a sharp drop in support for mainstream parties. By the mid-2010s, for the first time since the 1940s, average levels of electoral support for parties that professed major opposition to significant parts of the liberal democratic consensus (that is, anti-system

parties and system-critical parties) surpassed 20% of the international electorate. Conversely, support for traditional pro-system parties of government reached its post-Second World War nadir, with an average of almost a third of the electorate rejecting them. To be clear, this means that the overwhelming majority of the electorate continues to back mainstream parties; but the changing trajectory is still notable, deserves explanation, and potentially complicates the electoral arithmetic facing mainstream parties seeking to form governments in an increasingly fragmented political landscape.

To what extent are these trends generalisable, rather than driven by one or two specific outliers? Figure 1.3 plots the average general election results for anti-system parties by country and time period. The line graphs indicate that, while there are a few countries with long-standing anti-system party presence (Italy, France, and, to a lesser extent Finland and Flanders), the current popularity of these types of parties in several other national political systems is historically unprecedented; notably so, in the cases of relatively diverse polities such as the United Kingdom, Spain, and Iceland. Combined anti-system party vote shares greater than 10% (and occasionally 20%) have become the norm, not the exception in recent years. That said, significant variation remains even when taking this broad view of ‘anti systemness’: Canada, Australia, and Norway, amongst others, so far remain much less affected by the surges seen elsewhere.

Figure 1.3: Vote Shares for Anti-System Parties in 22 Advanced Democracies, 1950 – 2016



Note: The trendlines indicate the actual vote share for anti-system parties in each country over time. Results refer to the percentage of all votes cast in the first round of general elections (in the electoral tier apportioning the greatest number of lower house seats). Post-authoritarian elections were excluded. $N = 393$ general elections (average of 18 per country).

Data Source: Nohlen (2005); Nohlen, Grotz, and Hartmann (2001); Nohlen and Stover (2010); various official national parliamentary websites. Individual parties were categorised by the author in accordance with the principles laid out in Figure 1.1. Classifications by country are given in Appendix A.

Conclusion

One of the issues with existing typologies is their tendency towards dichotomy. A party is either part of the political ‘mainstream’ or it is not. ‘Insider’ status is achieved by either incorporation into government, even just once (Hobolt and Tilley 2016), or by taking a moderate position on a conventional set of left-right issues (Adams et al. 2006; Meguid 2005). These approaches are not always ideal. They will often overlook parties undergoing substantial changes to their ideology and interactions with other political actors, and they will often misclassify parties that have one of these properties but not the other. A useful typology should distinguish between degrees of anti-system sentiment, and be able to acknowledge the evolution of a party over its lifetime.

An alternative to dichotomous approaches based on party family membership or previous incorporation into government is Zulianello’s (2018) extensions of Sartori’s (1976) concept of an anti-system party. That is, a party that seeks changes to the very practices, shared assumptions and selection criteria for government, rather than merely a change in that government *per se* (Sartori 1976: 132–33). In this chapter I offered an original approach to operationalising Zulianello’s four-category typology of ‘anti-systemness’, and coded several hundred parties accordingly in order to present the electoral trajectories of mainstream, complementary, system-critical, and anti-system parties in Western parliamentary democracies from 1950 to the present day. I showed that anti-system parties, the radical outsiders in a party system, are, on average, more popular today than at perhaps any time since the post-Second World War period.

Consider, once more, the list of parties introduced at the start of this chapter. The One Nation

Party of Australia, Canada's Bloc Québécois, the Communist Party of Greece, De Gaulle's Fourth Republic Rally of the French People, the German Green Party, and the contemporary Five Star Movement of Italy. Parties of the radical right, separatist, radical left, conservative, Green, and populist party families, respectively. Are there large differences in the positions, supporters, and prospects for system-integration of these parties? Of course. But so too are there great differences members of the same supposed party family. One Nation have major differences with the more overtly white-nationalist British National Party, or the more economically free-market Progress parties of Scandinavia. The Communist Party of Greece has a much different position of the proper extent of nationalisation or the acceptability of homosexuality than the reformist French Communist Party. The contemporary German Green Party of 2015 is almost unrecognisable in terms of its rhetoric and policy when compared with itself less than three decades ago, and its earlier incarnation is yet further away from the profile of more contemporary right-leaning environmentalist parties such as the Green Liberal Party of Switzerland, or Germany's own Ecological Democratic Party. Does this mean that comparison among party families is itself futile? Should we view every instance as *sui generis* and just revert to single-country, or even single-party case studies and avoid cross-case inference altogether?

I claim not. Even ignoring some policy spill-overs, anti-system parties are in some sense partial functional equivalents due to the position that they occupy within their own party systems. They all pose a strong challenge to the dominant norms, values, and systems of representation in their country, and have, therefore, all remained unintegrated within that country's governing establishment. Yes, important differences remain, but comparative politics is a dialectic between uniqueness and correlation, the particular and the general, and our theories need to accommodate both diversity and convergence (O'Neill 1996: 11–17).

The appeal of anti-system party politics is in some ways case-distinct, in other ways quite similar. This thesis aims to trace those similarities and look, in probabilistic terms, at the general causes that may be ascertained from those instances.

Having identified a heterogeneous population of political actors for whom support for can be cited as evidence of strong resentment towards the current functioning, rules, or norms of one's political community, the remainder of this thesis attempts to uncover the factors that would lead a voter to 'flee the centre' (Hobolt and Tilley 2016) and become an anti-system party supporter. I aim to test a potential theory of anti-system party support which I refer to as the 'crisis and convergence' model.

Chapter Two – When are Anti-System Parties Successful?

Abstract

In the previous chapter, I identified a significant amount of national and temporal variation in the popularity of a certain type of political party that I described as ‘anti-system’. That is, an ideologically heterogeneous group of anti-establishment actors outside of national government, who challenge the legitimacy of some aspects of the dominant norms, values, actors, and institutions of their political system. When and why do such parties gain votes? What types of factors push voters away from the political mainstream? In this chapter, I argue that previous attempts to explain radical party success, which tend to focus on either supply- or demand-side factors in isolation, have their limitations. Drawing on studies of economic voting behaviour and the political history of Latin America, I outline a ‘crisis and convergence’ model of anti-system party success which may be better placed to answer these questions. The observable implications of this theory are then tested in the following empirical chapters.

Introduction

When are radical parties successful? This question has probably been amongst the most widely pondered puzzles in political science over the past couple of decades. Broadly speaking, there are two approaches to answering this question. The first emphasises the role of short- or long-term changes to the socioeconomic structure of societies (such as increased immigration, de-industrialisation, or a severe economic shock that reduces living standards), and highlights how these processes generate new coalitions of voters who seek-out policies that promise to alleviate or reverse these changes. The second highlights the political opportunity structures – such as electoral institutions or the pre-existing positions of larger, more established parties – that affect the ability of new parties to provide disgruntled voters with new policies themselves.

In this chapter I focus on two, widely-cited, potential explanations for the rise of anti-system parties in the past few decades - one from each camp. These are the state of the economy, and the extent of mainstream party ideological polarisation, or, the differences between established parties. Theories of why both these factors should influence the success of radical challenger parties are highly credible, but empirical tests of these hypotheses often throw up contradictory results. In this chapter, following the advice of recent state-of-the-literature reviews (e.g. Golder 2016; Kitschelt 2018), I argue that the size of anti-system parties at any given election should be a multiplicative, rather than an additive, function of material hardships and the 'political space' ceded to challengers by established centrist parties.

My theory, which I term the 'crisis and convergence' model of anti-system party success, is that both a rise in 'demand' for radical new directions in policy and a reduction in the ability of mainstream parties to 'supply' these new policies are both jointly necessary to explain why a voter might 'flee the centre' (Hobolt and Tilley 2016) and become an anti-system party supporter. If the apparent 'outputs' of the policy process – in this case, macroeconomic management – are good, why seek a change in the 'inputs' ? If the 'outputs' are malformed, but there are a sufficiently diverse set of solutions being offered by different established parties, why look elsewhere for new 'inputs'? Deficiencies in both the product and process of representative democracy need to be accounted for when we try to explain opposition to the current state of affairs (Easton 1965; Hobolt 2012; Scharpf 1997: 19).

In what follows, I discuss the existing literature that connects the rise of anti-system parties to fluctuations in the health of the economy and mainstream party convergence. I then put

forward my argument as to why these factors need to be appreciated in combination, rather than separately, in greater detail. I conclude with an explicit statement of my hypotheses and the observable implications that should follow if my theory has merit. Subsequent chapters attempt to falsify these hypotheses using a combination of aggregate, cross-sectional, panel, and experimental data, respectively.

Previous Attempts to Explain Radical Party Success

Variables that influence levels of support for particular parties are conventionally divided into demand- and supply-side factors (Eatwell 2003). That is, those variables which mediate the electorate's levels of desire for certain new policies or forms of representation, versus those variables that determine whether this latent demand coalesces around a particular new challenger, gets co-opted by a pre-existing party, or simply goes unrepresented.

First, consider the demand-side. What are the grievances that make anti-system party candidates appealing, and what events, processes, and experiences raise their salience? Given that it is commonly assumed that each individual ideological subtype of anti-system party (Greens, radical left, radical right etc.) mobilises around a distinct set of issues, it is not surprising that few comparative studies have engaged with the possibility of a unifying catalyst for all anti-system sentiment. The balkanisation of the literature into party family-specific subdisciplines has, to a certain extent, ghettoised particular stimuli as either pro-radical left or pro-radical right (for example), and rarely both. Accordingly, for each specific party family there is usually seen to be one or two particularly important phenomena that might help explain up-ticks in their support. For example, higher levels of immigration for the radical right (Arzheimer 2009; Golder 2003), or conflict over nuclear power for the

Greens (Grant and Tilley 2019; Schumacher 2014). Some factors help one type of anti-system party, others another.

Clearly if one was trying to provide a comprehensive account of the success of each different type of anti-system party, these types of factors would need to be accounted for. However, when discussing the factors that give rise to demand for anti-system parties in general, they are less relevant. That said, there may be an exception to this rule: the role of economic crisis.

An ailing economy has been widely linked to support for a variety of radical parties. Recessions are associated with a host of painful experiences for the electorate, such as unemployment and declining real incomes (Hurd and Rohwedder 2010; Singer 2018). Multiple democratisation theorists posit that voters learn from the performance of their political system, and are only willing to defend representative institutions if they believe in their economic benefits (e.g. Cheibub et al. 1996; Friedman 2005; Lipset 1959). Regime change is more likely when the system performs poorly in this respect. Accordingly, severe economic problems have the potential to undermine the legitimacy of the established political order in the eyes of output-oriented voters, meaning that the size of the electorate potentially receptive to anti-system rhetoric will increase. Conversely, a booming economy also mitigates against defection to untested outsiders as the potential opportunity-costs of political uncertainty, which could deter individuals from making long-term investments, are raised (Bruckner and Gruner 2010: 2-3). One might, therefore, expect the median voter's risk-adverseness to rise and fall in a rough association with their country's economic performance, with implications for the level of demand for radical changes in policy.

Of course, anti-system parties might not benefit from economic crisis solely due to their political radicalism. Another contributing factor could be their other property: a lack of prior experience in government. As Hobolt and Tilley (2016: 972–74) note, with less extensive histories of government participation, political outsiders should be better able to present themselves as non-responsible for current hardships. Anti-system parties can therefore credibly claim to be both innocent in regard to current economic misfortunes and have radical new solutions to fix them.

The extent to which voters retrospectively reward or punish incumbent governments for the economic conditions they preside over has been discussed extensively. Though ‘economic voting’ is weaker where multiple actors dominate policy-making and the ‘clarity of responsibility’ for the economy is obscured (Hobolt, Tilley, and Banducci 2013; Powell and Whitten 1993; Rudolph 2003), few other factors are weighted more heavily throughout democracies (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2000), and some effect on elections is perceptible in most cases (Dassonneville and Lewis-Beck 2017).

However, traditional models of economic voting tend to emphasise only the tendency of public to punish incumbent parties by deserting them at election time (Dassonneville and Lewis-Beck 2019; Duch 2007; Duch and Stevenson 2008; Key 1966; Kramer 1971), with little attention cast on where, specifically, voters then move to (van der Brug, van der Eijk, and Franklin 2007: 193–194). Currently, there have been relatively few efforts to specify the conditions under which voters will choose to defect to a mainstream opposition party, an anti-establishment populist, or possibly even abstain altogether, which would reflect the full range of options available for an economic voter in a multiparty system (Margalit 2019: 284–

288). This literature is, therefore, unclear as to when the economy should lead to mass defection to radical anti-system challengers, rather than mere rotation from incumbent to opposition mainstream parties. When do voters become willing to risk abandoning the establishment? While the appeal of radical parties could rise in troubled times, it seems equally plausible that, faced with a matter of such urgency, voters stick with the parties who have more extensive experience in governance and with managing macroeconomic problems, rather than leap into the unknown.

Unsurprisingly, then, research linking radical party fortunes to fluctuations in the macroeconomy throws up inconsistent results. While some studies find a positive association (Arzheimer 2009; Brückner and Grüner 2010; van der Brug, Fennema, and Tillie 2005; Hobolt and Tilley 2016; March and Rommerskirchen 2015), many others uncover null or even negative findings (Abedi 2004; Arzheimer and Carter 2006; Knigge 1998; Lubbers, Merove, and Peer 2002; Spies and Franzmann 2011).

These inconsistencies suggest the influence of supply-side factors, and the role of the political opportunity structure in denying anti-system candidates the opportunity to exploit latent anti-establishment sentiment. Levels of regional decentralisation or the permissiveness of the national electoral system are commonly-cited when explaining minor party fortunes (Dow 2011; Duverger 1954; Hakhverdian and Koop 2007; Lijphart 1990, 2012; Willey 1998). The former provides challengers with the opportunity to build-up administrative experience after victories at lower level contests, which are easier to win due to their smaller electorates and the relative lack of resources committed to them by major parties. The latter boosts the chances of the party actually achieving legislative

representation, which can encourage more instrumentally-oriented to follow their heart in the polling booth.

However, we should not place too much hope in the ability of relatively static properties like institutional structure to explain over-time variation in political phenomena. After all, Figure 1.3 already visualised sharp rises and falls in support for anti-system parties over the last couple of decades in both proportional systems (Spain and the Netherlands) and majoritarian ones (the United Kingdom); unitary states (Greece) and federal ones (Canada). Predictably, the association between non-establishment parties and institutional ‘openness’ has been variously found to be positive (Hakhverdian and Koop 2007; Harmel and Robertson 1985; Hino 2012; March and Rommerskirchen 2015; Willey 1998), negative (Arzheimer and Carter 2006; Spies and Franzmann 2011), and null (Abedi 2004; Arzheimer 2009; Carter 2005; Golder 2003; Ignazi 2003; Norris 2005).

A more dynamic supply-side factor is the behaviour of mainstream parties. What opportunities do they leave open for anti-system parties to mobilise due to the way that they position themselves? One popular idea is that radical parties may find it easier to mobilise their support when the mainstream parties have depolarised (become more similar) ideologically.

That a great number of mainstream parties have become more similar in recent years is not a novel observation. Various studies have shown how certain establishment parties have indeed distanced themselves from the unique ideological and sociological profiles that they had previously cultivated (Bara 2006; Blyth et al.2010; Hornsteiner and Saalfeld 2014; Mair

1997), a process that was only accelerated in response to the 2008-09 financial and 2011-14 Eurozone crises (Copelovitch et al.2016: 125). This has probably been most pronounced among centre-left parties, who have increasingly reconciled themselves with the imperatives of market liberalism, and elevated talk of economic responsibility, balanced budgets, and competence above traditional language of social justice and equality (Bermann and Snegovoya 2019; Blyth 2002; Karreth et al.2013; Thompson 2000). The ‘new’ social democratic governments of the 1990s - Clinton’s ‘New Democrats’, Blair’s ‘New Labour’, and German Social Democrat leader Schröder’s ‘Neue Mitte’ - epitomised these trends; combining talk of lower taxes, reduced welfare entitlements, and balanced budgets (Lipset 2001) with a strikingly middle class, university-educated, and ‘professionalised’ elite-level social profile (Bundestag 2015; Evans and Tilley 2017; Heath 2013; Ohmura et al.2018; Pew Research 2019). In the words of one scholar of the UK Labour Party, the party had moved “*from coalminers to careerists*” (O’Grady 2018).

As well as their increasing ‘positional’ similarities, mainstream centre-left and centre-right parties in several advanced democracies also appear to have coalesced in ‘relational’ terms. For example, in at least half of the years since the financial crisis (2008 – 2018), the governments of Austria, Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands have been led by coalitions featuring both the largest centre-left and centre-right parties in the country, and Finland and Greece have also experienced at least one legislative term like this¹¹. In a situation where the mainstream parties are increasingly advocating similar policies, increasingly being represented by similar people, and sharing government, it is no

¹¹ Author’s calculations. In some of these countries (such as Austria and Belgium) these sorts of governments have been historically more common than others (such as Germany or Greece).

wonder that many voters may be left feeling that the traditional choices offered to them in elections have been somewhat eroded.

There are two schools of thought about why mainstream party convergence might create new opportunities for anti-system parties. One is derived from spatial models of individual utility-maximisation on a left-right ideological spectrum, the other is based on more psychological conceptions of partisanship and social group identity.

The classic statement of the former type comes from Downs (1957), who envisages political competition as taking place on a single-spectrum in which voters are spaced from 'left' to 'right', and parties strategically locate themselves in order to co-opt their support. The logic was borrowed from economists who tried to explain why shops selling similar products would gravitate to similar locations in town centres, despite potentially negative consequences such as excessive standardisation of products and inflated local rents. They do so because that is where the apex of any shopping population is found (Hotelling 1929). However, in converging on the centre for vote-seeking purposes (given that, in a unidimensional left-right spectrum, this is where the median voter typically locates themselves), parties, like firms looking to appeal to new customers while retaining their old ones, risk a trade-off between gaining new ideologically moderate supporters and losing their old, non-centrist voters. At first, a party may simply lose these now politically 'homeless' followers to abstention. In the long-run, however, it is these abandoned voters on the edges of the political system that new, more radical, parties now have the opportunity to mobilise (Downs 1957: 296; see also Smithies 1941).

For example, assume that there is a consistently sizeable number of voters in Greece who would prefer a large state sector, limited restrictions on trade unions, and a generous guaranteed minimum standard of living. Such voters would probably have been historically allied with the centre-left Panhellenic Socialist Movement [PASOK] for much of the post-dictatorship era. However, from 2012 to 2015, these voters would witness their ‘natural’ party abandon these commitments by dismissing thousands of civil servants, placing limits on employees ‘right to strike’, and making deep cuts to the minimum wage (Kaltsouni and Kosma 2015) in attempts to respond to the sovereign debt crisis and balance the national budget. All this while in the government with their traditional rivals, the centre-right New Democracy. Even though PASOK voters may not have actually changed their opinions on these issues, they may now be more susceptible to the overtures of a new left-leaning populist party, such as the Coalition of the Radical Left [SYRIZA], who could present themselves as simply picking up where that older party had left off. Decreased ideological distance between the main parties of the right and left thus creates ‘a vacuum’ that can be exploited by parties situated at the extremes (Hainsworth 1992: 11).

In contrast, where enough distance exists between competing programmes, social and political divisions between the parties will harden and voters will resist any urge to defect, given that switching one’s vote would effectively mean switching one’s ideology in such circumstances (Bartolini and Mair 1990). Considering evidence that mainstream parties in several advanced democracies have indeed become more similar in term of left-right positioning since the end of the Cold War (Adams, de Vries, and Leiter 2012; Bosco and Verney 2012; Elff 2013; Evans and Tilley 2017; Karreth, Polk, and Allen 2013; Mair 1997, 133; Vidal 2018), it seems reasonable to suggest that this phenomena could have contributed towards the aforementioned rise in anti-system vote shares in this era.

Kitschelt (2000: 157) has criticised the ideological convergence thesis. While he is in broad agreement about the direction of ideological change amongst mainstream political parties in recent years, he is sceptical that this convergence is responsible for rising radical party support. He argues that the ‘convergence triggers defection’ hypothesis only makes sense if we assume that most voters oppose compromise and support radical policy alternatives, a proposition that longstanding evidence of single-peaked voter distributions around the ideological centre (e.g. Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009: 682; Inglehart and Klingemann 1976; Knutsen 1998) seems to undermine. While claims of a mainstream ‘stitch-up’ are favourable to the underdog self-presentation many new parties like to employ, this is not an accurate depiction of the political reality (Kitschelt 2000: 173–74).

Kitschelt’s rejection of the role of ideological convergence is a strong and convincing one. Rebuttal rests on the extent to which we can take centrist self-placement at face value as evidence of genuine ideological moderation. However, analysis that goes beyond description of voter self-placement to investigate the *causes* of centrist positioning do not support this assumption.

Theoretically, there are a number of alternative reasons an individual might self-identify as centrist on a general level (Knutsen 1998; Rodon 2015). Rodon (2015) questions the causal order inherent to Kitschelt’s argument. Over time, he shows that convergence to the ideological centre by parties tends to increase the number of people identifying as centrists. This suggests that some partisans may simply be following party cues when deciding upon their own self-placement. More problematically, he notes that those voters who do self-place in the middle of the ideological spectrum tend to be less politically sophisticated, less

politically engaged, and less interested in politics, than those that self-define as clearly left or right. It may be that many self-described centrists may simply lack the political sophistication to locate themselves in such an abstract political space. This has led Knutsen to refer to centrist self-positioning as “*a concealed form of nonresponse*” (1998: 303–4). In a multicounty study, Rodon (2015) finds that supporting a centrist party and low political interest are the strongest predictors of centrist self-positioning; actual ideological moderation (as measured by centrist positions on a range of questions relating to specific policy trade-offs) is not a statistically significant predictor! Therefore, despite Kitschelt’s argument, there remain good grounds to hypothesise a relationship between perceptions of convergence and mainstream defection. While voters may be hesitant to place themselves away from the centre when facing potentially unfamiliar 0 – 10 ideological intervals, this does not mean that they are immune from the signals sent out when mainstream parties become more similar in their rhetoric, policies, and appearance in government.

Spatial models are very influential in any discussion of party depolarisation. However, there is also an alternative, though clearly not contradictory, approach to understanding the impacts of shifting party positions based on theories of partisanship as a reflection of social identity. From this perspective, partisanship is less about a utility-maximisation calculation based on distance from a party on some policy spectrum, and more about the association of different parties with being ‘for’ or ‘against’ certain social groups (Achen and Bartels 2017; Campbell et al. 1960; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002). Mainstream convergence can create ‘space’, in this sense, for radical challengers by undermining existing perceptions about which ‘group’ each party stands for, upon which continued emotional attachments to established parties depends.

Lupu (2014, 2016) develops a 'branding model' of partisanship in which voters learn about party brands (whether they are 'pro-poor' or 'pro-entrepreneurship', for example) by observing party behaviour over time. Factors like the policies that are implemented, the electoral alliances that are made, and the background of high-ranking spokesmen all play a role in the development of a party's brand. Voters are assumed to update their priors about these brands overtime as new information becomes available, a process that well-known patterns of motivated reasoning on behalf of partisans may slow, but cannot erase entirely. Importantly, however, brands are perceived in relative, rather than absolute terms. Lupu's idea of party brand is, therefore, based on the idea of 'comparative fit', whereby individuals self-categorise into identity groups not only when they think that they resemble that group's archetypal member, but also when they think that their group differs from other groups (outsiders) in meaningful ways (Hogg et al. 2004; Turner 1999). Therefore, to be a strong partisan, one should both feel close to the stereotypical image of a given party's support and feel like that stereotypical image departs heavily from those of rival parties. So, for example, a council tenant or coal miner, who believes that the Conservatives tend to be supported by landlords and factory owners is a particularly likely Labour partisan. Both a strong fit with a given party brand, and the distinctiveness of that brand, are important (Lupu 2013: 51-52). The clearer the understanding of a voter about where 'their' party stands relative to all other parties, the stronger the partisan identification that will develop.

This theory is very similar to the social cleavage models of electoral competition, which held that mid-twentieth century Western party systems' low levels of electoral volatility and persistent domination by the same large established parties was caused by the ability of those parties to 'capture' particular demographic subgroups in a population (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Rose and Unwin 1970). Short of a radical change in the socioeconomic structure of

society, or a further extension of the franchise to some hitherto excluded group, every occupational class, religious denomination, and ethnolinguistic group already had ‘their’ party and, due to the high-stakes political saliency of these identities, there were precious few wavering electors outside these tight voter-party linkages available to ‘new’ parties to convert.

However, what the proponents of these models often left unsaid was the possibility that the de-thawing of Western party systems, and the increasing competitiveness of ‘outsider’ parties, could come not primarily through changes in the character and identities of the electorate, but by changes in the parties themselves. Lupu (2014, 2016) argues that, while it takes time for a party to create a strong brand, they can very quickly undermine these efforts by engaging in what he calls ‘brand dilution’. This is the term used to describe parties moving away from their traditional ideological profile or demographic clientele, and undertaking the sort of actions usually considered to be under the purview of a rival party’s own brand. This has deleterious consequences for the loyalty of long-standing party supporters, who no longer see themselves reflected in the prototypical voter for that party.

Examples of brand dilution might include a left-wing party undertaking policies traditionally perceived as right-wing (such as cuts to social expenditure), fielding a greater number of candidates from the social constituency typically associated with a rival party (such as small businessmen or members of the clergy), and actually joining that rival bourgeoisie party in a coalition government. The role of this type of bait-and-switch by nominally left-leaning parties has been cited in explanations of the collapse of Latin America’s more institutionalised party systems during the 1990s and early 2000s (Morgan 2011; Roberts

2013; Seawright 2012; Stokes 2001). When longstanding parties of the centre-left began to implement free-market reforms with the support of their traditional conservative rivals, their ‘pro-poor’ brand was almost irreversibly damaged, granting radical outsiders such as Evo Morales (in Bolivia) and Hugo Chávez (Venezuela) an opportunity to marshal their former voters.

Lupu (2013: 60) cast doubt on the applicability of his theory to Western democracies, as he considered party brands and attachments to be far more stable there. However, the role that party convergence plays in conditioning the political preferences of European voters has received much more academic attention in recent years. This is particularly true in regard to the increasingly diminishing electoral returns wrought by that continent’s centre-left parties, which are amongst the oldest in their political systems. Numerous researchers have argued that the dilution of the social democratic brand by successive leaders seeking to appeal to the economic and social preferences of the increasingly dominant middle classes has undermined the appeal of these parties to their working-class base, and contributed to their current crisis¹² (Berman and Snegovaya 2019; Elff 2009; Evans and Tilley 2017;

¹² Why did social democrats shift to the centre? Some argue that the preferences of Europe’s burgeoning middle classes were rationally targeted by vote-seeking party leaders who gained leverage over typically policy-seeking grassroots activists following declining party membership and a series of historic losses to the centre-right (Kitschelt 1994; Marx and Schumacher 2013; Przeworski and Sprague 1986; Radice 1992). More conspiratorial approaches, such as Peter Mair’s ‘cartel party’ thesis, go further. They suggest a conscious decision by career politicians of all stripes to defend their parliamentary remuneration and other privileges by undertaking reforms that minimised their exposure (and accountability) to democratic pressures. Alongside institutional adjustments (for instance, increasing state funding for political parties or devolving contentious decision making to supranational institutions like the EU), policy distinctions were deliberately downplayed in order to deny voters a channel for opposition to the new political-institutional settlement (Katz and Mair 1995; Mair 1995, 2013; Mair and Katz 2009). Kitschelt (2000b: 162–166) disputes this, arguing that the retreat from typical left-wing policies of nationalisation, price controls, and higher taxes was effectively mandated by the post-Cold War realities of new technology, globalised trading patterns, and the threat of capital flight.

Jansen, Evans, and Graaf 2013; Karreth, Polk, and Allen 2013; Rennwald and Evans 2014; Weakliem 2001). This party-driven ‘thawing’ of the class cleavage is usually seen to have benefited the growing radical right party family who can now appeal to proletariat voters on the basis of nationality given that the centre-left are no longer successfully appealing to their class identity (Coffe 2008; Ford and Goodwin 2014; Hobolt and de Vries 2015; Spies 2013; Spies and Franzmann 2011). The 1968 US presidential election is another example (Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002: 140-163). Following the passage of the ‘pro-Black’ Civil and Voting Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965, the Democratic Party’s longstanding ‘brand’ as representatives of the interests of racially-conscious white southerners was irrevocably damaged. With the Republican Party not yet as trusted to safeguard these interests as they would one day become, a representation gap emerged that was quickly filled by the renowned segregationist George Wallace, who swept the Deep South and became, as of 2016, the last third-party presidential candidate to win a state’s popular vote¹³.

However, this narrative is, in turn, rejected by those who argue that, rather than undermining the appeal state intervention, globalisation and the rise of the service sector has actually spread economic insecurity to the traditionally right-leaning middle classes (Blyth, Hopkin, and Pelizzo 2010; Hutton 1995). British survey evidence reveals that many typical centre-left policies – wealth redistribution and limited nationalisation – actually remained fairly popular even while Labour moved away from these positions in the 1990s and early 2000s (Curtice 2017; Heath, Jowell, and Curtice 2001). However, while all these approaches may disagree on the size of the electoral bonus for occupying the ideological centerground, they all at least acknowledge the potential for alienated voters on the edge of the political spectrum, or certain ‘left behind’ social groups, to become more politically volatile following changes in the centre-left’s political strategy. Furthermore, none acknowledge the role of continued economic growth in legitimising these moves to the centre, which I argue is most crucial in understanding the backlash against centripetal electoral competition by mainstream parties.

¹³ While these examples all cite the responsibility of the centre-left for partisan breakdown, the convergence hypothesis is not simply about established social democrats moving right-wards. For example, the rise of the ‘new’ European radical right during the 1970s and 1980s (from the Progress Parties of Scandinavia to the Austrian Freedom Party) was similarly interpreted as a backlash against the mainstream post-war consensus on high-tax, bureaucratic welfare states, particularly amongst shopkeepers and private sector employees (Betz 1994: 417–418; 421–423). Elsewhere, the more socially liberal positions staked out by David Cameron’s ‘de-

There are, therefore, good reasons to suspect that mainstream party convergence ‘creates space’ for radical parties to co-opt previously loyal mainstream party voters. This can be understood using the conceptual prism of either classic utility-maximising spatial theories, or more psychological conceptions of partisanship as an expression of group identity.

I would also add that the appeal of self-described anti-establishment candidates may also be cemented by the increasing similarity of ostensibly rivalling mainstream forces (Mair 1997: 118–19). Where public trust in the responsiveness and quality of political institutions is low, voters will be attracted to candidates who portray themselves as radical ‘outsiders’, crusading against the established political order (Doyle 2011: 1448–1449). Any behaviour by mainstream parties that appears to validate the Manichean rhetoric of a corrupt and collusive elite that populist outsiders of all stripes frequently employ (Ivaldi, Lanzone, and Woods 2017; Mudde 2004: 543), can only be to the benefit of the latter.

Figure 2.1 depicts examples of campaign materials by different anti-system parties that play up the trope of a homogenous and antagonistic mainstream cartel. The image in the top-right is taken from the personal blog of a candidate for the Italian Five Star Movement (de Simone 2012). It is a visual depiction of party leader Beppe Grillo’s repeated taunt that the two main parties in Italy can simply be summarised as PD (the Democratic Party) “*Plus an ‘L’*” in the case of Berlusconi’s House of Freedoms (acronym PDL), or PD “*Minus an ‘L’*” in the case of the Democratic Party. The poster at the bottom is from the French National

toxified’ Conservative Party after 2005 have been cited as one explanation for the increased success of the United Kingdom Independence Party in this era (Ford and Goodwin 2014).

Figure 2.1: Mainstream Convergence in Anti-System Party Campaign Literature



Note: Campaign literature for different anti-system party candidates. Clockwise from top-right: A) Online Image Taken from the Personal Blog of a Candidate for the Italian Five Star Movement (De Simone 2012), B) 2014 Poster for the French National Front (National Front 2014), C) 2010 Campaign Poster for the United Kingdom Independence Party (Daily Mail 2010).

Front (National Front 2014), and it creates a portmanteau out of the two major centre-right and centre-left parties' initials (UMP and PS). The text explains that the two parties continue to have "the same policies" with "the same damage" (with rising unemployment, immigration and taxes cited here). It calls on voters to "stop the madness". Finally, in the top-left, there is a 2010 campaign poster for the United Kingdom Independence Party [UKIP] (Daily Mail 2010). The image features mugshots of the three major parties' leaders and advises voters to "sod the lot" – implicitly emphasising the lack of real opposition (as

UKIP regularly referred to themselves as) amongst the political mainstream¹⁴.

The convergence thesis is therefore theoretically plausible, and evidently persuasive enough to anti-system parties themselves, who have explicitly tried to make political hay out of the apparent similarity of mainstream parties. Nonetheless, evidence for the role of mainstream party depolarisation in facilitating the breakthrough of anti-establishment parties is mixed. Some demonstrate a positive association (Abedi 2002; Carter 2005; Hino 2012; Kitschelt and McGann 1995; Pelizzo 2007; Spies and Franzmann 2011; Spoon and Klüver 2019), but many others do not (Arzheimer and Carter 2006; Bustikova 2014; Ignazi 2003; Lubbers, Merove, and Peer 2002; Norris 2005).

Mixed evidence for the role of both the economy and mainstream party positioning perhaps suggests that the importance of these factors is contingent, rather than absolute. Why does a bad economy lead to simple rotation to an alternative mainstream party on some occasions, but defection to a radical challenger on others? Why does convergence only sometimes boost radical outsiders? When do these factors become relevant in the decision to cast an

¹⁴ Ivaldi, Lanzone, and Woods (2017: 359–60) highlight other examples by juxtaposing speeches made by Marine Le Pen (National Front), Beppe Grillo (Five Star Movement), and Pablo Iglesias (Podemos). Le Pen excoriated the two largest parties in France, “*the PS [Socialist Party] and UMP [Union for a Popular Movement] ... two clans of a same political mafia which is called UMPS ... and is worthy only of banana dictatorships*”. For Grillo, the major Italian parties (in coordination with business and the mainstream media) form “*castes [which] united together and form an immense body, a super social group (...) which feeds on the blood of those who produce*”. Similarly, according to Iglesias, “*the key to understanding what is happening in Spain is not choosing between left or right, but a contradiction between an oligarchic minority and a majority of citizens*”. Iglesias’ frequent denunciations of the collusive Spanish political establishment was also memorably captured in ‘Casta Wars’, a highly popular satire of the 1980s arcade game Space Invaders, in which players pilot a laserbeam-equipped version of Podemos’ leader to battle a variety of Spanish politicians and their supposed media cronies (Hoja de Router 2014).

anti-system vote? These outstanding questions lead to my central hypothesis, and the specification of the economy and political supply-side in interactive terms.

The ‘Crisis and Convergence’ Theory of Anti-System Success

Why should the combination of economic hardship and the depolarisation of mainstream parties have an effect on anti-system support that is greater than the sum of its parts? My case for an interactive effect rests on two assumptions that are derived from the academic literature on economic voting behaviour during the 2008-2014 financial and Eurozone crises, as well as the breakdown of several Latin American party systems in the aftermath of this region’s own debt crisis during the mid-1980s.

The first is that, by undermining close emotional attachments between voters and their parties, ideological convergence makes incumbent parties more likely to be held accountable, and less likely to be forgiven by their previous supporters for any economic downturns that occur under their watch. In this sense, party convergence magnifies the effect of the economy. The second assumption, and the one which makes voters more likely to defect specifically to anti-system parties, is that a reduction in the quality of the ‘output’ provided by a government makes voters reconsider the ‘inputs’ that have caused this malformed product. Where no mainstream party is offering convincingly different policies to those which are believed to have caused, or at least failed to alleviate the current crisis, a door is opened for anti-system parties to capitalise by presenting themselves as the only party offering fresh solutions to the problem. In this sense, the economy magnifies the effect of party convergence.

Some of these patterns are evident in the political experience of Latin America. To summarise very briefly, the 1980s were a time of severe economic turmoil for virtually all of the continent's democracies. Many countries had borrowed heavily from international creditors to fuel industrialisation programmes during the 1960s and 1970s. While this was not too dangerous in the mid-twentieth century era of cheap credit and high growth rates, the global recession and oil price spike of the late 1970s hit the region hard. Firstly, borrowing to keep local economies afloat spiked, despite anti-inflation contractionary monetary policies in the US and Europe significantly increasing the interest rates for these loans. Latin American countries suddenly found themselves owing a lot more, and a lot sooner, than originally anticipated. Secondly, the economic contraction in more developed states reduced demand for the primary sector commodities on which many local economies were still based, reducing the ability of these poorer countries to service their debts. The crisis reached its peak following Mexico's sovereign default in 1982, when it became clear that many countries in the region were simply incapable of paying back the vast sums that they now owed (Sims and Romero 2013).

Following a series of failed attempts to reach an agreement on debt restructuring, during the late 1980s the US and the International Monetary Fund [IMF] struck a more wide-reaching deal that allowed for substantial debt relief and a recontinuation of international loans to afflicted countries. This was, however, only on the condition of substantial economic reform to reduce the possibility of a repetition to the crisis. These reforms, which were aimed at reversing the weak economic competitiveness and large-scale current accounts deficits believed by the IMF to have caused the crisis, mandated sweeping liberalisation of domestic and foreign trade, as well as a reduction of government intervention in the economy (Agarwal and Sengupta 1999; Carrasco 1999; Doyle 2012). In practice, this meant cuts to

infrastructure and social expenditure programmes, the elimination of quotas and tariffs on imports, the abolition of export duties, a reduction in consumer subsidies, the freezing of public sector wages (combined with layoffs in certain cases), and devaluation of the national currency. While the economic and social records of these policies are usually described as ‘mixed’ – declining real wages and rising levels of unemployment and inequality were coupled with an eventual rise in exports and return to high growth rates in many countries by the mid-1990s (Agarwal and Sengupta 1999; Carrasco 1999; Sims and Romero 2013) – the more important aspects for my thesis are the political ramifications.

While a number of established parties (and even entire party systems) in the region collapsed during or immediately after this period of economic reform (for example, in Peru, Venezuela, Bolivia, Argentina, Colombia, and Ecuador), many others survived (for example, in Uruguay, Chile, Brazil, and Mexico). A key explanation for this variation, according to the logic of several scholars of Latin American politics (Lupu 2016; Morgan 2011; Roberts 2013; Roberts and Wibbels 1999; Seawright 2012; Stokes 2001), is that while in some countries these reforms were ushered in by parties of the centre-right (or even military dictatorships) in the face of left-wing opposition, in others the responsibility fell to political groups that were traditionally associated with either populism or trade union and worker movements. As previously mentioned, the adoption of ‘brand diluting’ policies (to use Lupu’s terminology), caused a decline in partisan attachment to leading parties, as well as disaffection with the democratic process more broadly after several experiences of ‘bait-and-switches’ by nominally centre-left parties moving from the campaign trail to office (Stokes 2001). Where these reforms were more ‘programmatically aligned’ with the long-standing ideology of the incumbent implementing them, and visibly contested by left-wing

opposition, party systems suffered much less political instability (Roberts 2013; Roberts and Wibbels 1999)

That said, the cause of mainstream party breakdown is not solely due to policy convergence between the established left and right, but also due to the moderating impact of recurring patterns of economic shock and stagnation. Lupu states that it was the combination of brand dilution with continued poor economic performance that led to party collapse as “*without the assured support of a partisan base, parties became more susceptible to voters’ short-term retrospective evaluations. Voters who now had no party attachments deserted incumbent parties when they performed poorly*” (Lupu 2016: 3). The argument here is that we are looking at a two-step process of political change. First, the implementation of policies that are inconsistent with those that supporters have come to expect reduces their positive sentiment towards you. Support becomes more instrumental and conditional on performance, than when there was a clearer emotional connection between voter and party. Second, continued economic problems or an unforeseen downturn occurs, which loyal supporters may previously have granted you the benefit of the doubt for in terms of culpability, and the party suffers massive defections as punishment. Understanding the importance of both these factors helps explain why parties like Venezuela’s Democratic Action, Bolivia’s Revolutionary Nationalist Movement, or Argentina’s Radical Civic Union, could survive previous periods of economic bust (not to mention lengthy authoritarian interludes) before these changes to their policy, but were powerless to stop the flood of support to newer parties in the face of economic hardship after their implementation. Or, conversely, why others such as Argentina’s Justicialists, that also diluted their brands yet presided over better economic performance, did not suffer the same fate. Both convergence and crisis matter in the destabilisation of Latin American party systems (Lupu 2016).

Lupu's theory is corroborated by findings made by other political scientists who have shown that the salience of a party's performance in office rises when ideological convergence takes place. Green and Hobolt (2008) demonstrate evidence to this effect from the United Kingdom from 1987 to 2005, which was an era of convergence for the two major parties. In their words, "*voters who cannot determine which party is closer to them in policy terms, because parties offer similar policies, will more likely choose between parties on the basis of which can deliver*" (Green and Hobolt 2008: 461). In turn, partisans are much more likely to view their preferred party as the most competent when the political environment is polarised (Vegetti 2014).

Karreth, Polk, and Allen (2013) apply a similar logic when seeking to explain the poor recent performance of social democrats in Germany, Sweden, and the UK. They argue that the gains that these parties made from right-ward (centripetal) shifts in the 1990s were short-lived, and came at the expense of electoral success in the subsequent decades. In mottling their ideological coherence, these parties effectively traded voters who strongly identified with them for more numerous but less invested swing-voters. This risked future collapse as the political centre is 'fuzzy' and easily switches votes; exactly what happened in the aftermath of the later financial and Eurozone crises when these parties presided over poor economic performance.

Simply put, depolarisation shatters the so-called 'partisan lens' through which many voters learn to view the political world and economic outcomes (Campbell et al. 1960). Accordingly, where once voters may have found excuses or scapegoats to avoid blaming economic circumstance on their favoured incumbent party, with the decline of partisan

sentiment these parties are now much more vulnerable to negative evaluations of their time in office, and must face the potential for mass defection (Lupu 2014: 594–95). The rise of valence politics entails risks as well as potential benefits.

That said, while these ideas can explain why the combination of brand dilution and poor economic performance would lead to a general uptick in electoral volatility, they do not really explain why it should be anti-system parties in particular that profit from these changes. This is also a problem with much of the existing literature on the economic vote. Models in this subfield are frequently specified in binary terms as the size of the swing from incumbent to opposition (see Anderson 2000, Dassonneville and Lewis-Beck 2019, and Duch and Stevenson 2008 for reviews of this literature), with far less attention being paid to be the exact type of opposition being selected. This is unhelpful as it overlooks the diversity of responses that economic voters can choose from in multiparty systems (Margalit 2019: 290; van der Brug, van der Eijk, and Franklin 2007:18, 193–194).

The problems of this approach have been particularly apparent in aftermath of the 2008-14 financial crisis in Europe, where in several countries both incumbent and mainstream opposition parties lost ground to challenges from the radical right and left (Bosco and Verney 2012; Hernández and Kriesi 2016). This pattern is somewhat unusual. As Bermeo and Bartels (2014: 7) note, previous economic downturns, such as Europe's 'Long Recession' from 1973 to the early 1980s, though admittedly not as severe, were not matched by similar political upheavals. Why is this?

To be clear, my argument is that this occurs when the political mainstream as a whole has

converged, rather than just one or two parties alone moderating their rhetoric and policies. While a poor economy might normally incriminate incumbent parties and prompt a simple rotation to a mainstream alternative waiting in opposition (the ‘classic’ economic vote), if the opposition is unlikely to implement substantively different policies, the whole mainstream establishment becomes implicated and anti-system challengers are gifted an opportunity to mobilise. Why merely defect to an opposition mainstream party if they are unlikely to meaningfully change the policies that one believes created, exacerbated, or at least did not alleviate the current crisis? To quote Jana Morgan (2011: 53–54) on the collapse of Venezuela’s two-party system during the 1990s, *"without programmatic differentiation between incumbent and opposition ... all the parties are implicated in the failed status quo, and programmatic discrediting infects the entire system"*.

Consider the political debate in the United Kingdom following the 2008 financial crisis. Both major parties agreed on the primary necessity of closing the deficit in government expenditure, with division over whether a shorter or longer period of implementation would be better (Quinn 2011: 407). This continued in the run-up to the next election when the major centre-left party, Labour, committed itself to matching Conservative spending plans, running a budget surplus, and demonstrating ‘fiscal discipline’, thus putting themselves under great pressure to make big cuts to public spending (Wintour 2014). The ideological choice presented to voters was subsequently described as *“relatively constrained”* (Allen and Bara 2017). For voters unhappy with austerity politics and dissatisfied at the policies on offer from the Conservatives, the offer from Labour may not have appeared credibly different. The long-term convergence of the centre-left and centre-right in Britain has been linked to sharp rises in support for radical right, Green, and secessionist parties around the 2015 General Election (Evans and Tilley 2017; Ford and Goodwin 2014).

The parallels with the Latin American experience are probably even more striking if we consider the experiences of southern Europe in the same period (Roberts 2017). Just like their counterparts in Venezuela and Bolivia, many social democrats found themselves caught between the need to appear responsive to voter demands, and responsible to international creditors. The ‘Troika’ of the European Commission, European Central Bank and IMF were a substitute for the earlier role played by the IMF and Washington in mandating reform in Latin America. Hermann (2014) demonstrates that, regardless of whether they were led by nominally centre-right or centre-left parties, governments throughout the region converged on a shared series of policies – rises in the state pension age, freezes to retirement benefits, cuts to public sector jobs, and reforms to make contesting dismissal more difficult – to alleviate their budget deficits and restore international competitiveness to their economies. Therefore, many social democratic parties in the region found themselves going into elections against a backdrop of continued unemployment and low growth rates, but with ‘solutions’ that were not easily distinguished from those of their centre-right rivals (Bosco and Verney 2012; Vidal 2018).

This is the environment that I predict anti-system parties will be most likely to profit in, given that their two fundamental features – relative absence of history in government, and an opposition to the shared norms, institutions and values that mainstream parties take for granted – should prove very appealing to voters suffering from economic hardship, and frustrated by a rather restricted political choice set that seemingly offers few alternative avenues to alleviate these problems. Tangible opposition to a widely-held political norms creates an anti-establishment aura about a party allowing it to reap the benefit of a disillusioned public. The absence of government participation probably boosts the ability of parties to credibly offer these appeals and present themselves as agents of change (Barr 2009:

44), and also emphasises “*the degree to which a party has (non-)responsibility for (negative) political outcomes for which they can be held to account*” (Hobolt and Tilley 2016: 974).

As a final addition to this theory, I would also expect abstentionism to rise under such conditions. Previous research has demonstrated that citizens are less likely to participate in an election at all when they feel alienated by (rate no party particularly highly), or indifferent towards (rate two competitive candidates equally highly), the competitors in a particular contest (Aarts and Wessels 2005: 79; Brody and Page 1973; Downs 1957: 261; Hinich and Munger 1997). Ideological convergence should increase the number that feel this way, given that it will swell the ranks of those on the edge of the spectrum who have no party acceptably close to their own position, as well as raise the likelihood that there are two (or more) parties in the centre whom voters feel equally close to. The social identity theory of ‘comparative fit’ (Hogg et al. 2004; Lupu 2016; Turner 1999), would predict that voters would then begin to feel less close to existing mainstream parties, given that the heuristic cue provided by the identity of the prototypical supporter of each would become harder for the electorate to discern. One possible consequence of this is that such a voter would become more likely to vote for a radical party alternative; however, it is also conceivable that under these conditions a citizen might simply abstain from the election altogether, particularly if they cannot locate a viable anti-system party currently competing for votes¹⁵.

¹⁵ There are reasons why, even if a viable anti-system party is available, members of the electorate still might choose to abstain rather than endorse the radical party that is objectively closer to their own position and distant from all other parties. Ivarsflaten’s (2006) theory of ‘reputational shields’ states that it is nearly impossible for radical anti-immigration to make credible appeals to voters unless they have a legacy that can be used to field off accusations of racism and extremism. Would-be radical right voters might, therefore, prefer to abstain rather than support a stigmatised anti-system party or an unsatisfactory mainstream alternative. Given the success of certain radical parties with anti-democratic or more explicitly racist heritages since this publication

In fact, we might also expect abstention rates to be equally sensitive to conditions of economic crisis, given that research has also suggested that non-voters, like the prototypical anti-system party supporter, tend to have lower baseline levels of satisfaction in democracy and government performance (Akkerman, Mudde, and Zaslove 2014; Dassonneville, Blais, and Dejaeghere 2015; Tillman 2008). Given that economic shocks frequently decrease trust in the political system still further (Margalit 2019), it is reasonable to assume that, robbed of partisan sentiment or the desire to affirm or sanction the incumbent's record through mainstream alternatives, certain citizens may be vulnerable to dropping out of the electorate altogether under conditions of 'crisis and convergence'. Given this likelihood, omitting the possibility of abstention in individual-level studies of vote choice may be selecting on the dependent variable (Lacy and Burden 1999 in Tilman 2008: 1292), as we would only be analysing the actions of respondents with enough faith to continue engaging in the political process at all. Therefore, while my main predictions for this thesis concern the factors that incentivise anti-system voting, I take care to allow for potential non-voting when modelling vote choices using election survey data later in this thesis.

Statement of Hypotheses

In summary, I propose that it is the interaction of economic crisis with mainstream party convergence which opens the door for anti-system parties to mobilise. If mainstream parties

– for example, the Golden Dawn in Greece or the Sweden Democrats in traditionally liberal Scandinavia – this thesis is probably not the iron law that the original publication suggested. However, given the pervasiveness of public norms of tolerance (which may also stigmatise radical left parties such as Germany's Left Party, which has its roots in authoritarian communism) it is reasonable to think that some voters may still prefer not to vote at all rather than endorse some of the more controversial of the West's anti-system parties; particularly in contexts where, for historical reasons, these norms are held more strongly. This means that it is appropriate to allow for the possibility of abstention when conducting individual-level modelling of voter choice.

are sufficiently distinguishable, even if one presides over a period of economic difficulty, they may still retain the loyalty of the majority of their supporters. Polarisation afflicts their voters with partisan perceptual screens, and heightens the threat of an alternative mainstream party coming to power and implementing their radically different political preferences. The ideological depolarisation of mainstream parties reduces the strength of partisan sentiment amongst their voters, increasing levels of electoral volatility and making incumbent party support more responsive to fluctuations in the economy.

While this can benefit the incumbent mainstream party when the economy is good (as the supporters of mainstream opposition parties are no longer so prejudiced against them), it also opens the possibility for them to be felled by economic crisis as their own followers are more apt to punish them for perceived incompetence. However, in such cases these defectors will not necessarily flock to the mainstream opposition either. Under conditions of ‘crisis and convergence’, where the economy is ailing and opposition mainstream parties appear to be unlikely to implement substantively different policies to the incumbents, this incentive to sanction extends to the entire roster of established political actors. Once this occurs, substantial portions of the electorate, particularly those suffering economically themselves, are primed to look for an outsider with a clearly different party brand to inject new life into the stale political dialogue, and punish mainstream parties for their perceived collusive and incompetent ways.

Anti-system parties, which cannot be held accountable for past legislation and offer a sustained criticism against the dominant ideological assumptions and institutions that mainstream parties take for granted, are therefore products of a crisis of legitimacy

surrounding both the inputs (quality of representation and political choice) *and* outputs (quality of policy and macroeconomic conditions) of political systems (Easton 1965; Hobolt 2012; Scharpf 1997: 19). Both factors are needed to understand when and where radical outsiders can be expected to succeed.

For the avoidance of any doubt, Figure 2.2 explicitly lays out the expected observable implications of the crisis and convergence model. I use a two-by-two table to represent my hypotheses for the distribution of votes in a party system where there is economic hardship, or ideological convergence, or both, or neither. I assume that incumbent governments will tend to lose support in practically all cases given the general ‘costs of governing’ that have been identified in the literature (Nannestad & Paldam 2002); however anti-system parties will only be the main beneficiary of this collapse in support under particular conditions. To be clear, anti-system parties should be successful if, and only if, there is both a crisis and mainstream parties have become ideologically depolarised. Abstention rates should follow a very similar pattern. Both factors are equally necessary. In such circumstances radicals should be able to win votes from both mainstream incumbents and opposition parties, as the whole roster of establishment parties will be delegitimised by the current problems. In other situations, anti-system parties should simply not obtain wide levels of popularity. Incidents of entirely robust centre parties during such conditions, or rampaging anti-system parties against the backdrop of a growing economy and a healthy mainstream political choice set, must be counted as a partial falsification of my hypothesis¹⁶.

¹⁶ Incidentally, this model might also help explain why, contra the work of Downs (1957) and several subsequent studies (e.g. Ezrow 2005, 2008; Somer-Topcu 2015) mainstream parties are *not* always rewarded for centrism. Having a broad appeal might allow a Blair or a Clinton the opportunity to suck-up credit for

Figure 2.2: Crisis and Convergence Model Hypotheses

	<u><i>Mainstream Parties Ideologically Convergent</i></u>	<u><i>Mainstream Parties Ideologically Distinct</i></u>
<u><i>Economic Crisis</i></u>	Anti-System Parties (+) Mainstream Incumbent Parties (-) Mainstream Opposition Parties (-) Abstention (+)	Anti-System Parties (.) Mainstream Incumbent Parties (-) Mainstream Opposition Parties (+) Abstention (.)
<u><i>No Economic Crisis</i></u>	Anti-System Parties (.) Mainstream Incumbent Parties (-) Mainstream Opposition Parties (+) Abstention (.)	Anti-System Parties (.) Mainstream Incumbent Parties (.) Mainstream Opposition Parties (+) Abstention (-)

+ = Vote gain
 - = Vote loss
 . = No movement (ceteris paribus)

Conclusion

Given the limitations of monocausal explanations for complex phenomena such as political choice, rather than any one type of factor being individually sufficient, a mix of both favourable supply and demand-side variables is increasingly seen as necessary for radical parties to succeed (e.g. Golder 2016; Kitschelt 2018). For an outsider to experience success, voters need to want the policies represented by the party, the party must be seen as a credible/viable vehicle for those policies, and the institutional or political structures of a country must not unduly penalise the ability of that party to exploit the gap in the electoral market. An appropriate theory should, therefore, say something about both ‘supply’ and ‘demand’.

good performance from all sides during ‘boom times’, but it can also lead them with no core vote to fall back on during an economic winter (Karreth, Polk, and Allen 2013).

In a search for answers, Eurocentric studies have often overlooked the lessons from the Latin American political history (Roberts 2017)¹⁷. This is misguided. The patterns of constrained political choice sets (in part resulting from the external intervention of international creditors), declining party loyalties, rising electoral volatility, and triumphant populists feels incredibly relevant to contemporary advanced democracies. In many ways, Latin America's past could be Europe's future. For this reason, I have suggested that the answer to the puzzling relationship between anti-system support, the economy, and mainstream party convergence is best modelled in contingent terms. That is the positive effect of economic crisis on support for anti-system parties is increased when mainstream political parties have ideologically depolarised. The hypothesis revolves around the interplay of crisis and convergence. The interaction of supply and demand.

Over the course of four empirical chapters, this thesis tests the utility of this theory in helping to explain when and why voters in advanced democracies abandon establishment parties in favour of anti-system candidates. I begin, in the next chapter, by using aggregate-level data from a large number of Western democracies over an extensive time period, to see whether the interactive product of economic growth rates and the ideological depolarisation of mainstream parties' manifestos can predict anti-system vote shares. Subsequent chapters then examine the behaviour of individual voters in a reduced time period and a smaller

¹⁷ As this thesis was being finalised, one new text on recent British politics did explicitly frame recent political upheavals as a product of both long-term partisan dealignment and largely unexpected political 'shocks' in the same manner that I do here. Fieldhouse et al. (2020: 27) argue that abrupt changes to the status quo – such as the 2007-08 global financial crisis or the surge in eastern European immigration post-2004 – “*do not have inevitable consequences, and are not defined by their consequences*”, they merely create the opportunities that different politicians can respond to in different ways. That said, despite the similarity to my thesis, the authors focus only on one country and are predominantly concerned with electoral volatility rather than the rise of anti-system challengers per se.

number of countries in order to corroborate these results. Overall, I show that there is a solid-enough empirical foundation for the ‘crisis and convergence model’ of anti-system party success to at least deserve consideration in future discussions of radical party fortunes.

Chapter Three – In the Absence of Growth or Choice: The Ecological Correlates of Anti-System Party Electoral Success in 22 Advanced Democracies, 1950 – 2016

Abstract

In the previous chapter, I outlined a ‘crisis and convergence’ model of anti-system party success. I argued that radical outsiders should be most likely to receive substantial support when the depolarisation of mainstream parties coincides with an economic downturn. In this situation, both the ‘inputs’ and ‘outputs’ of the established political system can be targeted as insufficient, opening the door for an anti-system challenge. In this chapter I test this theory by modelling the anti-system vote share in over 350 elections in 22 advanced Western parliamentary democracies between 1950 and 2016. The results indicate that, as expected, the combined anti-system vote share is highest when economic growth is negative and mainstream party ideological distinctions are weakest. This finding is robust to several alternative approaches to model specification. Subsequent chapters use individual-level datasets to check for the microfoundations underpinning this aggregate-level result.

Introduction

In the last chapter, I outlined a theory of anti-system party support which I referred to as the ‘crisis and convergence’ model. This model spawned a series of hypotheses about which factors should catalyse a growing appetite for radical political actors who have not served in government, allied with governing parties, or accepted the legitimacy of the fundamental institutions, boundaries, norms, and actors of their political systems. To recap briefly, the combination of economic crisis with mainstream party ideological depolarisation is most favourable to anti-system party fortunes. In such instances, voters are primed to look for solutions to alleviate their hardships and, upon encountering policies from the mainstream opposition parties that are insufficiently different from the incumbents, begin to look outside the established order, creating an opportunity for anti-system parties to mobilise. Anti-

system parties therefore require a simultaneous breakdown of both the inputs and outputs of the established political system (Easton 1965; Hobolt 2012; Scharpf 1997).

Does this theory have any empirical support? Looking back over the varied fortunes of anti-system parties over several decades – as was depicted in Figures 1.2 and 1.3 – is there a robust association between greater levels of success and the confluence of widespread financial hardship with more ideologically homogenous mainstream competitors? This chapter uses a variety of regression-based modelling techniques to scrutinise this predicted relationship. It takes a long-view of the struggle between establishment and radical forces and analyses the aforementioned compiled dataset of aggregate anti-system party vote shares in 393 elections in 22 advanced democracies from (in most cases) 1950 to 2016, which is a very large sample size for studies of this nature (cf. Abedi 2002; Arzheimer and Carter 2006; Golder 2003; Hino 2012; March and Rommerskirchen 2015).

Aggregate- (or ‘ecological-’) level data only permits the analysis of contextual factors surrounding voters’ decision-making; individual motivations must be inferred rather than observed directly or declared by the actors themselves. However, such studies do have their advantages. Conducting a statistical inquiry into such a comprehensive dataset of real election results ensures that a) we can observe cases of ‘unsuccessful’ anti-system parties just as clearly as ‘successful’ examples, and b) that we have the most accurate possible measurement of anti-system popularity at any given time.

Individual-level studies of anti-system support are more prone to selection and measurement

bias because ‘failed cases’ are difficult to study accurately with voter surveys. In countries where anti-system parties are weak, few supporters will be captured by conventional representative sampling, and those that are will probably be operating under conditions of a strong social desirability bias that encourages them to hide their true partisanship (Arzheimer 2009; Golder 2003: 435). Furthermore, even self-described anti-system party supporters may be unable to act on their preferences if an organisationally-weak party simply cannot afford to present a candidate in their district. This is a problem as the principle dependent variable in most studies tends to be vote choice.

Being able to observe genuine cases of low levels of support for anti-system candidates is a huge justification for aggregate-level studies. Without analysing such instances, one will overestimate the effects of factors present in ‘successful’ cases as inherent to that outcome, when they may be merely coincidental. Conversely, factors systematically linked to instances of weak anti-system parties will be expunged from the statistical record and under-emphasised (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994:107–9). A given factor must be systematically associated with instances of high anti-system support *and* proven to be rarely associated with instances of low support if we are to make any proper, falsifiable, causal claims about its effect (Popper 1959: 19). Achieving a wide variety of outcomes on the dependent variable is therefore a hallmark of proper social science, and a major benefit of aggregate-level research.

Ultimately this chapter uncovers evidence for the crisis and convergence model that is highly robust to additional sensitivity analyses. Anti-system parties are more popular when the macroeconomy is sickly, mainstream parties campaign on ideologically similar platforms,

and particularly when both factors occur simultaneously. Future chapters supplement these findings by analysing the individual-level motivations believed to drive this relationship.

Measuring ‘Crisis’ and ‘Convergence’

In this section, I want to model the popularity of radical parties in the aforementioned countries and time period. My dependent variable is, accordingly, combined anti-system party¹⁸ general election vote shares (%) in the decisive electoral tier for lower house contests. In addition, I also need reliable indicators of the health of the macroeconomy, the extent of mainstream party ideological (de)polarisation, and any relevant control variables that could potentially confound the relationship between these factors and the anti-system vote.

I use per capita GDP growth rates to measure economic ‘crisis’. GDP is preferable to, say, inflation or unemployment, as it is easily comparable between countries and over a long period of time, measured with considerable precision, serves as a more holistic indicator of the state of the economy (Norpoth et al. 1991), and has been used extensively by theorists of democratic consolidation (Friedman 2005). I use growth in the year before an election, as previous research shows voters act retrospectively and evaluate the economy in this period (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2000; Nadeau, Lewis-Beck, and Bélanger 2013). In addition, using a lagged variable here also reduces the potential for reverse causality: GDP could be

¹⁸ That is, an ideologically heterogeneous group of anti-establishment actors outside of national government, who challenge the legitimacy of some aspects of the dominant norms, values, actors, and institutions of their political system. The classification of individual parties by country is made available in Appendix A. Vote shares were sourced from Nohlen’s compendiums for North America (2005), Europe (with Stover (2010)), and Asia and the Pacific (with Grotz and Hartman (2001)), alongside official national parliament websites for more recent elections.

slowed by rising political instability following anti-system party breakthroughs. These figures are for real GDP in constant 2011 national prices (US dollars) and were sourced from the Penn World Table, Version 9.1 (Feenstra, Inklaar, and Timmer 2015)¹⁹.

Measuring party system ‘convergence’ entails controversial decisions about which parties to include, how to place them on an ideological continuum, and how to combine these individual positions into an overall index of polarisation (or lack thereof). I improve on previous attempts by taking only the positions of mainstream parties, applying Prosser's (2014) validated scaling approach to summarising manifesto data, and using an adjusted version of Dalton's (2008) deviation-based formula for polarisation to capturing the level of ideological differentiation between all mainstream parties weighted by their relative size.

When measuring polarisation in a study like the present, it is important to only include the relative positions of mainstream parties in one's calculations (and not complementary, system-critical, or anti-system stances). Including the positions of *all* parties within a system (e.g. Hino 2012: 148; Spies 2013) makes the measure of polarisation partly endogenous to anti-system party success. Assuming that the radical party has a non-centrist position, the party system will appear more polarised the more popular the anti-system party becomes, which obscures any situation where challengers profit from mainstream convergence. For theoretical reasons I am only interested in establishment party polarisation, so only the positions of mainstream parties – that is, those who have served in government or made alliances with governing parties, and accept the basic values, norms, and practices of their

¹⁹ For 11 observations (those in 1950 or 1951), lagged growth was not available. Here annual growth statistics for the nearest available year were used instead. Results are robust to omitting these imputed cases.

political system – are measured. Parties like the French National Front, Italian Communist Party, UKIP etc. do not contribute at all to my measure of party polarisation. Appendix A categorises all parties by country.

I require continuous, comparable, quantitative measures of mainstream party positions for each election over a long period of time. For these purposes, the Manifesto Project on Political Representation [MARPOR] dataset (Volkens et al. 2019) is very useful.

The MARPOR team use official party manifestos, defined as “*texts published by a political party or presidential candidate in order to compete for votes in national elections*” (Werner, Lacewell, and Volkens 2015: 2), to understand what message each party is trying to convey to voters, and to know which issues the party is prioritising. Manifestos are a perfect source for answering these questions given their twin purposes of serving as a potential record of mandate for future governments and as a promotional device for electoral campaigns (Allen and Bara 2017; Topf 1994). While few voters actually read them directly, they receive generous coverage by journalists who do²⁰, given that they are the only direct and clear statements of policy attributable to the party as such, rather than individual representatives and their surrogates (Robertson 1976: 72). Qualitative evidence demonstrates that individual candidates try to campaign on the basis of these policy synopses (Adams, Ezrow, and Somer-Topcu 2011: 372) and, contrary to cynical interpretations, a quantitative study of several advanced democracies revealed that a majority of the proposals made in these documents by

²⁰ One poll from Britain in 2017 indicated that, while only around 33% of adults surveyed claimed to have ever read manifestos, a further 28% indicated that they often used website/newspaper comparisons of these documents as a guide during campaigns (BMG Research 2017).

incoming governments do tend to be enacted into law (Naurin 2011: 40). Also, on a more practical level, MARPOR's unrivalled coverage gives it an advantage compared to expert survey data (the main alternative), which force one to either exclude a wide number of election years from one's analysis, or else risk measurement bias and endogeneity problems by applying these survey results forwards and backwards to elections held at different times (cf. Abedi 2004)²¹.

The procedure that the team uses to extract the central 'messages' of this document is as follows. First, the group uses human coders to parse and code the entire text of a party's electoral programme. The manifesto is then divided into 'quasi-sentences', each comprising of a single statement that emphasises some policy goal, identified by one of 56 standard issue categories (listed in Table B.1 of Appendix B). For example, the official handbook for coders (Werner, Lacewell, and Volkens 2015) notes that "*We need to address our close ties with our neighbours (1) as well as the unique challenges facing small business owners in this time of economic hardship (2)*" and "*We must force our unions to step back from their demands or their policies will result in the loss of thousands of jobs, closing of schools, and diminishing pensions (3)*", are quasi-sentences that would be assigned to the issue categories (1) 'Internationalism: Positive' [issue code 107], (2) 'Economic Incentives: Positive' [402], and (3) 'Labour Groups: Negative' [702], respectively²². Finally, after each quasi-statement

²¹ And, in any case, there is good evidence to suggest that data from MARPOR are often highly correlated with expert testimony anyway (Bakker and Hobolt 2013: 41-4).

²² There is also a residual group of quasi-statements where "*no meaningful category applies*". For example, if the statement is completely devoid of meaning (e.g. a statement congratulating the country's trophy-winning soccer team), or refers to an unusual policy position outside the standard issue category schema (e.g. opposing environmental protections). Table B.1 presents the full list of issue components.

has been assigned to an issue category, one can get a sense of the ideological profile of any given party by observing the relative distribution of these categories in their manifestos.

This is usually achieved by converting the number of times that a particular issue (or group of issues) is emphasised into a percentage of all of the total quasi-sentences in that manifesto. These percentages are then aggregated into two fixed groups marked as either ‘left-wing’ or ‘right-wing’ (a residual category of issues that do not fit into either column is also usually created). The underlying assumption is that parties with more left-(right-)wing ideologies will be more likely to devote greater space in their manifesto to issue components that are understood to be left-(right-)wing in nature. Being further to the left or right is a function of the difference between the percentage of your electoral programme devoted to themes on the left and that devoted to themes on the right.

Several different methods have been identified for selecting which particular components should be ‘left’ or ‘right’ (Franzmann and Kaiser 2006; Gabel and Huber 2000; Jahn 2011; Laver and Budge 1992). The most commonly used (e.g. Hino 2012; Spoon and Klüver 2019) is still MARPOR’s own ‘RiLe’ scale which is large based on inferences from the patterns and combinations of different ideas in left and right-wing philosophy around the turn of the 20th century (Volkens et al. 2013: 88–90). However, the validity of this scale (displayed in Table B.2 of Appendix B) has been widely-criticised (Franzmann and Kaiser 2006; Gabel and Huber 2000; Gemenis 2013) on the grounds that several of its components appear unrelated to traditional divisions between left and right. For example, one might question just how crucial components like ‘civic mindedness’ and ‘constitutionalism’ (both

of which can push a party to the right, according to the RiLe scale) really are to a party's ideology.

The conventional defence of the RiLe index is that it actually correlates very strongly with alternative scaling methods that are also based on manifesto data, or derived from alternative data sources like expert surveys (see Volkens et al. 2013: 93–101 for a review). However, Prosser (2014: 93–94) argues that this type of validity test is insufficient for scrutinising individual component selections. The problem with checking for the association between entire scales is that, given that the RiLe scale (et al) contains a large number of components, the overall index can be strongly associated with whatever benchmark you are using, even while certain individual components themselves are not or are, in fact, even negatively associated with the rest of the featured components. Prosser demonstrates that the RiLe scale's internal consistency (measured by Cronbach's Alpha) is barely changed by omitting components like 'Constitutionalism [203]' altogether, or even by moving such intuitively 'left-wing' components as 'Nationalisation: Positive' [413] to the right of the scale. Furthermore, the strength of association between individual components featured in RiLe is remarkably low, with the mean correlation being just 0.11 and 0.12 for 'left-wing' and 'right-wing' issues respectively. Given that standard approaches to component selection do not weight individual components in accordance with their importance to the assumed left-right divide, there is a danger that position estimates based on these methods could be in part driven by components which are actually not strongly associated with left and right ideology themselves (or are, but in the 'wrong' direction).

Prosser (2014: 96–97) develops a new approach to scale validation that offers the chance of a more discriminatory method of component selection. His method is ‘self-referential’. That is, starting with the RiLe scale itself (serving as a baseline, or ‘best guess’ at what an ideological spectrum should look like), he checks the correlation of each individual component with the rest of the left-right scale minus that particular component (in order to prevent an endogenous relationship). Any component that does not have a correlation coefficient with an absolute value of greater than 0.15 (an obvious ‘breakpoint’ when viewing a histogram of all of the components’ correlation coefficients) is removed. In an iterative process, he then runs this test again correlating the remaining coefficients with the ‘new RiLe’ scale (pruned of the poorly related components from the first test), now removing components if they fall below a new threshold. He continues this process until the remaining components are all sufficiently associated with the left and right parts of the new scale, in the expected direction.

This method is efficient at weeding out many of the ‘non-essential’ components featured in the original RiLe index. For example, ‘Economic Protectionism’(404) and ‘Law and Order (605)’ are not sufficiently related to the core of the left vs right distinction. Conversely, favourable mentions of an ‘Anti-Growth Economy (416)’ and ‘Multiculturalism: Negative (608)’ are found to be closely related to other left-wing and right-wing positions respectively, even though they do not feature in the original scale. The final collection of ‘left’ and ‘right’ components in this new ‘Prosser scale’ are displayed in Table B.3 of Appendix B. Prosser (2014: 99) demonstrates that the internal validity of his scale (the mean exogenous correlation of each component with the scale) is significantly greater than that of the original RiLe scale ($r = 0.21$ v $r = 0.13$).

Also, rather than simply take the difference between the percentage of ‘left’ issue statements versus the percentage of ‘right’ statements (as with the RiLe scale), Prosser adopts the logit-based method of component scaling promoted by Lowe et al’s (2011). I.e.

$$\text{Lowe et al. Left-Right Position} = \text{Log} ((R \text{ Statements} + 0.5)/(L \text{ Statements} + 0.5))$$

Where R is the raw number of right-wing quasi statements and L the raw number of left-wing statements. Here 0.5 is added to all counts to make position estimates crated from very small counts more stable (estimates derived from larger numbers of sentences are barely affected). Party positions will theoretically range from minus infinity (most left) to plus infinity (most right), though the use of the log-scales ensures that moving further to the extremes becomes increasingly difficult as statements are racked up. To ease interpretation, though, Prosser (2014) rescaled the Lowe et al. (2011) values so that each party’s score is constrained to run 0 – 10, with 10 being the most right-wing party possible (i.e. one which made only manifesto statements on issue components associated with right-wing ideology) and 0 being the most left-wing.

This is an improvement on the original method of scaling as a) left-right scores are no longer affected by the number of ‘neutral’ statements in a manifesto that are neither left nor right²³,

²³ For example, consider the fictional ‘Red Reform Party’. Overall, this party dedicate 20% of their electoral programme to classic left-wing such as economic planning and nationalisation. They spend just 5% on conventional right-wing issues like positive references to the military and political authority. However, the bulk of the document (75%) is dedicated to so-called ‘neutral issue components’ such as constitutional reform. In such a case, though there is four times as much emphasis on left-wing issues than right-wing ones, the Red Reform Party would be assigned a left-right score of only -15% (indicating mild left-wing tendencies). Estimates of party positions will be biased towards the centre as to get the maximum ‘left’ score one would have to devote no space at all to any non-positional statements, in addition to making no right-wing statements. This problem is acknowledged by the MARPOR team themselves (Volkens et al. 2013: 92) , and is particularly

and b) due to the use of a log transformation we no longer assume linearity in component aggregation. That is, that each additional quasi-sentence has a consistently sized ‘effect’ on pushing a manifesto to the left or right. This seems unrealistic. For example, if Party A, a conservative party, goes from making no positive references to the welfare state in one manifesto to a single mention of its virtues in the next, the impact on that party’s ideological position in the eyes of the reader is probably greater than that which occurs for Party B, a social democratic party, moving from 100 positive references to 101 in the same time period. Lowe et al. (2011) argue that there should instead be a pattern of diminishing returns. Each additional bit of emphasis placed on the same topic should matter less and less for where we consider that party to be positioned ideologically. This makes some sense. Voters are more likely to notice Party A transitioning from being totally opposed to the welfare state to having some positive things to say about it than they are Party B heaping yet more praise on an institution that have long since made their adoration for clear.

Critics of using a single unidimensional left-right scales to summarise contemporary Western party systems may still feel uncomfortable with deriving measures of polarisation from components that relate to both economic and socio-cultural political issues. Some argue that unidimensional spectrums based on traditional political conflicts over economic interests are outdated in the modern era due to the rise of new (and orthogonal) values-based cleavages that capture positions on issues like immigration, international organisations, and sexuality (Bornschieer 2010; Flanagan and Lee 2003; Hooghe and Marks 2018; Houtman,

problematic for me given that my hypotheses revolve around the ideological distance separating mainstream parties. I cannot test these hypotheses if references to so-called ‘neutral statements’ (which may well not be distributed randomly among countries and time-periods) are arbitrarily forcing party-placements away from the extremes of left and right.

Achterberg, and Derks 2008; Kriesi et al. 2006; Oesch and Rennwald 2018). However, the general left-right spectrum is a surprisingly ‘resilient’ and ‘flexible’ heuristic that often captures aspects of these other political debates and can be easily modelled in empirical papers (Mair 2007). Additionally, my study covers periods long before this second dimension of political conflict is supposed to have become salient. Furthermore, using a large unidimensional axis means making fewer assumptions about which issues a voter considers salient when deciding to punish mainstream convergence. Though I hypothesise that convergence is punished more greatly when it coincides with economic crisis, it could be that voters consider the mainstream consensus on, say, immigration to be partly responsible for these troubles. This would be obscured by only looking at mainstream polarisation on purely economic grounds. Finally, while previous studies of radical parties have preferred to use a specific subdimensions (i.e. economic tax-spend or sociocultural liberal-authoritarian spectrums) which pertain only to those issues on which said party competes (e.g. Arzheimer 2009; Arzheimer and Carter 2006; Lubbers, Merove, and Peer 2002), I am dealing with anti-system parties as a whole, so the use of a single overarching dimension is probably more appropriate. For these reasons, and theoretical parsimony, the general left-right axis is used.

To summarise, the components used to form the ‘objective’ left-right scales used in the analysis in Chapters Three and Four were taken from Prosser (2014) who improved the content-validity of earlier scale by way of an iterative self-referential approach²⁴. The next task is to convert these disparate values into a single index that summarises how far apart mainstream party positions can be said to be at any given national election. The level of

²⁴ I am grateful to Chris Prosser for providing me with the Stata do-files needed to generate party left-right positions using his scaling procedure.

dispersion will then be said to capture the degree of ideological polarisation amongst mainstream parties in any given political system at that time.

One approach is to simply take the difference between the left and rightmost establishment parties (e.g. Abedi 2004). In Germany in 2013, the mainstream parties were (from left to right): the Greens, the Social Democratic Party [SPD], the Christian Democratic Union-Christian Social Union [CDU-CSU] alliance, and the Free Democratic Party [FDP]. Using the Prosser-Lowe et al. scaling method, their left-right positions were 4.04, 4.28, 5.25, and 5.51, respectively. This first range-based measure of polarisation would simply take the absolute difference between the positions of the Greens and the FDP, to get an index of polarisation equal to 1.47.

The advantage of this measure is its parsimony, but also the way in which it focuses attention on the maximum level of differentiation between all mainstream parties. For a left-wing voter considering a vote for the anti-system Left Party, the outlying position of the Greens could be highly pertinent. However, this measure also has very obvious flaws. It does not account for the fact that mainstream parties are often of very different sizes. In 2013 the CDU-CSU and SPD were several times larger than the two flank parties in terms of both votes and legislative seats, which means that it is the difference between the SPD and the CDU-CSU that accounts for a far greater proportion of the observed political debate in the country, as well as the potential for policy transitions that could occur as governments rotate. Measures based on the absolute maximum ideological range of mainstream parties will significantly overestimate the real amount of ideological diversity in party systems that are dominated by large centrist parties.

An alternative option is to instead take the difference between the two largest parties of the mainstream right and left (e.g. Arzheimer and Carter 2006; Carter 2005; Kitschelt and McGann 1995; Norris 2005; Spies and Franzmann 2011). This means the SPD and the CDU-CSU in the German example, giving us a new (and smaller) polarisation score of 0.97. However, while this measure highlights the extent of the ideological choice provided by those parties actually competing to lead government, it will dramatically underestimate polarisation in countries with significant mainstream ‘flank’ parties, which could prove a suitable alternative for radically-inclined voters. The positions of the Greens and the FDP would be ignored entirely.

Ideally, an indicator of mainstream party polarisation would reflect the fact that, due to their size, the policy offers of different governments will be determined primarily by the difference between large establishment parties like the SPD and CDU-CSU, yet still not neglect the more outlying Green and FDP positions. It would incorporate both the relative position of each party along the left-right scale, and the party’s position weighted by its size. Ultimately, both the above strategies are inefficient as they ignore the positioning of other mainstream parties beyond the chosen two, so give a misleading account of the choices facing voters.

To deal with this conundrum, Dalton (2008: 906–907) has developed a formula for party polarisation that collects parties’ deviations from the ‘average’ left-right position in their country, and weights those deviations by vote share before aggregating them. His formula is the following:

$$\text{Dalton Polarisation Score} = 10 * \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^N V_i \left(\frac{P_i - \bar{P}}{5} \right)^2}$$

Where N is the number of parties; V is the vote share for a given party, P_i is a given party's left-right position on a 0-10 scale, $\bar{P}$ is the party system average L-R score weighted by the size of each party (i.e. it equals the sum of each party's vote share multiplied by their L-R score, divided by the total vote share of those parties), and the division by 5 is an arbitrary adjustment to centre the index on the 0-10 scale (Dalton 2008: 906). Importantly, Dalton demonstrates that this formula is independent of the effective number of parties at any given election. The Pearson's correlation between his measure of polarisation and the Herfindahl index of legislative fragmentation²⁵ among his sample of over 30 countries is a tiny 0.07.

However, while this measure provides a good indication of the central tendency of a given party system as a whole, to use it in the study of a subset of parties (i.e. mainstream vs non-mainstream parties) risks incurring biases. As the formula weights each party's distance from the average left-right position by their vote share before summing these deviations, where the sum of those vote shares fall short of 100, so polarisation will appear to be lower. This means that values of the index that notionally indicate mainstream party ideological convergence may really just be endogenous to the increased levels of success of anti-system parties in that country (causing mainstream party vote shares to be lower). A party system dominated by centrist mainstream parties could yield a higher value of mainstream polarisation than a party system which pits two small mainstream parties at

²⁵ The formula for which is $\sum (party\ seat\ share\ in\ legislature)^2$, where i represents individual parties. The Herfindahl index can be interpreted as the probability that two deputies picked at random from the legislature will be of different parties, with higher values indicating a less fractionalized party system.

opposite ends of the political spectrum against a legion of minor anti-system parties, as the former will attach a much larger combined weight to the contributions of their mainstream parties. Given my hypothesis that anti-system vote shares are in fact caused by lower levels of mainstream polarisation, clearly this original formula is insufficient for my needs.

It is therefore necessary to adjust Dalton's formula slightly, in order to make it independent of the size of the overall mainstream party vote share. I do this by dividing the weighted contribution of each party to the total level of polarisation by the overall sum of mainstream party votes. The new formula is thus:

$$\textit{Adjusted Dalton Polarisation Score} = 10 * \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^N V_i \left(\frac{P_i - \bar{P}}{5} \right)^2}{\sum_{i=1}^N V_i}}$$

This new variable theoretically runs from 0, where all parties, regardless of size, take the exact same position on the left-right scale, to 10, where two large parties sitting at opposite ends of the political spectrum split the entire mainstream party vote share between them. Given that the formula is based on manifesto issue components, what this means in practice is that, in the first extreme, all parties exhibit the exact same balance of left and right themes (identified in Table B.3) in their election programmes; in the second extreme, one large party completely focuses on left-wing statements, and the other purely on right-wing ones. Using this approach, the final value for weighted mainstream party polarisation in Germany is 1.06, which is somewhere between the values produced by the two simpler range-based methods. Given that my formula is significantly more complex than these older approaches, I present a step-by-step example of how it is calculated in Appendix B.

The interaction of GDP growth and the extent of mainstream party convergence is of primary interest; however, a number of variables that have been linked to both levels of party system polarisation and radical party success are included as controls. Firstly, a dummy variable indicating a grand coalition government – that is, a coalition of the electorally largest left and right-wing mainstream parties. Though these deals are a potential cause of depolarisation, they may provide a different mechanism to voter dissatisfaction. Frustration might arise due to the lack of an effective parliamentary opposition, rather than convergence per se. Additional controls are the proportionality of the electoral system, the degree of institutional federalism, the size of the party system, the overall size of the economy, and exposure to economic globalisation²⁶. They are measured, respectively, by the effective electoral threshold (or formal threshold where larger) (Bormann and Golder 2013); the Regional Authority Index [RAI] (Hooghe et al. 2016), which scores countries from 0-30 according to the extent to which political competencies are devolved to subnational government; the lagged effective number of electoral parties (Bormann and Golder 2013; Laakso and Taagepera 1979); the *level* of real GDP per capita; and merchandise imports plus

²⁶ I derived these controls from the debate on the causes of mainstream party (de)polarisation. Some argue that political centrism is effectively mandated by the weakened capacity of domestic government to control the economic environment in the contemporary globalised economy (Kitschelt 2000a: 162–166). Doyle (2010) also finds that a country's level of exposure to international trade is associated with the undertaking of free-market (privatisations) reforms regardless of incumbent ideology. Alternatively, spatial theory holds that depolarisation is endogenous to political competition: parties simply move to the centre due to vote-seeking imperatives in two-party systems (Downs 1957), but in multi-party systems they distribute themselves with relatively equal niches of voters between them – creating more opportunities for voters towards the extremes to express their more polarised attitudes (Sartori 1976; Andrews and Money 2009). Exposure to ruthless international markets, and the opportunities presented by a more permissive electoral system and a larger party system could therefore be plausibly associated with anti-system challengers. Regional decentralisation and a permissive national electoral system boosts minor parties by giving them the opportunity to win seats and grow their profile at lower levels of competition first, as well as encouraging more instrumentally-oriented voters that support for them is not simply a 'wasted vote' (Dow 2011; Duverger 1954; Hakhverdian and Koop 2007; Lijphart 1990, 2012; Willey 1998).

exports as a percentage of GDP (Feenstra et al. 2015). All of the non-institutional variables are lagged by one year; all variables bar the RAI were logged due to their skewed distribution²⁷. I also include decade period dummies to account for any potential variation in results over time. With the exception of the control for the presence of a ‘grand coalition’, for presentation purposes these variables are not displayed; however, apart from the overall size of the party system (positive) and the economy (negative), none of these variables have a statistically significant association with the anti-system vote. Appendix C displays descriptive statistics for all the variables in this chapter, along with additional information about coding procedures.

Given that election-years are not independent but clustered within countries, and certain countries (for any number of historical, geographic, or cultural reasons) might be consistently more hospitable for anti-system parties, modelling strategies should account for unobserved heterogeneity that could bias one’s estimates. In the interests of robustness, I adopt a plural approach and use three different models: a pooled dataset with clustered standard errors (by country), fixed-effects (by country) and random-effects. The latter strategy makes most efficient use of the data, but relies on the assumption that the independent variables are not correlated with underlying country-specific heterogeneity (which is also assumed to be consistent over time). The former approaches make no such assumptions, but they are less efficient. The fixed-effects model only observes ‘within-country’ variation in the effects of my variables, whereas the random-effects model

²⁷ To account for potential multicollinearity between the electoral threshold and the size of the party system, these variables were dropped and re-entered sequentially. My results were unchanged. There are similarly no substantive changes if one was to measure electoral system permissiveness using only the electoral threshold or, alternatively, average district magnitude (results available on request).

considers both this and variation between different countries (Wooldridge 2002). Use of the Hausmann test revealed that my random-effects model is indeed a consistent estimator; however, all models display essentially the same results.

Results and Discussion

To recap, my hypothesis is that the marginal effects of both weak economic growth and mainstream party convergence on anti-system performance are co-dependent. The impact of a downturn in pushing voters towards radical parties is maximised when mainstream parties have depolarised; and the impact of mainstream party convergence should be more pronounced when the economy is doing badly. I would therefore expect to see negative coefficients for economic growth and mainstream party ideological polarisation, and a positive coefficient for the interaction of the two (which would suggest that the negative effect of each constituent term is weakened when the value of the other is positive). My results are presented in Table 3.1. Variables are entered sequentially: first the main products of my interaction alone, then with the interaction, then with my chosen controls, and finally with my time-period fixed-effects.

In all models, the coefficients demonstrate the same basic trend. The closer that mainstream parties are located to each other on the left-right dimension at a given election, the stronger the performance of anti-system parties. Likewise, the weaker pre-election year per-capita-GDP growth, the stronger that anti-system parties perform on average. Most interestingly (and importantly for my study) the effects of both factors are magnified when an interactive equation is specified. That is, the effect of negative economic growth on fuelling support

Table 3.1: Modelling Variation in Aggregate Anti-System Party Electoral Support in 22 Advanced Parliamentary Democracies, 1950-2016

	Pooled OLS Model (With Country-Clustered SEs)				Country Fixed Effects				Random Effects			
	Model 1a	Model 1b	Model 1c	Model 1d	Model 2a	Model 2b	Model 2c	Model 2d	Model 3a	Model 3b	Model 3c	Model 3d
% GDP _{pc} Growth (<i>y</i> – 1)	- 0.52 (0.34)	- 1.27 * (0.55)	- 1.33 * (0.49)	- 1.20 * (0.43)	- 0.45 ** (0.17)	- 1.11 ** (0.34)	- 1.02 ** (0.32)	- 0.94 ** (0.31)	- 0.46 ** (0.17)	- 1.14 ** (0.34)	- 1.07 ** (0.31)	- 1.01 ** (0.31)
Mainstream Party L-R Polarisation	- 2.46 * (1.10)	- 3.98 ** (1.16)	- 4.20 ** (0.89)	- 3.72 ** (0.80)	- 1.64 * (0.65)	- 2.93 ** (0.86)	- 2.85 ** (0.80)	- 3.01 ** (0.80)	- 1.75 ** (0.64)	- 3.06 ** (0.86)	- 2.91 ** (0.80)	- 3.07 ** (0.80)
Growth * Polarisation		0.60 * (0.28)	0.63 * (0.25)	0.66 ** (0.24)		0.53 * (0.24)	0.57 ** (0.22)	0.58 ** (0.21)		0.53 * (0.23)	0.56 ** (0.22)	0.59 ** (0.22)
Grand Coalition Government			5.74 * (2.16)	5.95 ** (1.72)			6.29 ** (1.19)	6.51 ** (1.19)			6.51 ** (0.25)	6.20 ** (1.15)
Controls			Included	Included			Included	Included			Included	Included
Decade Fixed-Effects				Included				Included				Included
Constant	15.51 (2.25)	17.32 (2.56)	12.71 (22.54)	74.27 (37.35)	14.27 (1.00)	15.84 (1.21)	6.29 (13.01)	24.13 (28.91)	14.89 (1.49)	16.48 (1.66)	- 0.14 (11.26)	53.19 (21.37)
<i>R</i> ²	0.06	0.07	0.25	0.32	0.35	0.36	0.47	0.49	0.06	0.07	0.22	0.31
F (X) <i>df</i> ₁ , <i>df</i> ₂	3.37 2 21	4.05 ** 3 21	7.41 ** 9 21	25.72 ** 15 21	7.50 ** 2 369	6.72 ** 3 368	11.26 ** 9 362	7.85 ** 15 356				
Corr. (u _i , X _b)					0.11	0.11	- 0.49	- 0.38				
Wald Chi ² <i>df</i>									16.77 ** 2	22.13 ** 3	100.55 ** 9	129.31 ** 15
Sigma_U					5.67	5.64	7.08	6.46	5.34	5.48	4.71	3.32
Sigma_e					8.38	8.34	7.63	7.55	8.38	8.34	7.63	7.55
Rho (ICC)					0.31	0.31	0.46	0.42	0.29	0.30	0.28	0.16
N (elections)	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393
N (countries)	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22
T (av. elections per county)	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18

* *p*-value < 0.05; ** *p*-value < 0.01.

Hausmann Tests on FE v RE models: *p* = > 0.05.

Note: The dependent variable is the percentage vote share for all anti-system parties in a given general election in the decisive electoral tier of the lower house.

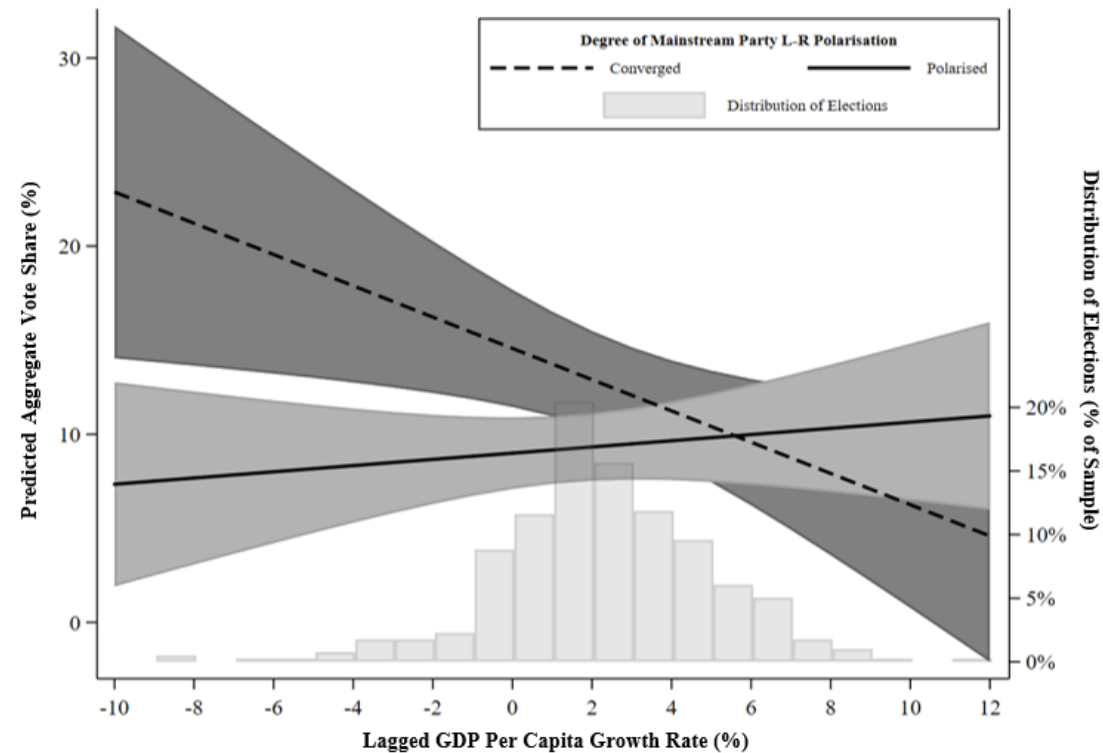
Controls: Logged effective number of electoral parties (lagged one election); logged trade exposure (lagged one year); logged level of GDP per capita (lagged one year); logged effective or legal electoral threshold; level of regional decentralisation (Regional Authority Index score). Decade fixed effects begin with 1950-59 as the reference category.

Data Source: An original dataset compiled from multiple different sources by the author. See main text for details.

for anti-system parties is much greater when mainstream parties are ideologically convergent, and the impact of mainstream depolarisation is increased when the economy is doing badly. This interaction effect is strong and statistically significant in all models. The effect does not diminish much when the other controls relating to the extent of economic globalisation and electoral and party system features are added into the equation. My coefficients are similarly unaltered once time-dummies are added, suggesting that the findings are not driven by some confounding time-related trend. A period of ‘crisis and convergence’ is associated with stronger anti-system parties.

Interestingly, these effects are above and beyond that produced by the presence of a grand coalition government alone, which seems to have a (substantially large) association with support for radical parties even when the reduction in ideological divisions between these parties is accounted for. This might mean that the absence of a large mainstream party holding the government to account is itself negatively evaluated by the electorate. That said, this could also simply be endogenous to rising anti-system party support. In countries such as Germany, Sweden, and Belgium, where major parties have upheld a cordon sanitaire against participation with the post-communist Left Party and radical right Sweden Democrats and Flemish Interest parties, respectively, mainstream parties, with their increasingly reduced legislative cohorts, might just have fewer and fewer options for achieving a parliamentary majority without relying on support from these ostracised radicals. This new anti-system threat may itself have forced old enemies from the centre-left and -right to put aside old differences and join together for the greater good. However, in a vicious cycle, this grand coalition-building may simply increase the appeal of those anti-establishment voices further. I return to the question of how grand coalition governments

Figure 3.1: Predicted Anti-System Party Vote Share by Lagged Economic Growth Rate and Mainstream Party Polarisation



Note: The lines indicate the predicted anti-system party vote share for different levels of lagged economic growth and mainstream party ideological polarisation. The margin estimates and 95% confidence intervals are derived from Table 1, Model 1d (a pooled OLS model with standard errors clustered by country). Economic growth is measured in terms of GDP per capita in the year prior to an election. This variable has a mean of 2.3 and a standard deviation of 2.7. A histogram is also presented showing the distribution of elections according to their value on this variable (each percentage equals roughly 4 elections). The two lines indicate how the predicted vote share varies according to growth, both when mainstream parties are ideologically ‘converged’ (mainstream party manifesto polarisation is set at one standard deviation below the sample mean) and where they are ideologically ‘polarised’ (one standard deviation above the mean). Other variables in the model are held constant at their mean. Estimates refer to the first round of general elections in the electoral tier apportioning the greatest number of lower house seats. Post-authoritarian elections were excluded. $N = 393$ general elections (average of 18 per country).

Election Data Source: Nohlen (2005), Nohlen, Grotz, and Hartmann (2001), Nohlen and Stover (2010), and various official national parliamentary websites. Anti-system parties were classified by the author (see Appendix A).

Party Position Data Source: Comparative Manifesto Project, Version 2019a (Volkens *et al* 2019), using the scaling method of Lowe *et al* (2011) and Prosser (2014).

Economic Growth Data Source: Real per capita GDP in constant 2011 national prices (US dollars) from Penn World Table Version 9. (Feenstra *et al* 2015).

are perceived, independent of policy convergence, in Chapter Six.

Substantially, how large are these effects? Figure 3.1 is instructive. Here, using the values of my pooled-OLS model with country-clustered standard errors and period fixed-effects²⁸, (Table 3.1, Model 1d), the predicted anti-system party vote is plotted for different levels of mainstream party ideological convergence and economic growth (all other variables are set at their means). The two lines indicate the predicted vote share for anti-system parties when mainstream parties are either relatively similar (one deviation below the mean level of polarisation) or differentiated (one standard deviation above the mean), for different values of per capita GDP growth. The shading indicates 95% confidence intervals. To aid interpretation, I overlay a histogram that depicts the distribution of my cases in regard to the level of economic growth at the time. Please note that 1% of all cases is roughly equivalent to 4 country-elections in my sample.

The mediating impact of mainstream convergence on the relationship between the economy and the anti-system vote is palpable. Anti-system parties clearly perform best only when the economy is in recession and mainstream parties are ideologically convergent. In virtually all other conditions, the lines indicate that the predicted vote shares for anti-system parties are consistently small. The impact of mainstream convergence on pushing voters towards anti-system parties declines thereafter as the economy improves. Interestingly, the association between mainstream party ideological convergence and anti-system party success essentially disappears at non-negative levels of economic growth (the confidence

²⁸ I chose to graph this particular model due to its relatively easy interpretation. Interaction plots of the fixed- and random-effects models look very similar.

intervals overlap almost immediately above the 0% mark). This may reflect the reluctance of voters to punish parties for reaching a bipartisan agreement on a ‘winning formula’ for raising living standards. Alternatively, it may just reflect the inability of anti-system parties to effectively mobilise once a major demand-side grievance has effectively ‘dried up’, regardless of supply-side factors.

Consider the data in Figure 3.2, which depicts predicted marginal effects derived from the same model. This two-by-two table can be compared directly to Figure 2.2 in Chapter Two, which presented my hypotheses for when anti-system parties should be stronger or weaker. I argued that these parties should perform best when the economy is in crisis and mainstream parties are ideologically convergent. Here I use ‘crisis’ to mean GDP per capita growth that is two standard deviations below the sample mean (-3.1%) and ‘no crisis’ for a situation where growth is two standard deviations above that level (+7.7%). Likewise, mainstream convergence refers to a situation where there is a level of ideological homogeneity amongst mainstream parties (according to manifesto data) that is one standard deviation above the sample mean; ‘no convergence’ indicates a level of mainstream homogeneity one standard deviation below.

The data show that I was correct to predict that anti-system parties would gain the most support under ‘crisis and convergence’ conditions. During a severe recession, anti-system candidates will receive on average around 16% of the vote if mainstream parties are ideologically convergent, but only around 7% when those parties are ideologically polarised. The effect of the economy more than doubles due to the particular political supply-side that

Figure 3.2: Crisis, Convergence, and the Predicted Anti-System Vote Share

	<u>Mainstream Convergence</u>	<u>No Mainstream Convergence</u>
<u>Economic Crisis</u>	15.7 % (11.5 – 20.0)	7.1 % (4.8 – 9.4)
<u>No Economic Crisis</u>	6.8 % (2.4 – 11.2)	8.9 % (5.4 – 12.3)

Note: Figures indicate the predicted total vote share for anti-system parties under a variety of conditions. Economic crisis refers to a pre-election year GDP per capita growth two standard deviation below the sample mean (-3.1%), ‘no crisis’ refers to growth two standard deviation above it (+7.7%). Mainstream convergence refers to a situation where there is a level of ideological homogeneity amongst mainstream parties (according to manifesto data) that is one standard deviation above the sample mean; ‘no convergence’ indicates a level of mainstream homogeneity one standard deviation below. Estimates are derived from Table 3.1, Model 1d (a pooled OLS model with standard errors clustered by country) all institutional and macroeconomic, and time-period control variables are held at their means; no grand coalition is present. 95% confidence intervals are provided in parenthesis.

voters face. In all other conditions, anti-system parties perform much less well.

How robust are these findings? In Appendix D I make a number of changes to the models above to test for sensitivity of my results to different specifications. First, in acknowledgement of research which argues that west European party systems are increasingly multidimensional (Flanagan and Lee 2003; Hooghe and Marks 2018; Kriesi et al. 2006), I recreate the regressions above using an alternative measure of left-right position that only includes components that relate to the classic economic ‘left-right’ spectrum (i.e. questions of income inequality and government intervention in the economy)²⁹. Table D.1 shows that the results are almost identical to the original model. Anti-system parties

²⁹ The components featured in this scale are listed in Table B.4 in Appendix B.

experience more success when mainstream parties have similar ideological positions on left-right economic issues, and this convergence corresponds with an economic downturn. This is perhaps understandable: the Pearson's correlation between this index and my original one is 0.80 ($n = 393$, $p < 0.01$). In Table D.2 and D.3 I use two simpler (and, as I discussed previously, less ideal) measures of mainstream party polarisation: the ideological range between the two left and rightmost mainstream parties (following Abedi 2004), and the two largest mainstream parties (following Arzheimer and Carter 2006), respectively. Again, the results are substantially similar (though the interaction coefficient on the latter is only significant at the 0.1 level). Table D.4 uses a logged dependent variable in order to minimise potential distortions from any outlying observations with very large anti-system vote shares. These results are, once again, practically unchanged. Finally, in Table D.5, I break my sample into recession years and non-recession years, which is an alternative way that one could capture 'economic crisis' as opposed to the more conventional continuous measure of economic growth. As my theory would predict, the effect of mainstream polarisation on the anti-system vote is clearly more sizeable when the economy is in recession, as oppose to when it is growing.

These tests give me confidence that my results are not the product of a particular approach to model specification³⁰. That said, there is one further approach that is worth considering.

³⁰ I tested several other approaches which, for reasons of space, I cannot present in this document. Many similar studies use Tobit models to account for the fact that some observations may be 'left-censored' by the non-contestation of any radical party in a particular election where the political opportunity structure appears unfavourable (Jackman and Volpert 1996; Golder 2003; March and Rommerskirchen 2015). Studying all anti-system parties means that few observations are actually left-censored in my dataset (16/393); however, my results are unchanged by adopting a Tobit model. Adding clustered standard errors to my fixed-effects model also does not jeopardise coefficient statistical significance. Finally, results are robust to dropping any one

In Table 3.2 I add a lagged dependent variable to my model (i.e. the anti-system vote share at the previous election). This which means that I am now effectively predicting the change in anti-system party support from one election to the next³¹. This helps alleviate some potential endogeneity concerns. For instance, it could be that mainstream parties move closer together in response to a growing anti-system cohort in parliament undermining their ability craft parliamentary majorities with their traditional allies. Also this might reflect my theory that conditions of ‘crisis and convergence’ grant a sudden window of opportunity to anti-system parties better than my earlier approaches (which were effectively modelling absolute levels of anti-system voting, rather than increases or decreases). The results are indeed consistent my overall narrative. While the size of the coefficients for economic growth, mainstream polarisation, and the interaction of the two are clearly reduced (by up to half) in relation to their counterparts from the previous models, they remain (once controls and period fixed-effects are added) statistically significant, and in the expected direction.

What if I changed the criteria needed to qualify as an anti-system party? Tables D.6 and D.7 in Appendix D present replications of my main models from Table 3.1, but change the dependent variable to the combined vote share of all parties with a radical ideology, whether in government or not, and the combined vote share of all parties that do not serve in government or make alliances with governing parties, whether radical or not. That is, the

particular country from the dataset and re-running the analysis. The results for all these supplementary tests are available on request.

³¹ Please note that I am unable to run a random-effects model with this new specification, as such a model ‘fails’ the Hausmann test for the appropriateness of random-effects. This indicates that results under random-effects are inconsistent given the inevitable correlation between unobserved country effects and the lagged dependent variable that is now included.

Table 3.2: A Replication of Table 3.1 Using A Lagged Dependent Variable

	Pooled OLS Model (With Country-Clustered SEs)				Country Fixed Effects			
	Model 1a	Model 1b	Model 1c	Model 1d	Model 2a	Model 2b	Model 2c	Model 2d
% GDP _{pc} Growth ($y - 1$)	- 0.35 (0.21)	- 0.77 * (0.38)	- 0.76 * (0.37)	- 0.72 * (0.34)	- 0.39 ** (0.14)	- 0.84 ** (0.30)	- 0.74 ** (0.29)	- 0.67 * (0.28)
Mainstream Party L-R Polarisation	- 0.90 (0.62)	- 1.75 * (0.82)	- 1.73 * (0.82)	- 1.70 * (0.76)	- 0.81 (0.56)	- 1.71 * (0.76)	- 1.72 * (0.73)	- 1.87 ** (0.73)
Growth * Polarisation		0.34 (0.22)	0.34 † (0.19)	0.37 * (0.18)		0.36 † (0.20)	0.38 † (0.20)	0.38 * (0.19)
Grand Coalition Government			4.71 ** (1.38)	4.82 ** (1.20)			6.53 ** (1.07)	6.21 ** (1.07)
Controls Decade Fixed Effects Lagged DV	Included	Included	Included	Included Included	Included	Included	Included	Included Included
Constant	6.08 (1.48)	7.16 (1.76)	1.22 (12.60)	31.81 (31.81)	7.59 (1.04)	8.74 (1.23)	4.91 (11.72)	28.06 (26.07)
R^2	0.47	0.47	0.51	0.53	0.51	0.52	0.57	0.59
Corr. (u _i , Xb)					0.53	0.53	- 0.07	0.04
Sigma_U					2.69	2.70	4.21	3.75
Sigma_e					7.24	7.22	6.87	6.81
Rho (ICC)					0.12	0.12	0.27	0.23
N (elections)	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393
N (countries)	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22
T (av. elections per county)	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18

† p -value < 0.10; * p -value < 0.05; ** p -value < 0.01.

Hausmann Tests on FE v RE models: $p = < 0.05$.

Note: The dependent variable is the percentage vote share for all anti-system parties in a given general election in the decisive electoral tier of the lower house. The models are the same as those in Table 3.1, but also contain the lagged dependent variable (anti-system vote share at the previous election) as an additional control.

Controls: Logged effective number of electoral parties (lagged one election); logged trade exposure (lagged one year); logged level of GDP per capita (lagged one year); logged effective or legal electoral threshold; level of regional decentralisation (Regional Authority Index score). Decade fixed effects begin with 1950-59 as the reference category.

Data Source: An original dataset compiled from multiple different sources by the author. See main text for details.

combined vote share of anti-system and system-critical parties (i.e. all ‘radical’ parties), and that of anti-system and complementary parties (i.e. all ‘outsider’ parties), respectively. Other than these slightly different dependent variables, model specification remains exactly the same as in Table 3.1.

The results for both of these regressions are actually fairly similar. While mainstream party ideological convergence remains a reliably strong predictor of the vote share going to all ‘radical’ or ‘outsider’ parties, there is no longer any statistically-significant interaction with the economy. By itself, the coefficient for growth in lagged GDP per capita points in the same (negative) direction as before; however, this is only inconsistently associated with ‘radical’ party support at statistically significant levels, and never is for all ‘outsider’ parties. This seems to validate my decision to distinguish between these ‘types’ of parties. It maybe that, although system-critical parties offer a radical critique of the conventional inputs of policy-making, they are still seen as at least partly culpable for negative outcomes produced by ‘the system’, given that they have supported it by joining governments or providing them with parliamentary support. Conversely, because complementary parties do not offer a radical critique of the conventional inputs of policy, they do not benefit from an economic disruption that seems to undermine the subsequent ‘outputs’ that had legitimated the old way of doing things. Only true anti-system parties have the wholly ‘clean hands’ and genuinely ‘radical solutions’ which allow them to profit when that system appears to malfunction.

Conclusion

This chapter has used election returns in many countries over a long period of time to demonstrate a striking relationship between the macroeconomy, the political supply-side, and the anti-system vote. I have improved on previous aggregate-level studies of radical party fortunes (e.g. Abedi 2004; Arzheimer 2009; Golder 2003; Hino 2012; Norris 2005) by using a content-validated scale of left-right polarisation, an index of mainstream party polarisation that weights contributions by party size, a much large sample size (in terms of both countries and time periods), and interactive modelling of the effects of variables to highlight the contingent nature of their effects. Across my sample, anti-system parties have performed most strongly when the national economy is performing poorly and mainstream parties are placed fairly close together on the left-right spectrum. These results are clearly consistent with my crisis and convergence model of anti-system support.

However, while this type of evidence allows us to say something about the generalisability of my theory beyond a few recent elections, it is important to directly examine the individual-level behaviour assumed to drive these findings. Are voters actually more likely to punish the mainstream political establishment by defecting to anti-system parties when they perceive the former to have converged, or could some alternative type of voter behaviour be confounding the ecological-level relationship? The following chapter attempts to clarify matters by analysing individual-level data on the opinions and circumstances of actual voters at many different national elections.

Chapter Four – The Radicalisation of the Economic Vote: From Sanctioning the Incumbent to Sanctioning the Mainstream

Abstract

In the previous chapter, I corroborated my ‘crisis and convergence’ model of anti-system party success by demonstrating that aggregate-level vote shares for these parties were larger in elections that took place against a backdrop of mainstream party ideological depolarisation and weaker economic growth. This chapter tests for the underlying individual-level behaviours assumed to drive these aggregate findings. I use multilevel modelling techniques and data on actual voters collected from over 70 national election studies conducted as part of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems. I present strong evidence that individual perceptions of mainstream party ideological convergence are more likely to be associated with an anti-system vote choice when the economy is doing badly. Subsequent chapters use more fine-grained panel and experimental datasets to make sure that individual-level level perceptions of party polarisation are not merely endogenous to partisanship.

Introduction

The previous chapter revealed a strong association between poor economic circumstances, mainstream party ideological depolarisation, and higher levels of support for anti-system parties. However, this analysis was premised on measuring ideological convergence ‘objectively’ using manifesto data. We do not yet know if voters in advanced democracies actually perceive mainstream parties to have depolarised, whether doing so is associated with support for anti-system parties, and whether this interacts with the economy in any meaningful way. This study aims to provide answers to these questions.

Here I examine data on actual voters collected from 72 national election studies conducted between 1996 and 2016 as part of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems [CSES]. I uncover two novel findings. Firstly, even controlling for a variety of potentially confounding demographic and attitudinal factors, voters are more likely to support anti-system candidates when they perceive mainstream parties to be more ideologically similar. Secondly, this relationship becomes stronger when the national economy is performing badly. I take these findings as providing a qualified corroboration of my aggregate-level results. The ‘crisis and convergence’ model of anti-system party support does appear to be rooted in the actual decision-making process of individual voters in advanced democracies.

Measuring Voters’ Perceptions of Party Positions

As described in Chapter Two, multiple academic studies in a great many advanced democracies have demonstrated that longstanding parties of the centre-right and -left have increasingly come to resemble one another in terms of their ideological positions, political priorities, the social background of their high-ranking members, and the sort of social groups that they focus on appealing to (Bara 2006; Berman and Snegovaya 2019; Blyth, Hopkin, and Pelizzo 2010; Evans and Tilley 2017; Heath 2013; Hornsteiner and Saalfeld 2014; Jansen, Evans, and de Graaf 2013; Karreth, Polk, and Allen 2013; Mair 1997, 2013; O’Grady 2019; Ohmura et al. 2018; Thau 2018, 2019; Thompson 2000). It is also not, in itself, original to link these trends to rising levels of success for anti-establishment candidates, who can profit from perceptions that mainstream parties are colluding, denying the electorate a real contest, keeping certain issues of the agenda, or else failing to represent an adequate range of policy options. Political scientists have frequently explored this topic, using either qualitative historical narratives or statistical models that link aggregate vote shares and survey vote intentions to more ‘objective’ measures of mainstream party positions from

manifestos or ‘expert’ surveys ratings. Some have argued for a positive association (Abedi 2004; Carter 2005; Hino 2012; Hobolt and de Vries 2015; Kitschelt and McGann 1995; Kriesi 2008; Morgan 2011; Roberts 2017; Spies and Franzmann 2011; Spoon and Klüver 2019; Taggart 1995), while others have found a weak or even negative one (Arzheimer and Carter 2006; Bustikova 2014; Ignazi 2003; Lubbers, Merove, and Peer 2002; Norris 2005).

However, while these studies bring an admirable variety of methods and data to the question at hand, they all lack for one thing: measurement of the perceptions of individual voters themselves. I could find only one previous study that actually sought to link opinion of mainstream party ideological diversity to proclivity for supporting radical parties (Pelizzo 2007). Furthermore, this paper covered just two elections, recorded only perceived differences between the largest social democratic and conservative parties, and did not implement any statistical controls for potential confounding variables. This chapter aims to fill this prominent gap in the literature.

Throughout this chapter, I make extensive use of the long-running series of national election studies that were coordinated by the CSES research team, and compiled and harmonised for the recent ‘Integrated Module Dataset’ (Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) 2018). In order to facilitate cross-national comparisons of electoral behaviour, each national research team affiliated to the CSES poses the same questions to representative samples of their own electorate immediately after the particular election selected for study. While some of these questions are altered over time depending on the substantive research questions that the team are interested in, a common ‘core’ group of questions have been asked in each of the four waves of the CSES between 1996 and 2016.

One of these questions is a series of requests for respondents to place each party in their country on a single 11-point left-right political spectrum. The question (in its English translation) is as follows:

"In politics people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you place [PARTY A] on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?"

And then subsequently:

"Using the same scale, where would you place, [PARTY B]?"

And so on for party C, D, E etc³². Respondents were also allowed to respond with *"don't know"* or *"have never heard of this party"*, which were treated as missing data for the purposes of this study. It is this question that subsequently forms the basis of measures of perceived polarisation in my study.

The procedure for translating distinct placements of individual parties to an overall index of polarisation was exactly the same as the method used with manifesto data in the previous section. Once again, I used Dalton's (2008: 906–907) equation in order to arrive at a value equivalent to the weighted average deviation from the weighted mean mainstream party position, after making the aforementioned adjustments for variation in the total size of all mainstream parties (see page 101)³³. Given that I am only interested in where respondents

³² The total number of parties that the respondent was asked to rank varies by country and election depending on how fragmented their electoral landscape was. The minimum number of parties was 4 (Spain 2004), and the maximum number was 8 (in several elections, for example the Netherlands in 2010).

³³ The weighting is important. Once again, I assume that a voter who feels that the two largest mainstream parties in their country are pretty similar, but one very small mainstream party is fairly distinct, might still be

place mainstream parties in their country - i.e. those that have been integrated into government and accept the legitimacy of the dominant rules, norms, processes, actors, and boundaries of their political community (see Appendix A for list) - all parties that are not classed as 'mainstream' (i.e. complementary, system-critical, or anti-system parties) were not counted when calculating this equation.

There are, of course, potential questions over the validity of voters' subjective perceptions of party positions on a left-right scale. As I discussed in Chapter Two, a substantial portion of the electorate in advanced democracies has only a very limited understanding of the conceptual distinction between 'left' and 'right' (Bauer et al. 2017; Knutsen 1998; Rodon 2015). A recent YouGov survey in the United Kingdom (Smith 2019) underlines this point. Of more than 100 political views put to a representative survey of British adults, none were identified as being specifically left-wing or right-wing by more than 53% of people.

dissatisfied with the quality of electoral choice on offer. This is because the potential variation in ideological content provided by a rotation of governing parties will still mainly reflect (and be minimised by) the more muted differences between the two largest parties competing to lead those governments. For example, imagine two voters, voter A and voter B, in a country defined by a 2.5 mainstream party system (two large parties getting around 40% of the vote, and one smaller mainstream party getting about 10% of the vote). Voter A places the two largest parties at 2 and 8 (on the 11-point scale), respectively, and the smaller party at 5. In contrast, voter B places the two largest parties at 5 and 7, but the smaller party at 1. The maximum 'range' of mainstream party ideological positions that these voters perceive is the same: 6. However, it is reasonable to assume that voter A would consider their party system to provide a more meaningful range of mainstream party positions given that the political debate in their country (and the majority of the legislative output of successive governments) will be dominated by the largest parties, not the smallest. Conversely, there is reason to believe that the ideological range of the two largest parties will also not adequately capture a respondent's perceived polarisation. Consider another two voters, C and D, in the same fictional party system. They both place the two largest parties at 4 and 6, but voter C places the smaller third party at 5 and voter D places them at 2. It is fair to state that the latter still sees more ideological diversity, even if the range provided by the largest two parties is the same. Voter C is most likely to feel the need for an anti-system party to restore ideological choice to the party system, whereas voter D may still feel the minor mainstream party as a suitable alternative, even if they are unlikely to dominate the policy agenda of respective governments themselves.

Furthermore, 53%, 52% and 49% could not identify the orientation of even stereotypical left-wing proposals such as supporting public ownership of utilities, the nationalisation of the railways, or the redistribution of income respectively³⁴.

That said, giving ordinary voters the task of placing multiple parties on a left-right scale will still yield reasonable approximations of how ‘different’ they see these parties as being, even if the exact placements for any individual party are at odds with the exact connotations that a political scientist might associate with that position on the political spectrum. Granberg and Brown (1992: 729) find that, when asked to place parties on a political spectrum, voters inherently tend to approach the task in relational terms. That is, parties are perceived as particularly left-wing or right-wing in relation to each other, rather than in relation to some more complex understanding of how inherently ‘left’ or ‘right’ a single policy or party is in universal terms. Therefore, I take the combination of these scores to be indicative of party

³⁴ Conceptual confusion may stem, in part, from the single left-right spectrum conflating both ‘economic’ and ‘cultural’ dimensions of political ideology. Several scholars have argued that unidimensional spectrums may fail to capture the diversity of issues relevant to political opinion in contemporary advanced democracies (see Carmines and J.D’Amico (2015) and Ford and Jennings (2020) for recent reviews of this literature). These researchers often point out that voters’ positions on ‘cultural’ issues such as national identity and sexuality are often orthogonal to the stances that they take on classic ‘economic’ issues such as economic redistribution and the desirable size of the state. Giving respondents only one overarching left-right spectrum may, therefore, lead to even more confusion as voters struggle to reconcile these two aspects of political contestation (Bakker and Hobolt 2013). The absence of alternatives to the unidimensional spectrum in existing cross-national datasets renders me with little choice but to rely on this unidimensional measure. That said, there is some evidence that, in countries where non-economic issues have become highly political salient, voters do respond by redefining their own left-right position to incorporate these subjects without entirely abandoning economic considerations (de Vries, Hakhverdian, and Lancee 2013). The left-right spectrum is, therefore, probably slightly more resilient to changing patterns of political contestation than is often appreciated (Mair 2007). In any case, where I have the opportunity to limit my study to a pure economic left-right spectrum (as in my replication of Table 3.1 in Appendix D, or my use of a non-spectrum-based measure of polarisation in Chapters Five and Six), I achieve very similar results in regards to the effects of party convergence and polarisation.

distinctiveness, while acknowledging that, on occasion, there will inevitably be certain parties that are placed on the ‘wrong’ side of the canonical ideological spectrum. The point of the exercise is capturing voters’ understandings of ideological ‘difference’, rather than ‘content’ per se.

A more pressing issue could be that, rather than *causing* one’s voting behaviour or political affiliation, perceptions of where the parties stand on any given issue are actually *caused by* these underlying orientations. Granberg and Brown (1992: 728-729) find that, when placing themselves and others on an ideological spectrum, people tend to pull their preferred party towards themselves while simultaneously pushing their nonpreferred party further away. This means that those who have a preferred party – and particularly those who have a non-centrist ideology themselves, given that they will, consequently, drag their preferred party further from the centre – will systematically tend to emphasise more difference between the parties. Busch (2016) corroborates this by showing how, in a multicounty dataset, those who have strong emotions for or against a party tend to estimate that party’s position less accurately (compared to manifesto or expert estimates) than those whose emotions fall within the ‘normal’ range.

Tendencies for assimilation – mentally ‘pulling’ preferred objects towards oneself – and contrast – ‘pushing’ away objects that one dislikes – can be explained by longstanding psychological theories which argue that people are often at pains to achieve, maintain, or restore a sense of cognitive balance and reduce feelings of dissonance between their beliefs – where parties stand in relation to oneself – and actions – which party one supports (Granberg and Brown 1992; Heider 1958). Undoubtedly, just as with the ongoing

controversy over the direction of causality between perceptions of economic performance and underlying feelings about incumbent parties (Evans and Pickup 2010; Tilley and Hobolt 2011), there is likely to be a degree of feedback between partisanship and perceptions of a party's position in relation to oneself. While the relative strength of these two factors can never be properly ascertained using cross-sectional data, I do use evidence from panel and experimental surveys in the following two chapters to address these concerns. For now, I can only stipulate appropriate statistical controls for a respondent's own partisan identity and ideological position, and emphasise that any 'effects' of convergence/polarisation uncovered here are likely to be at the upper limit in terms of their impact on political behaviour.

That said, the idea that party polarisation is ultimately in the eye of the (biased) beholder, is worth investigating briefly. Do voters' perceptions reflect real-life events? Table 4.1 is a multilevel model estimating how ideologically different a respondent believes that mainstream parties are. This variable is derived from voters' left-right placements, combined, and weighted using the aforementioned adjustment to Dalton's (2008) equation for party polarisation. It ranges from 0 to 10, with higher numbers indicating that the voter places mainstream parties further apart. I attempt to predict these values using three main variables. In response to the findings of Granberg and Brown (1992) and Busch (2016) that political extremism and partisan sentiment skew one's perceptions of party position, I specify two variables capturing political orientation. 'Respondent L-R radicalism' is derived from respondents' self-placement on the same 11-point left-right spectrum, which was subsequently recoded as distance from the centre (6). The variable ranges 0-5, with higher figures indicating a more 'radical respondent'. 'Feel close to a mainstream party' is taken

Table 4.1: Modelling Belief in Mainstream Party Left-Right Polarisation in CSES Surveys, 1996-2016

Linear Mixed-Effects Multilevel Model	
<u>Individual-Level</u>	<u>Individual-Level</u>
Respondent's L-R Radicalism	0.40 ** (0.02)
Feels Close to a Mainstream Party	0.43 ** (0.02)
Demographic Controls	Included
<u>Country-Level</u>	<u>Country-Level</u>
Mainstream Party L-R Manifesto Polarisation	0.20 † (0.12)
Constant	2.54 (0.17)
Log pseudolikelihood	-174609.29
Rho (ICC)	0.10
N (Lv.1 - Voters)	87,027
N (Lv.2 – National Elections)	72

† *p*-value < 0.10; * *p*-value < 0.05; ** *p*-value < 0.01.

Note: The model is estimating how ideologically polarised a respondent believes that mainstream parties are. This variable is derived from individuals' left-right placement (11-point scale) of various parties in the survey, weighted by party size and recoded into an index of polarisation according to the principles outlined in Chapter 3. The variable hypothetically ranges from 0 to 10, with higher numbers indicating that the voter places mainstream parties further apart. Parties categorised as mainstream are listed in Appendix A.

Survey Data: CSES Integrated Module Dataset (2018) [Waves 1-4: 1996 – 2016];

Demographic Controls: Gender; Age Leaving Education (Pre-16; 16-19; Post-19); Household Income (Quintiles); Age (16-24; 25-44; 45-64; 65+).

Manifesto Data: Comparative Manifesto Project, Version 2019a (Volkens et al 2019).

as a measure of partisanship, and is indicated by a respondent stating that they feel at least “somewhat close” to any mainstream party in their country. In contrast, ‘mainstream party L-R polarisation’, which is measured at the country-election rather than voter-level, is meant to capture the objective size of the ideological gulf between established parties. Like party polarisation in the previous chapter, it was taken from MARPOR data using Prosser’s (2014) scaling method and the adjusted Dalton formula. It also ranges from 0-10, with higher values indicating greater dispersion. If this variable proves a significant predictor, it will help to alleviate concerns that individuals’ relative left-right placements are entirely exogenous to

political reality. Finally, I also include a full set of demographic controls: age, gender, household income, and level of education. Descriptive statistics and further information about coding procedure (including the original wording of various survey questions) for all these variables are available in Appendix E.

All three of my principal independent variables have a positive association with individual perceptions of polarisation. A respondent is more likely to perceive mainstream parties to be polarised if they themselves are less ‘centrist’ in their political attitudes, they have an emotional attachment to one of said parties, or the parties’ manifestos are genuinely quite distinct in terms of their relative emphasis on left-right issues. These factors vary in their effect sizes. Partisans have a perception of polarisation that is, on average, 0.40 points higher than non-partisans; a one standard deviation in respondent radicalism and manifesto polarisation increases that perception by 0.58 [95% CI: 0.52 – 0.64] and 0.13 [95% CI: -0.2 – 0.28] on average, respectively. Clearly, then, the ideas that a voter has about the extent of ideological choice available in their party system is not solely a function of how the parties present themselves in their promises at election time³⁵. That said, neither is this variable solely a function of partisanship or one’s own ideology (and, in any case, these effects are likely to be partly reciprocal anyway). In all, it seems wise to employ appropriate controls and be wary of the fact that the effects of these perceptions uncovered in observational research are always likely to be somewhat inflated, rather than do away with investigations of voter opinion on these matters entirely.

³⁵ That said, voters could be picking up on non-positional cues that would not be captured by the manifesto data. For example, whether the parties tend to make ‘grand coalitions’ with each other or choose the same sorts of people to represent them. I return to the issue of what causes perceptions of polarisation in the concluding chapter to this thesis.

The Impact of Perceptions of Party Positions on Vote Choice

With these caveats in mind, I turn to the question of whether perceptions of convergence are in fact related to one's propensity to support anti-system candidates. Table 4.2 presents a series of logistic regression models (one for each 'wave' of the CSES) modelling the likelihood that a respondent reported voting for an anti-system party in that particular election (1) as opposed to supporting any other type of party or abstaining (0). To predict anti-system support, I use of all of the previous demographic and attitudinal variables introduced in the previous table³⁶. In addition, however, all models include a fixed-effect for country-election year, given that respondents are clustered in country-survey years and that the strength of anti-system parties will vary from context to context (for any number of historical, geographic, or cultural reasons) other than because of the relative similarity of the mainstream parties at any given time.

In all four models, placing the mainstream parties in one's country further apart on the left-right spectrum is negatively associated with the likelihood that one votes for an anti-system party³⁷. We now have evidence at the level of individual which suggests that an expansion of the political choice provided to voters by mainstream parties might prevent shifts towards more radical alternatives. The coefficients associated with the other two attitudinal variables – personal ideological radicalism and a partisan affiliation with a mainstream party – are

³⁶ My results are also unchanged when controlling for religion and attendance of religious ceremony; however, I do not include these controls in the final models as they are not available for a significant minority of country surveys (results available upon request).

³⁷ The size of these 'effects' can be determined by converting the logit coefficients in Table 4.2 into odds ratios. Even after specifying all of the statistical controls mentioned previously, a one standard deviation increase in a respondent's level of perceived mainstream polarisation still decreases the odds of anti-system voting by between 6% (CSES Wave 1, 1996-2001) and 14% (CSES Wave 4, 2011-16), depending on the exact survey wave.

Table 4.2: Modelling Variation in Individual Anti-System Party Voting in Four CSES Survey Waves, 1996-2016 – Simple Model

Fixed Effect Logistic Regression Models	Model A CSES Wave 1 (1996 – 2001)	Model B CSES Wave 2 (2001 – 2006)	Model C CSES Wave 3 (2006 – 2011)	Model D CSES Wave 4 (2011 – 2016)
Perceived Mainstream Party Polarisation	- 0.03 (0.01) *	- 0.05 (0.02) **	- 0.06 (0.01) **	- 0.07 (0.02) **
Ideological Radicalism	0.27 (0.02) **	0.35 (0.02) **	0.27 (0.02) **	0.17 (0.02) **
Feels Close to a Mainstream Party	- 2.03 (0.07) **	- 2.35 (0.09) **	- 2.32 (0.07) **	- 2.19 (0.10) **
<u>Age</u>				
18-24	0.08 (0.11)	0.26 (0.12) *	0.26 (0.10) *	0.10 (0.13)
25-44	0.07 (0.08)	0.15 (0.09)	0.40 (0.08) **	0.27 (0.09) **
45-64	0.10 (0.08)	0.19 (0.09) *	0.43 (0.08) **	0.25 (0.08) **
(Ref: Age 65+)				
<u>Gender</u>				
Female	- 0.07 (0.05)	- 0.23 (0.06) **	- 0.14 (0.05) **	- 0.25 (0.06) **
<u>Age Leaving Education</u>				
Pre-16	- 0.13 (0.08)	- 0.47 (0.10) **	0.20 (0.08) **	0.17 (0.10)
16-18	- 0.06 (0.07)	- 0.08 (0.08)	0.25 (0.06) **	0.29 (0.07) **
(Ref: 19+)				
<u>National Household Income Quintile</u>				
First Quintile	0.25 (0.09) **	0.44 (0.11) **	0.27 (0.09) **	0.51 (0.11) **
Second Quintile	0.28 (0.09) **	0.26 (0.11) *	0.31 (0.09) *	0.42 (0.10) **
Third Quintile	0.20 (0.08) **	0.33 (0.10) **	0.36 (0.08) **	0.37 (0.10) **
Fourth Quintile	0.05 (0.08)	0.25 (0.10) *	0.10 (0.08)	0.14 (0.20)
(Ref: Fifth Quintile)				
Country-Election Year Fixed Effects	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>
Constant	- 1.86 (0.15)	- 5.02 (0.44)	- 4.26 (0.28)	- 5.08 (0.29)
N – Respondents	20,173	19,518	24,840	19,545
N – Election Surveys	14	18	21	17
Pseudo R ²	0.19	0.23	0.26	0.27

** *p*-value <0.05; * *p*-value <0.01

Note: These models predict the likelihood of voting for an anti-system party, the reference category is any other decision (whether voting for another party or abstention). Parties were classified according to the procedure laid out in Chapter One. Party classification by individual country are available in Appendix A.

Survey Data Source: CSES Integrated Module Dataset (2018) [Waves 1-4: 1996 – 2016].

also consistently in the expected direction, being positively and negatively associated with anti-system support, respectively. Across time periods, the demographic information tells a relatively consistent story: anti-system voters are less likely to be of retirement age (though whether they are most likely to be young or merely middle-aged varies by survey wave), more likely to be male, and more likely to receive average or below average household incomes in relation to the rest of the national electorate. The exception to this consistency is educational attainment, which is positively associated with anti-system support in the first two waves, but negatively associated in the latter two. This finding, together with the fact that the coefficients associated with the lowest two income quintiles become notably large over time, probably reflects the gradual ‘proletarianisation’ of the radical right, who have become increasingly dependent on support from blue collar workers over this time period (Cutts, Ford, and Goodwin 2009; Gidron and Hall 2017; Gingrich and Häusermann 2015; Houtman, Achterberg, and Derks 2008; Oesch 2008; Oesch and Rennwald 2018; Rydgren 2013).

The Interaction of Belief in Convergence with the State of the Economy

Of course, the central argument of this thesis is not just ‘convergence matters’. As I have discussed ad nauseam, my theory is that the extent to which ‘convergence matters’ is dependent upon economic conditions. During ‘boom times’, when it looks as though everything is moving in the right direction, the fact that mainstream parties are essentially all offering ‘more of the same’ can be expected to be less of an affront to voters. During ‘hard times’, however, voters should be more likely to feel frustrated that established parties of all stripes are not offering much dissent from political orthodoxy that, in the minds of the voters, may have caused or perpetuated the downturn. Converging on a ‘winning strategy’ is better than converging on a discredited one. For this reason, my next set of models explore

whether the effects of perceptions of mainstream party polarisation on anti-system support are moderated by the health of the macroeconomy.

To do this, I will use the same variables as before to predict party support; however, I will specify my models somewhat differently. Rather than using a single-level binary logistic regression, my next set of findings shall come from a series of multilevel multinomial logistic models. I choose this particular setup for two main reasons. Firstly, multilevel models allow one to specify variables at both the ‘lower level’ of the individual respondent, as well as the ‘higher level’ of the contextual unit that they are clustered in (country-election years, in this case). This allows me to observe the effects of both individual perceptions of convergence and environmental factors like the state of economy, and the interaction between the two. Secondly, multinomial models allow me to more accurately capture the range of choices available to voters at any given election. This is very important for testing my theory. Traditionally, models of economic voting – which I am essentially building on here – make binary comparisons about voters choosing whether or not to re-elect the incumbent government (Dassonneville and Lewis-Beck 2019; Duch 2007; Duch and Stevenson 2008; Key 1966; Kramer 1971). More complex models, which explore the determinants of subsequent decisions over which particular opposition party to endorse instead, are much rarer (van der Brug, van der Eijk, and Franklin 2007: 193–194). Here, however, I distinguish between several different types of action that a voter might take at a general election.

These features are important given the interactive and non-dichotomous nature of my hypothesis. According to my theory voters who see the mainstream parties as more similar

should be more likely to defect to anti-system alternatives, but this should be particularly true when the economy is performing badly. The macroeconomy provides the incentive to punish the incumbent; the convergence disincentivises simply switching to the mainstream opposition.

I divide an individual's vote choice into six categories, based on the typology that I presented in Chapter One (Figure 1.1)³⁸. An individual can opt for an incumbent mainstream party (the reference category), an opposition mainstream party, a complementary party, a system-critical party, an anti-system party or they can abstain altogether. My hypotheses (outlined in Figure 2.2 of Chapter Two) stated that incumbent parties should be particularly likely to lose support to anti-system opposition specifically when the economy is doing badly and voters are not convinced that any mainstream opposition party has a credibly different set of positions from those currently being implemented.

As I mentioned previously, it is also helpful to allow for respondents abstaining from the election altogether. One could plausibly maintain that abstainers are, in their own way, also punishing the political establishment by refusing to renew their support for it. Research has suggested that abstainers, like the prototypical anti-system party supporter, tend towards lower levels of satisfaction in democracy and government performance (Akkerman, Mudde, and Zaslove 2014; Dassonneville, Blais, and Dejaeghere 2015; Tillman 2008), and low turnout is often concentrated among those who are indifferent (like several parties equally)

³⁸ Party classification for each country is available in Appendix A. My results are robust to specifying a simpler model that uses all mainstream parties (whether incumbent or not) as the reference category (Appendix F, Table F.1).

or alienated (like no party very much), which is more likely when there are fewer parties near that voters' favoured position (Aarts and Wessels 2005: 79; Brody and Page 1973; Downs 1957: 261). To some extent then, anti-system parties are competing with the temptation to stay home on election day as much as with mainstream parties (Allen 2017). Given this likelihood, omission of abstention may be tantamount to selection on the dependent variable (Lacy and Burden 1999 in Tilman, 2008: 1292), as we would only be studying those voters who have enough faith to continuing engaging in the political process at all³⁹.

I predict vote choice with a series of random-effects multilevel multinomial logit models using Stata's Gllamm package (Rabe-Hesketh, Skrondal, and Pickles 2004). The main variable of interest is the interaction between perceived polarisation and the health of the

³⁹ A necessary caveat to any empirical study of abstentionism reliant on self-reported survey data is the longstanding tendency of individuals to overreport turnout due to the perception of civic engagement as a desirable social norm (Aarts and Wessels 2005: 70–71). While some studies using the CSES attempt to correct for this by using only those individual surveys where reported turnout is in rough proximity to the official records of participation among the voter-age population or registered voters (e.g. Dassonneville, Blais, and Dejaeghere 2015), increasingly this is seen as insufficient given that these aggregate measures of turnout are also plagued with errors stemming from rising immigrant populations (of voter age but ineligible to vote) and dubious electoral register accuracy, respectively (Mellon, Evans, Fieldhouse, et al. 2018). Furthermore, the other alternative, validating a respondent's stated turnout against official records (e.g. Dassonneville and Hooghe 2017), is only possible in a very select handful of countries where such data is publicly available (and thus not feasible for a cross-national study with the scope of this present chapter). That said, I do not think that the strong likelihood of my dataset understating abstentionism is fatal to my project. Afterall, I am merely trying to see whether reported turnout is associated with the interaction of economic stagnation and perceived political polarisation, rather than provide a definitive measurement of the exact level of abstention in particular countries. So long as errors in self-reported turnout are not associated with either of these two independent variables or the success rate of anti-system parties (which I have no reason to doubt), I do not believe that the inferences which I make in my subsequent analysis should be made spurious by issues of data quality.

economy (measured, as in Chapter Three, using lagged GDP per capita in constant prices⁴⁰). All of the same demographic and attitudinal variables from the previous models in this chapter are also included; however, partisanship is now categorical, reflecting whether a respondent feels close to either of the five types of party captured by my dependent variable. Additionally, due to the multilevel setup, I also specify two upper-level variables to control for the fact that growth might be slower in more developed economies, and polarisation might be more extensive in states where electoral system permissiveness incentivises catering to a wider array of positions on the ideological spectrum. Furthermore, it has often been found that voters are more likely to factor the economy into their decisions at the poll booth when there is more ‘clarity’ about who should be held responsible for it, which is less clear in larger party systems where coalition government is more common (Duch and Stevenson 2008; Hobolt, Tilley, and Banducci 2013). To capture these factors, I use the logged level of GDP per capita as well as the logged effective or legal electoral threshold (whichever is higher), respectively.

Once again, descriptive statistics and further information on the coding of all these variables can be found in Appendix E. Due to constraints of space I do not display the results for all these coefficients⁴¹, and I only graph the values of the dependent variable that pertain to

⁴⁰ GDP in constant 2011 national prices (US dollars) was sourced from the Penn World Table [Version 9] (Feenstra et al. 2015).

⁴¹ Being middle-aged and male, as well as having a middle-level education (post-16, but not university), a low household income, and no partisan attachment to a mainstream party, are all factors associated with anti-system voting at the 0.05 level of statistical significance. In addition, this sort of voting behaviour is more common when both the logged effective electoral threshold and overall level of GDP per capita is lower. Anti-system voters can be distinguished from mainstream opposition voters by being less likely to have a university degree and being less likely to have an attachment to a mainstream opposition party. Mainstream opposition voters are more likely to have an average household income, rather than a low or high income; there are no significant effects of age and gender. However, mainstream opposition voting is more common when the electoral

voting for a mainstream opposition party, voting for an anti-system party, or abstaining. The effects that each variable has on voting for complementary and system-critical parties can, however, be seen in Table F.2 of Appendix F⁴².

The cross-level interaction in Table 4.3 provides more evidence for the ‘crisis and convergence’ model. While believing that mainstream parties are more similar in ideological terms is consistently associated with increases in the probability that a voter chooses an anti-system party, this relationship is magnified when the economy is performing poorly. This finding does not markedly decline in strength once demographic, attitudinal, and partisan controls are added to the model. Even in the highly conservative Model C, a personal belief in mainstream party convergence (as opposed to polarisation) and a context of weak to negative GDP-growth both independently increase the probability of supporting anti-system parties, and the incentive to engage in this ‘radical economic vote’ only increases when the two factors are coincident. This means that the impact of lower lagged GDP growth on pushing one towards an anti-system party is magnified for those respondents who

threshold and GDP per capita is higher, and the same is also true of abstention. Non-voters, unlike anti-system party supporters, are more likely to be very young and have the lowest level of education. They are equally likely to have low incomes, however.

⁴² Interestingly, voters are more likely to support complementary parties when the economy is doing badly, particularly if they also happen to believe that mainstream parties are ideologically homogenous. That is, support for complementary parties responds to exactly the same dynamics that I theorised should boost support for anti-system parties in my crisis and convergence model. Given that there is no such effect for system-critical parties, one might infer that it is the fact that anti-system parties have ‘clean hands’ (i.e. they do not make deals with governing parties or serve in government themselves) more so than the fact that they are ‘radical’ that allows them to profit during times of economic turmoil and the discrediting of the orthodox ideology presented by establishment parties.

Table 4.3: Modelling Variation in Individual Anti-System Party Voting in Four CSES Survey Waves, 1996-2016 – Interactive Model

Random-Effects Multilevel Multinomial Regression	Model A (vs. Voting Mainstream Incumbent)			Model B (vs. Voting Mainstream Incumbent)			Model C (vs. Voting Mainstream Incumbent)		
	Voting MS Opposition	Voting Anti-System	Abstention	Voting MS Opposition	Voting Anti-System	Abstention	Voting MS Opposition	Voting Anti-System	Abstention
<u>Voter Level</u>									
Perceived Mainstream Party Polarisation	0.04 (0.01) **	- 0.16 (0.01) **	- 0.16 (0.01) **	0.04 (0.01) **	- 0.15 (0.01) **	- 0.15 (0.01) **	0.05 (0.01) **	- 0.12 (0.01) **	- 0.08 (0.01) **
Ideological Radicalism							- 0.01 (0.01)	0.12 (0.01) **	- 0.04 (0.01) **
Demographic Controls				Included	Included	Included	Included	Included	Included
Partisanship Controls							Included	Included	Included
<u>Country-Election Level</u>									
% GDPpc Growth ($y-1$)	0.05 (0.02) *	- 0.16 (0.02) **	- 0.03 (0.02)	0.05 (0.02) *	- 0.15 (0.02) **	- 0.05 (0.01) *	0.04 (0.02) *	- 0.13 (0.02) **	- 0.03 (0.02)
Upper Level Controls	Included	Included	Included	Included	Included	Included	Included	Included	Included
<u>Cross-Level Interaction</u>									
Polarisation * Growth	- 0.01 (0.00) **	0.02 (0.00) **	0.01 (0.00) **	- 0.01 (0.00) **	0.02 (0.00) **	0.01 (0.00) **	- 0.01 (0.00) **	0.02 (0.00) **	0.01 (0.00) *
Constant	- 0.54 (0.15)	0.92 (0.15)	- 0.97 (0.15)	- 0.55 (0.15)	1.10 (0.15)	- 1.38 (0.15)	- 3.43 (0.14)	- 1.78 (0.15)	- 2.80 (0.14)
Log Likelihood		- 127940.62			- 125829.25			- 91975.02	
Δ in Log-Likelihood		2799.06			2111.37			33854.84	
RE Variance (Lv.2)		0.168 (0.021)			0.166 (0.020)			0.127 (0.015)	
N (Lv.1 - Voters)		87027			87027			87027	
N (Lv.2 – National Elections)		72			72			72	

* p -value < 0.05; ** p -value < 0.01

Note: These models compare the likelihood of voting for an incumbent mainstream political party to various types of parties or abstention. The potential categories of this variable are voting for a mainstream incumbent party; voting for a mainstream party in opposition; voting for a 'complementary party'; voting for a 'system-critical party'; voting for an 'anti-system party'; or abstention. Respondents' vote choices were categorised according to the procedure outlined in Chapter 1. Categorisation for all parties is listed in Appendix A. Coefficients for support for complementary and system-critical parties are shown in Table F.2 in Appendix F. Changes in log-likelihood are relative to the last model (or the null model – no independent variables – for Model A).

Demographic Controls: Gender; Age Leaving Education (Pre-16; 16-19; Post-19); Household Income (Quintiles); Age (16-24; 25-44; 45-64; 65+).

Partisanship Controls: 'Do You Usually Think of Yourself as Close to any Particular Party?' (a 6-category variable indicating whether a respondent is at least 'somewhat' close to each of the 5 type of party in question (see below) or no party at all).

Upper Level Controls: Logged level of GDP per capita (lagged one year); Logged effective or legal electoral threshold (whichever is higher).

Survey Data Source: Comparative Study of Electoral Systems Waves 1-4 (1996 – 16) [CSES 2018].

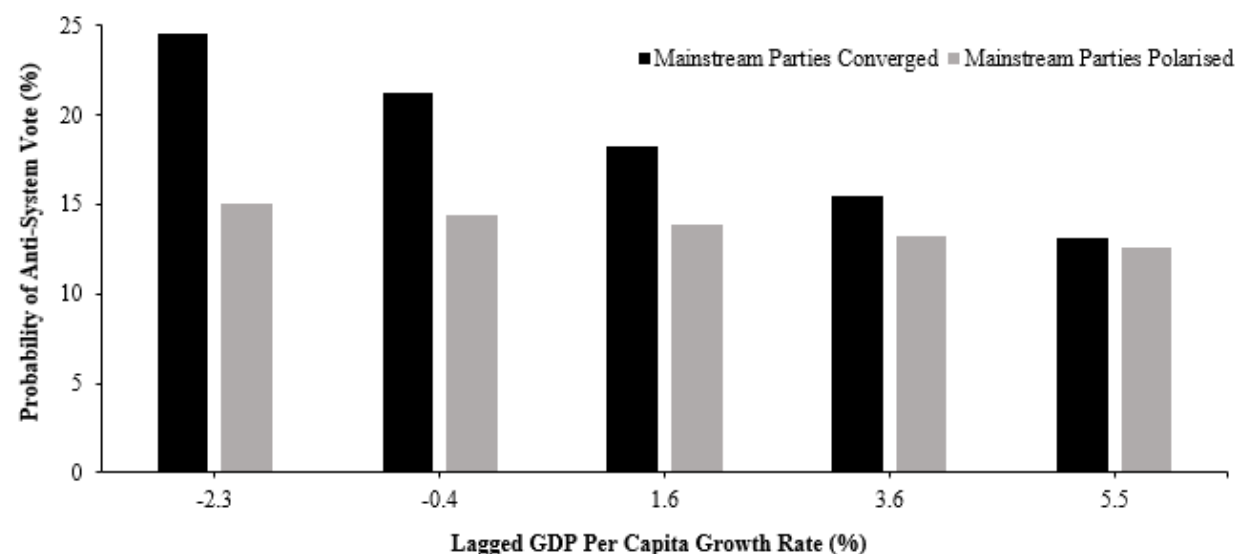
Economic Growth Data Source: Real per capita GDP in constant 2011 national prices (US dollars) from Penn World Table Version 9. (Feenstra et al 2015). See main text for details.

believe that mainstream parties remain relatively different in ideological terms. The crucial point is that perceptions of mainstream party convergence/polarisation mediate the extent to which negative economic circumstance translates into anti-system party support. Furthermore, the same also appears to be true for abstentionism, albeit the relationship is somewhat weaker here.

The true impact that these variables have on anti-system voting in substantive terms is presented in Figure 4.1. Here the raw coefficients from Model C have been converted into more easily interpretable sets of predicted probabilities, where 100 would equal certainty that a respondent would vote for an anti-system party based on the data in my model. The probabilities are for a particularly unremarkable type of voter: a middle-aged (45–64) male with a middle income (3rd quintile in their country), an average level of education (some post-16 schooling but no degree), and no particular partisan leaning towards any given party. The electoral threshold and the level of lagged GDP per capita are held constant at their mean. Two sets of probabilities are present: one for a respondent who believes that mainstream parties are quite similar ideologically (they have a level of perceived polarisation that is one standard deviation below the sample mean), the other for a respondent who believes that they are quite different (perceived polarisation is one standard deviation above the mean). The likelihood of these individuals supporting an anti-system party is presented for levels of lagged per capita GDP growth, ranging from two standard deviations below, to two standard deviations above the sample country-election mean (1.6%).

One can clearly see the interaction between personal perceptions of political choice and the economic context. While respondents are always more likely to vote for an anti-system party

Figure 4.1: Predicted Likelihood of Anti-System Voting by Objective Economic Performance and Subjective Mainstream Party Polarisation



Note: This figure indicates the likelihood of a respondent voting for an anti-system party, given variation in the health of the national economy and individual perceptions of mainstream party ideological diversity. The probabilities are from derived from the multilevel-multinomial model displayed in Table 4.3. The strength of the national economy is measured objectively (using lagged per capita GDP growth), and mainstream polarisation is a matter of subjective perception, varying from voter to voter, according to placements of the various mainstream parties on an 11-point left-right scale which were subsequently combined and weighted (by party size) according to the principles laid out on in Chapter Three. GDP growth is varied from two standard deviations (SDs) below (-2.7%) and above (5.2%) the sample mean (1.3%); ‘converged’ refers to a perception of mainstream party polarisation that is one SD below the mean, ‘polarised’ one SD above. The figures in each graph are for a middle-aged (45–64) male with a middle income (3rd quintile in their country), an average level of education (some post-16 schooling but no degree), and no particular partisan leaning towards any given party. The electoral threshold and the level of lagged GDP per capita are held constant at their mean. One can clearly see the interaction effect. A poor national economy will not seriously boost the likelihood of such an individual voting for an anti-system party unless that individual also perceives establishment parties to be highly similar in ideological terms. Perceptions of convergence exert practically no influence when the economy is performing strongly. N = 87027 respondents in 72 national election surveys.

Survey Data Source: *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems Waves 1-4 (1996 – 16)* [CSES 2018].

Economic Growth Data Source: Real per capita GDP in constant 2011 national prices (US dollars) from Penn World Table Version 9. (Feenstra et al 2015). See main text for details.

when they believe that mainstream parties have converged, the difference is magnified considerably when the economy is doing poorly. The gap is essentially negligible during ‘boom times’ (when growth is at 3.6% or above), but it reaches as much as 10 percentage points during a severe recession (growth is at -2.3%). Furthermore, while fluctuations in the economy can influence the likelihood that a voter who perceives convergence supports an anti-system party (again, by around 10 percentage points), the state of the economy appears to barely matter at all to voters who believe that mainstream parties are polarised. I take this as evidence for my theory that, because alternative mainstream parties are still seen to be offering a variety of different solutions to solve these problems, these voters do not feel the need to implicate all established parties in the crisis. In contrast, once again, anti-system parties are best placed to gain significant levels of support during conditions of ‘crisis and convergence’.

Conclusion

According to my hypotheses, the association between economic hardship and levels of support for anti-system parties should be heavily mediated by the overall level of polarisation between mainstream parties. While conventional depictions of the economic vote largely assume oscillation between established parties in office and those outside (Anderson 2000; Duch and Stevenson 2008), I argued that this model is less credible where alternative mainstream parties are promising to implement very similar policies in response to the crisis. What is the point of rotating to another party if they will merely uphold the established orthodoxy that you think might have contributed to the current troubles? In this manner, mainstream party depolarisation should ‘radicalise’ the traditional economic vote, and the famous reward-punish model that underpins conventional theories expands from concerning only the incumbent government to the entire political mainstream in general.

To test this hypothesis, I used cross-sectional survey data from a large number of national election studies conducted as part of the CSES. Using voters' personal placements of mainstream parties in their country on a left-right scale, I showed that respondents were consistently more likely to support anti-system parties when they saw fewer ideological distinctions between established parties. By combining this data with information about the economic context that these surveys were conducted in, I showed that these perceptions were particularly likely to result in the voters moving to radical alternatives when the economy was doing poorly. In contrast, believing that mainstream parties are all quite similar barely matters at all when the economy is doing well. These findings complement the results from my aggregate-level study perfectly: anti-system parties succeed if and only if there are conditions of 'crisis and convergence'.

This chapter has made several novel contributions. It is the first to give robust empirical evidence that the much-vaunted relationship between mainstream party depolarisation and rising support for radical parties (e.g. Abedi 2004; Carter 2005; Hino 2012; Hobolt and de Vries 2015; Kitschelt and McGann 1995; Kriesi 2008; Morgan 2011; Roberts 2017; Spies and Franzmann 2011; Spoon and Klüver 2019; Taggart 1995) exists at the level of the individual voter. Secondly, I have found relatively consistent support for the idea that the extent of mainstream party polarisation does condition the economic vote. This is interesting in and of itself. Previous studies have shown that the tendency of the electorate to reward or punish incumbent governments for the quality of economic output during their tenure is moderated by various institutional variables. Most notably, voters are usually seen to be more likely to engage in this sort of behaviour when there is greater 'clarity of responsibility' for the economy, which is typically more available in countries where political power is centralised in a single national executive (Anderson 2000; Listhaug 2005; Powell and

Whitten 1993), and when that executive is more likely to be held by a single party rather than a coalition (Dassonneville and Lewis-Beck 2017; Duch and Stevenson 2008; Hobolt, Tilley, and Banducci 2013; Nadeau, Lewis-Beck, and Bélanger 2013; Whitten and Palmer 1999). In contrast, my findings suggests that the ideological range of alternatives on offer also seems to matter, particularly when one goes beyond the ‘sanctioning’ part of economic voting models, and focuses on what determines which sort of party is ‘selected’ to replace the incumbent. The role of party polarisation deserves considerations in future models of economic voting, particularly as the literature increasingly seeks to outgrow the simple dichotomous conceptual distinction between ‘incumbent’ and ‘opposition’ (Van der Brug, Van der Eijk, and Franklin 2007, 193–194; Healy and Malhotra 2013).

So far, the findings in this thesis are premised on the assumption that ideas about a party’s position are not merely the endogenous product of a ‘perceptual screen’ that has long been embedded in the eyes of voters already affiliated to one party or another (Campbell et al. 1960). That is, I have taken it largely as given that party support is shaped by perceptions of party polarisation rather than vice versa. As I discussed at the beginning of this chapter, there are reasons to doubt this premise. Voters are rarely credited with being able to approach political ‘facts’ in an objective manner (Achen and Bartels 2017), and considerable evidence exists that survey respondents are likely to systematically ‘pull’ parties they like closer towards their own position, and ‘push’ parties they dislike further away (Busch 2016; Granberg and Brown 1992). This could lead to voters who dislike all mainstream parties projecting these parties to the opposite end of the political spectrum from themselves. On paper, it would then appear that these voters’ perceptions of mainstream parties as very similar are pushing them towards an anti-system party, whereas this is actually more of a product of underlying political dissatisfaction rather than a cause.

In the next two chapters I investigate the potentially reversed causal relationship between perceptions of convergence and declining support for mainstream parties. In Chapter Six I analyse results from an original randomised survey experiment – the gold standard for inferring cause and effect – to try and isolate the impact of belief in mainstream party convergence. First, however, I turn to multiyear panel data from Great Britain, which was gathered against a backdrop of first mainstream convergence, and then rapid repolarisation. By observing how voters react to these changes, and by controlling for past levels of partisanship when looking at subsequent behaviour, I attempt to validate the results from this chapter and its predecessor that speak to the systematic relationship between mainstream party ideological homogeneity and anti-system success.

Chapter Five – Are Perceptions of Convergence Endogenous? Part One: Evidence from British Panel Data

Abstract

In the previous chapters, I presented the case for my ‘crisis and convergence’ model of anti-system party success. However, the assumption underlying these results – that voters do recognise and respond to shifts in mainstream party positions – is contestable, given evidence that perceptions of party stances can be a product of partisanship as much as a source. In this chapter, I use British Election Study panel data to unravel the direction of causality between party support and belief about party positions. First, controlling for previous vote choice, I show that believing that Labour and the Conservatives had become less (more) similar in ideological terms over time reduces (increases) one’s likelihood of supporting an anti-system party. Second, utilising a series of structural equation models, I demonstrate that perceptions of Labour-Conservative polarisation have a stronger effect on attachments to those parties rather than vice versa. The following chapter attempts to alleviate concerns about endogeneity still further by way of experimental manipulation of treatment, the gold standard for causal inference research.

Introduction

Do I have a strong attachment to an established party because of its unique ideological position or, alternatively, do I think that a party has a unique ideological position because I have a strong attachment to it? It is at least possible that the direction of causality between perceiving mainstream convergence and abandoning mainstream parties could be reversed or reciprocal, as well as straight-forward. To fully validate my theory, I need to show that perceptions of a party’s ideological position or ‘brand’ drive political attachments (Downs 1957; Lupu 2016), and that we are not simply witnessing voters, consciously or not,

manipulating their understanding of political ‘facts’ to be more aligned with their partisanship (Busch 2016; Granberg and Brown 1992; Heider 1958).

To do this, I make extensive use of panel data (also known as longitudinal data) where the behaviour of the same voters can be observed at multiple time points. This allows a greater opportunity for understanding the nature of causal effects, given that we can control for previous attitudes and behaviour as well as establish a clear time-ordering for events (Finkel 1995). Specifically, I analyse data from the British Election Internet Panel Study [BESIP], which regularly monitored a representative sample of British voters between 2014 and 2017 (Fieldhouse et al. 2019). This was a period of abrupt political change in Britain, mostly due to the centre-left Labour party moving swiftly and firmly away from the more ‘centrist’ political stances that had characterised its election campaigns over the previous two decades (Dorey 2017; Prosser 2018; Quinn 2018). This case study presents a good opportunity to see if voters recognised the changes that took place and factored them into their decision-making criteria at the subsequent general election.

I use two main types of model to isolate the effects of perceptions of Labour-Conservative convergence and (re)polarisation. First I present a series of random-effects logistic regression models to demonstrate that, controlling for past vote choice and past perceptions of the positions of these two parties, belief in ideological polarisation – measured using a variety of different indicators – clearly reduces the likelihood that a respondent opted for a more radical, less-established party in 2017. Secondly, following the example of Lupu (2015) in the United States, I implement a series of cross-lagged structural equation models that enable me to isolate the effects of prior Labour-Conservative partisanship on subsequent

belief in Labour-Conservative polarisation, as well a vice versa. The evidence clearly shows that believing (at time 1) that the two parties are quite different has a larger effect on subsequent partisanship (at time 2) than previous partisanship (at time 1) has on believing that the two parties are quite different (at time 2). I take these findings as corroboration of my earlier assumptions about the exogeneity of beliefs about parties' ideological stances.

I begin, however, with an introduction to the long-term shifts and abrupt critical junctures that have shook British party politics in the last decade or so, and provide an explanation for why this backdrop presents an appropriate case study to test my 'crisis and convergence' theory of anti-system support.

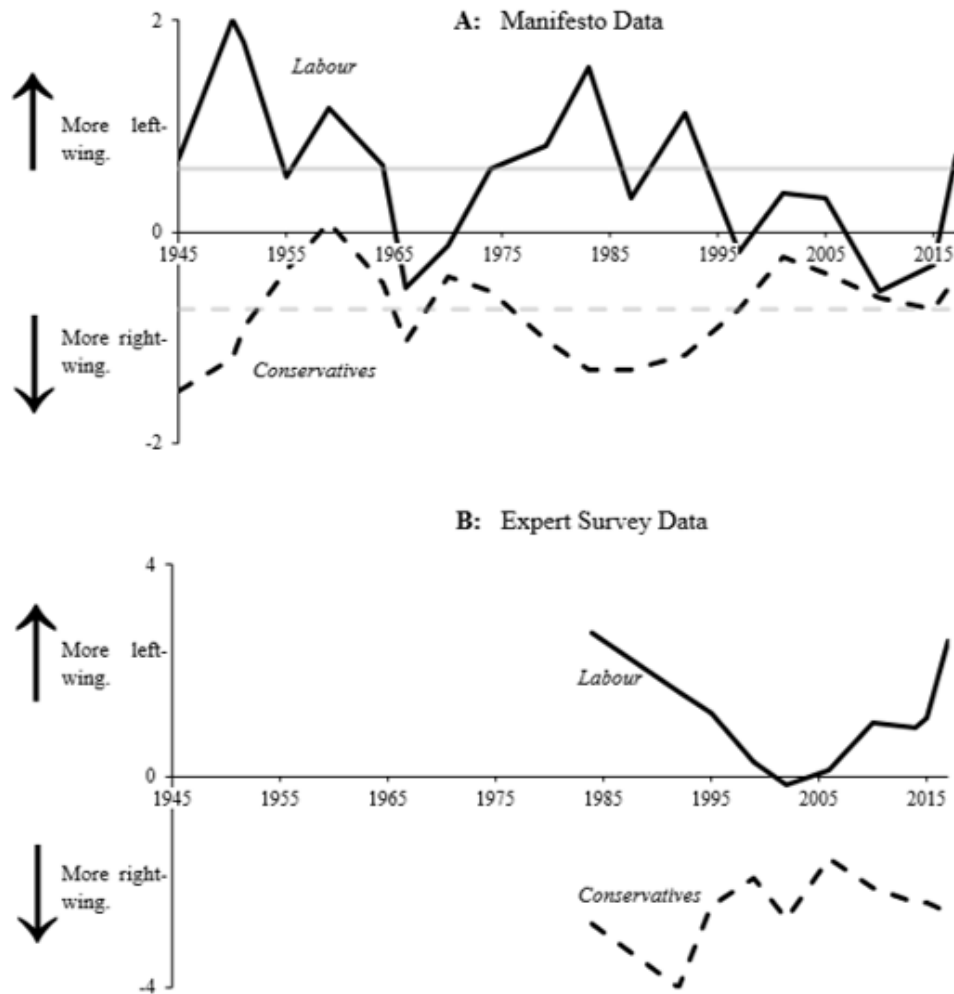
Convergence and (Re)Polarisation in British Party Politics, 1983 – 2017

Contemporary Britain is a good case study for testing theories of party convergence because it has witnessed a great deal of change regarding the ideological distance between the centre-right Conservatives and the centre-left Labour Party over the past few decades.

Historically these parties were quite ideologically distinct. Figure 5.1 shows the (L)eft - (R)ight positions of Labour and the Conservatives over time. L-R positions were derived from party electoral programmes as provided by the MARPOR team (Volkens et al. 2019) in accordance with the procedure developed by Prosser (2014) that was outlined in Chapter Two⁴³. In addition to the annual data points (in black), I have plotted the median position for the two parties over the entire post-Second World War period (in grey). The other data

⁴³ The average was taken for the two elections of 1974.

Figure 5.1: Labour and Conservative Left-Right Positions
According to Manifesto Data and Expert Surveys, 1945-2017



Note: This figure shows the (L)eft - (R)ight positions of Labour and the Conservatives over time, according to data from (A) their general election manifestos and (B) the average judgements of successive expert surveys. General L-R positions for each election was derived from manifestos in accordance with the procedure developed by Prosser (2014) that was outlined in Chapter Three. In addition to the annual data points (in black), I have plotted the median position for both Labour and the Conservatives over the entire post-Second World War period (in grey). Both the manifesto data and expert survey data were originally scaled from 0 (far left) to 10 (far right). Here I have rescaled the data so that 0 indicates the ideological centre (i.e. 5 on an 11-point scale), giving a final range of -5 (far right) to +5 (far left).

Source (Manifesto Data): Manifesto Project Dataset – Version 2019a (Volkens et al 2019).

Source (Expert Survey Data): Bakker et al. 2015; Castles and Mair 1984; Edwards et al. 2012; Huber and Inglehart 1995; Laver and Hunt 1992; Polk et al. 2017; Schmitt et al. 2015, 2017; Steenbergen and Marks 2007).

come from average responses to surveys of various national experts (usually political scientists working on British politics) who were asked to place the parties directly on to L-R ideological scales (Bakker et al. 2015; Castles and Mair 1984; Edwards et al. 2012; Huber

and Inglehart 1995; Laver and Hunt 1992; Polk et al. 2017; Schmitt et al. 2015, 2017; Steenbergen and Marks 2007)⁴⁴. The total number of experts consulted ranged from 9 (the 2006 survey) to 100 (the 2014 survey), with a median of 18. Both manifesto and expert survey data were originally scaled from 0 (far left) to 10 (far right). Here I have rescaled the data so that 0 indicates the ideological centre (i.e. 5 on an 11-point scale), giving a final range of -5 (far right) to +5 (far left).

In both manifesto and expert survey datasets, one can clearly detect a step change from the early 1990s onwards, when the two parties clearly converged to the centre of the ideological spectrum⁴⁵. This period of depolarisation lasts for around twenty years, peaking in the run-up to and immediate aftermath of the 2007-08 financial crisis. It is only partially reversed

⁴⁴ Where two expert surveys were carried out in one year, the weighted average (by number of experts consulted) placement of each party was adopted.

⁴⁵ One can also see that there was a similar convergence from the mid-1950s to the early 1970s. A criticism of the convergence hypothesis, for instance that made by Fieldhouse et al.(2020: 58-59), is that this era of ideological consensus did not lead to dissatisfaction and dealignment from mainstream parties. In fact this was the period of strong and stable partisanship *par excellence* (Rose and Unwin 1970). While a full discussion of this period is beyond the scope of this chapter, there are two potential reasons for this contradiction. First, continuing on the theme of this thesis, this period was one of an unprecedented increase in living standards throughout Britain, and one in which unemployment, inequality and economic growth remained low, falling, and strong, respectively (Black and Pemberton 2004). This contrasts the experience of the last 10-15 years in Great Britain, during which anti-system parties have only really begun to emerge (see Figures 5.8 and 5.9). The desire to punish parties for their overly-similar policies may simply have been much more muted when those policies were credibly seen to be ‘delivering the goods’ on a regular basis. Second, though the objective ideological positions of Labour and the Conservatives were not as different as they were, for example, in the 1930s or 1980s, voters still perceived these parties to be quite distinct (Figure 5.2 and 5.3). This is likely because the social images of the parties – what types of people, and in particular what social classes, each party represented – were much more polarised than at almost any time since (Butler and Stokes 1969; Evans and Tilley 2017). I return to the role of social group representation as an independent determinant of perceptions of polarisation in my concluding chapter.

in 2017, when the Labour Party clearly makes a sharp turn to its most left-wing position since 1992 (using manifesto data) or 1984 (using expert survey data).

This quantitative evidence can be corroborated by briefly reviewing the history of British political competition during the last few decades. This story has essentially three acts.

The first is the birth of the rebranded ‘New Labour’, following a series of shifts in policy and personnel in the decade or so leading up to the party’s landslide victory in 1997. Following a historic defeat in the 1983 contest on a platform of nationalisation, tax increases, and unilateral disarmament, a number of influential figures in and around the party leadership pushed for moving closer to the centre ground. The fear was that, with an electorate that was increasingly weighted towards white-collar workers in the south of England (Radice 1992), and a globalised economy believed to be increasingly susceptible to capital flight by a footloose investor class (Heath, Jowell, and Curtice 2001: 120), one simply could not win an election (or govern effectively) with a traditional social democratic platform⁴⁶. The party

⁴⁶ The veracity of this claim continues to be disputed by critics of the New Labour project (The Guardian 2017; Wilkinson 2017). Dissenters usually make three counterpoints. Firstly, a lot of the much-trumpeted lifestyle and consumption patterns that took place under the Thatcher years (notably the increase in home and asset-ownership) largely affected those already voting for Conservatives rather than causing widespread ‘embourgeoisement’ among Labour supporting manual classes (Garrett 1994). Secondly, while the working class was undoubtedly declining numerically, and Thatcherite privatisations and crackdowns on the unions had been widely accepted, survey evidence during this period revealed that certain ‘left-wing stances’ remained, if anything, more popular throughout the 1990s than they were in the early 1980s. Policies such as government action to reduce unemployment (even at the cost of rising inflation), higher taxes to pay for expansions to health and the social services, and greater intervention to reduce income inequalities, often had the support of a significant majority of the electorate during this period (Heath, Jowell, and Curtice 2001: 39, 42-48, 53). Will Hutton (1995) memorably argued that, rather than spelling impending doom for Labour by depleting their manual working-class base, the transitions of deindustrialisation and the rise of the service

seemed to face the intractable ‘electoral dilemma’ facing almost all of Europe’s centre-left parties in the contemporary era: either risk extinction by sticking to a declining and marginalised base of unionised manual workers, or jump ship and rebrand oneself as a new party of the ascendant middle classes (Przeworski and Sprague 1986).

Acceptance of this trade-off resulted in a series of policy reviews which began under Neil Kinnock’s leadership (1983 – 1992), but accelerated exponentially following the succession of Tony Blair from the late John Smith in May 1994 (Jones 1997: 10; Kavanagh 1997). Initially these reforms simply aimed to reiterate the party’s acceptance of the market economy and jettison some of their more egregiously unpopular policy proposals such as nuclear disarmament and withdrawal from the European Community (Heath and Jowell 1994; Seyd 1993). However, following the disappointment of the 1992 General Election and the official embrace of the ‘New Labour’ slogan in 1994, a much more extensive revision of the party platform was undertaken.

The nature of the ‘New Labour’ project is hotly debated, but is clearly visible in the shifts surrounding the party’s attitudes to trade unions, taxation, and nationalisation. For instance, in the run-up to 1997, the party pledged to maintain the Thatcher-era bans on secondary

sector may in fact expand the base for left-wing policy to white collar workers as inequality, economic insecurity, and the corresponding rise in crime and disorder begins to spread to other sections of society. Finally it has also been argued that, due to collapse of belief in the competence and trustworthiness of the incumbent Conservatives following the ‘Black Wednesday’ financial crash of 1992, as well as public infighting over the EU and a series of corruption and sexual impropriety scandals thereafter, “*it is hard to resist the conclusion that Labour would almost certainly have won anyway, even without New Labour*” (Heath, Jowell, and Curtice 2001: 4). Whatever the merits of these arguments, they clearly were not enough to convince the Labour Party which kept firmly to the cautious ‘New Labour’ script for economic management long-after the landslide victory in 1997 (Bara 2006; Bara and Budge 2001).

picketing⁴⁷, ruled out raising income tax during the full five years of parliament, committed themselves to the Conservatives' own spending limits for the first two years and, most symbolically, repealed 'Clause IV' of their constitution, which had hitherto committed them to bringing industry into common ownership (Heath, Jowell, and Curtice 2001: 101–120; Jones 1997: 73; Kavanagh 1997: 28; Shaw 2007: 195). The word 'socialism' was completely expunged from the party's vocabulary (Heath, Jowell, and Curtice 2001: 1–2). Nor was there a significant reversal of this moderation once the party took office. Upon the 10-year anniversary of the party's election, one review noted that income inequality remained at where it had been 1997, corporation tax rates were amongst the lowest in western Europe, and income taxation was less punitive than at any time in the post-Second World War era (Shaw 2007: 58). While investment in the National Health Service [NHS] and education meant that public spending – which, as a percentage of GDP, had been lower in 2001 than when Labour took office (Gamble 2010: 67) – rose considerably by the end of the 2000s (Shaw 2007: 201), the image of the party as ideologically unique was probably not resuscitated very much by these later actions, given that the Conservatives themselves had, by this point, publicly promised to match Labour's spending levels at the next election (Gamble 2010).

Nor was clear blue water between the parties restored by the onset of the 2008-09 financial crisis and subsequent recession. During the 2010 and 2015 election campaigns Labour

⁴⁷ This policy was also reflected in the party's campaign strategy where, ever wary of the 1979 and 1983 election defeats, the party leadership was frequently at pains to "*remove from Blair's image any association with the trade unions*" (Jones 1997: 33). Some advisors even considered a Unison protest against Labour's promise to stick to government spending targets for local authorities as a photo opportunity, as it would demonstrate that "*Blair is unpopular with trade unions...[which is] something New Labour would like to see*" (Jones 1997: 33).

largely forsook the opportunity to depart significantly from the Conservatives' austere plans for economic recovery or challenge the narrative of the crisis as a product of bad governance requiring market-based solutions (English et al. 2016). Instead, they attempted to win back moderate voters by virtue of their renewed 'economic competence', by pledging to halve the deficit through cuts to government during a first term (albeit somewhat more slowly than the Conservatives) and running a budget surplus during the second (Gamble 2010: 77; Wintour 2014). In broad ideological terms, the policy space remained "*relatively constrained*" (Allen and Bara 2017: 2), and Bara and Budge's (2001: 602–603) observation that tax and spend issues had been "*removed ... from the hub of party debate that now focuses on the question of who can deliver services most effectively*" remained largely accurate.

Of course, policy change was not the only tool employed in service of Labour's great moderation. Several studies have shown that the 1990s and 2000s coincided with a notable decline in both the proportion of the parliamentary cohort with a working-class background (Evans and Tilley 2017: 126–130; Heath 2013; O'Grady 2019), and the relative emphasis on underprivileged social groups in the party's campaign (Evans and Tilley 2017: 120–123; Thau 2019). Similarly, the traditional representatives of the organised working class, the trade unions, were kept at arm's length throughout Labour's time in office, and the party's dependence on their financial support was significantly reduced (Heath, Jowell, and Curtice 2001: 108–120; Jones 1997: 33; Kavanagh 1997: 27; Shaw 2007: 195). To further banish all associations of the party with working-class radicalism, significant efforts were made in public speeches and editorials to depict Labour as, in the words of their leader, a "*pro-business, pro-enterprise*" entity (Financial Times, 16 January 1997) that had "*no time for the politics of envy*" (Blair 1997), and recognised that the "*class war is over*" (Blair 1999). Most importantly, the party re-evaluated its previous firm commitment to economic equality and

communitarianism (Shaw 2007: 201–202). For example, Blair denied that it was possible for anyone to earn too much money (The Guardian, 23 November 2005) and, in a quote that's citation is almost de rigueur when discussing the era, prominent New Labour MP Peter Mandelson stressed that the party was “*intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich*”⁴⁸ (Financial Times, 23 October 1998).

As a result, Blair's party was “*perhaps the first Labour government towards which the business community was not actively hostile*” (Gamble 2010: 66), and it experienced a significant increase in middle class support (Evans and Tilley 2017: 149) which fuelled an unprecedented three successive electoral victories for the party. However, this dilution of the party's brand (Lupu 2016) – which is as clear as anything seen in the Latin American examples that I discussed in Chapter Two – did come at a cost. Under the surface the party was gradually experiencing a declining in the proportion of voters with a ‘strong’ attachment to it (Karreth, Polk, and Allen 2013: 804) and, with rising levels of abstention, there was mounting evidence that significant swathes of ‘traditional’ Labour voters were becoming increasingly apathetic towards a party that no longer seemed interested in representing their preferences on redistribution and workplace relations (Evans and Tilley 2017: 173–174; Heath 2016; Karreth, Polk, and Allen 2013: 804; Norris 2001)⁴⁹. The seeds had been set for future electoral upheavals.

⁴⁸ “*As long as they pay their taxes*” being the occasionally overlooked final clause in this statement.

⁴⁹ Interestingly, the danger of alienating left-wingers and portions of the working class was highlighted even before the Blair years. In the aftermath of the 1992 election, several leading academics spoke of the Kinnock-era attempts at moving towards the political centre election, and raised doubts that “*this manoeuvre can be repeated successful*” without incurring a damaging rise in abstention amongst the party's base (Heath and Jowell 1994: 207).

The scale of the changes undertaken by Labour in the decades following their 1980s nadir can often overshadow the second major change in party positioning during this era: the substantial revisions to the Conservative Party's brand in the aftermath of their own historical losses in the elections of 1997, 2001, and 2005. One highly influential electoral autopsy warned that significant portions of voters in crucial marginal constituencies viewed the Conservatives as old-fashioned, indifferent to the problems facing ordinary people, and out-of-step with their own preferences on sociocultural issues such as gay rights, single-parent households, and British-European relations (Ashcroft 2005). Whereas Labour had previously worried about being tied to a shrinking group of union-affiliated manual working classes (Radice 1992), the Conservatives were now concerned that their continued unpopularity with younger professionals (particularly female ones) and ethnic minorities could portend eventual electoral extinction (Ashcroft 2005).

The product of these fears was the victorious 2005 party leadership bid of one David Cameron, who premised his campaign on the 'de-toxification' of the Conservative brand, and the promise of more social liberalism, less overt Euroscepticism, and an increased commitment to the NHS and certain other 'ringfenced' social services (Ford and Goodwin 2014: 70–71; Green 2010). His election was supposed to be the party's very own 'Clause IV moment' (Green 2010: 87) and, indeed, Cameron was at times happy to refer to himself as the "*heir to Blair*" (Gamble 2010: 62). What these changes meant, however, was that the social aspects of the New Labour agenda – which were, along with support for devolution, perhaps the only remaining major ideological differences between the two parties during the early Blair years (Bara and Budge 2001; Heath, Jowell, and Curtice 2001: 2–7) – quickly lost their uniqueness. In the words of one (critical) traditionalist conservative commentator,

the party “*abandoned the last significant difference between his party and the established left*”, by embracing social liberalism (Hitchens 2005).

By the late 2000s, then, the leadership of both parties had reached an unprecedented level of agreement on all manner of issues from economic management to civil rights. While neither Labour or the Conservatives suffered an electoral wipe-out on the scale of centre-left and right parties in Latin America during their own transformations (Lupu 2014; Roberts 2013; Stokes 2001), there was evidence that both seemed to be gradually losing certain traditional supporters ‘left behind’ by this liberal consensus on both social and economic issues (Evans and Tilley 2017; Ford and Goodwin 2014: 129–134, 2016: 483). That said, this era of convergence and partisan dealignment was soon to come to a swift end in the years following the 2015 electoral contest, and the unexpected ascension of long-time left-wing backbencher Jeremy Corbyn to the Labour Party leadership, following a determined campaign by grassroots members (Allen and Bara 2017: 18-19; Whiteley et al. 2019).

The wide-ranging changes to the organisation, strategy, policy, and rhetoric of Corbyn’s rebranded Labour Party have been referred to as “*parallel only by the Blairite takeover of 1994 in [their] scope and significance*”, and a rejection of “*the last vestiges of centrism associated with ‘new Labour’ in favour of a radical left platform and image*” (Quinn 2018: 34). Although, in truth, the parliamentary Labour Party remained largely opposed to the Corbyn project, it would have been difficult to miss the changes in how the party was framed in the popular press compared to the Blair years, with editorials accusing the party as having turned to the “*hard left*” (Witte and Adam 2017) and become, perhaps, “*the most left-wing mainstream party in the Western world*” (Colville 2015). The reaction to the 2017 party

platform – which promised significant increases in the minimum wage, a wholesale reversal of recent welfare cuts, the nationalisation of railways and utilities, and sharp upticks in corporation and upper rate income taxation (Labour Party 2017) – clearly underlined the end of the Blair-era partnership between with business and Labour. Analysts at Morgan Stanley termed the party as a significant threat to British business and company valuations (Chapman 2017). The Conservatives – now led by Theresa May – also partly reversed their own Cameron-era moderation. They offered a policy platform that included commitments to grammar schools, a relatively clean break from the EU⁵⁰, and significantly lower levels of immigration, as well as a reduction in personal and corporation taxes (Conservative and Unionist Party 2017). All-in-all, the 2017 contest put “*clear red water*” between the two

⁵⁰ The 2016 referendum on the UK’s membership of the EU, and the subsequent years of contestation (both domestic and international) over what exact form of ‘Brexit’ should be delivered, have been rightly described as one of the most important critical junctures, or ‘electoral shocks’, to disrupt British politics in recent decades (Fieldhouse et al. 2020: 163–187). While the newly ‘repolarised’ 2017 election campaign generally focused on more traditional issues of state spending and party competence (Prosser 2018: 1229), it took place against a background in which attitudes towards Europe were playing an increasingly large role in determining partisanship and vote choice (Ford and Goodwin 2017; Hobolt, Leeper, and Tilley 2020; Jennings and Stoker 2017; Mellon et al. 2018). This is understandable, given that the issue was highly salient throughout the late 2010s, and Labour and the Conservatives were generally seen to have become more polarised in terms of the European question throughout this period (Fieldhouse et al. 2020: 170–171). In all of the models based on data from 2015 and 2017 in this chapter, I control for both respondents’ own attitudes to the Leave-Remain fissure and how close they think that the two parties are to them on this issue. This is important. Just as one should make sure that perceptions of polarisation are not a simply function of feeling close to a party (Busch 2016; Granberg and Brown 1992), I need to ensure that placing Labour and Conservatives further apart is not merely a product of wishful thinking on behalf of those with strong emotional investments in the European issue. That said, the fact that voters may be more likely to factor in the parties’ positions on the EU into their perceptions of political polarisation is not necessarily a problem for my thesis. The exact content of the political disputes that are seen to underpin Labour-Conservative contestations will, of course, change overtime. For example, the abolition of Britain’s nuclear arsenal and even European integration itself would have been more important during the 1980s than 1950s or late 2000s. The main point of my argument is that it is important that the two parties do provide a range of ideological choices regarding the future direction of Britain (especially during times of crisis), not that the specific choices must always concern ‘classic’ issues of industrial nationalisation or the extent of the welfare state.

parties for perhaps the first-time in a generation (Quinn 2018: 49–52).

Of course, the important factor here is not whether there was an ‘objective’ convergence between mainstream parties in Britain, but whether voters themselves actually noticed these changes, as well as how they reacted to them. For the rest of this chapter, I will capture individual perceptions of mainstream party ideological difference using two different measures. Respondents in the nearest available BESIP wave to the 2015 and 2017 election were asked “*considering everything the Conservative and Labour Parties stand for, would you say that there is a great difference, some difference or not much difference between them*”. Following this, respondents were also asked to place both Labour and the Conservatives on an 11-point scale, which asked respondents “*In politics people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you place the following parties on this scale?*”. Respondents are recorded as perceiving more polarisation if they replied, “*a great difference*”, and also if they put Labour and Conservatives further apart on the 11-point ideological spectrum.

The availability of multiple variables that record perceived polarisation is a major advantage of the BESIP. While I retain the measure of general left-right polarisation, the validity of my results can be improved by also utilising the ‘great difference’ variable. The latter is likely to yield more meaningful results for those respondents who are unfamiliar with the terms ‘left’ and ‘right’ (Bauer et al. 2017). If perceptions of polarisation do matter for voter alignments, the changes in these variables should be systematically related to alterations in one’s propensity to vote for anti-system parties between 2015 and 2017.

Figure 5.2: The % of the British Electorate Who See “A Great Difference” in what Labour and the Conservatives Stand For, 1964 - 2017

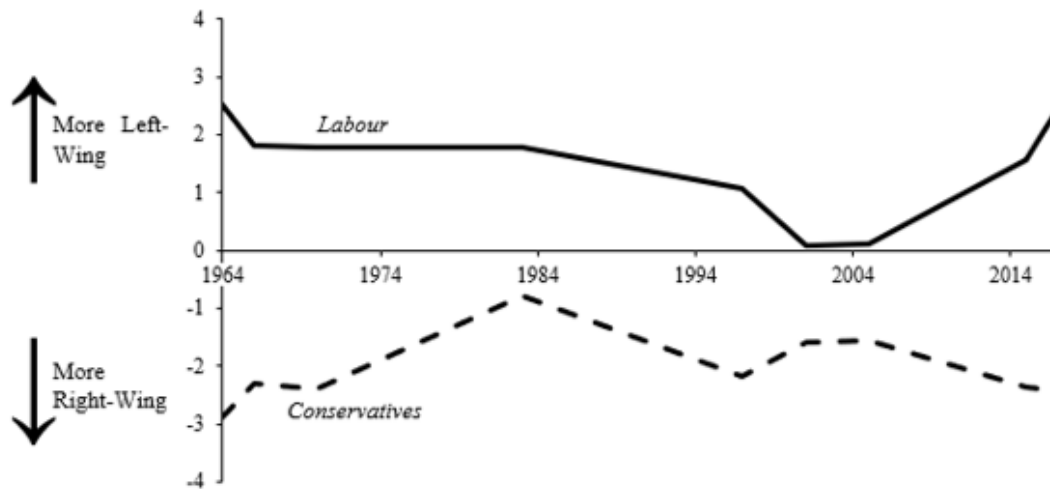


Note: The figure here shows the percentage of people who believe that there is a “*great deal of difference*” between the Conservative and Labour parties at each general election from 1964 to 2017 (the black data series). In addition to the British Election Study post-election survey, data also comes from the responses to the same question in the British Social Attitudes Surveys in the election years of 1997 – 2017 (the weighted average – by number of respondents in each dataset – was taken to derive the overall average percentage from 1997 on). At each survey, respondents were asked “*Considering everything that Labour and the Conservative party stand for, would you say there is a great deal of difference between them, some difference, or not much difference?*”. Prior to 1974, the first option was “a good deal” rather than “a great deal”, and before 1979 the question referred only to “the parties”, rather than Labour and the Conservatives specifically (though the two were overwhelmingly the largest two parties for most of this period). The percentage totals do not include “don’t knows” (however, these comprised 5% or less of the sample at each survey). The average was taken for the two elections of 1974. The grey data series indicates the median proportion responding “a great deal of difference” throughout the entire time period.

Source: British Election Studies 1964 – 2017; British Social Attitudes Surveys 1997-2017.

Figures 5.2 and 5.3 present data from various editions of the British Election Study [BES] and British Social Attitude Surveys [BSA], both of which utilise nationally representative survey samples, which suggests that voters did update their perceptions of the parties during this period. From 1983 onwards, but particular after the ascension of ‘New Labour’ in the mid-1990s, voters became less likely to say that there were ‘great differences’ between Labour and the Conservatives, and less likely to place these parties further apart on an 11-point scale

Figure 5.3: Labour and Conservative Left-Right Positions
According to BES Respondents, 1964 - 2017



Note: This figure shows whether respondents to the BES surveys considered Labour and Conservative to be left or right-wing. Responses are taken from various scales (originally of different lengths) in different editions of the BES that asked respondents to rate the party each party on a single dimension of left to right. All of these responses were rescaled to run from -5 (most right-wing) to +5 (most left-wing) so that 0 indicates the most 'centrist' possible position. Accordingly, negative values indicates that respondents view the party as more right-wing; positive values indicate more left-wing. The figure plots the average score for both parties at each election that asked a comparable question.

Source: British Election Studies 1964, 1966, 1970, 1983, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2015, 2017.

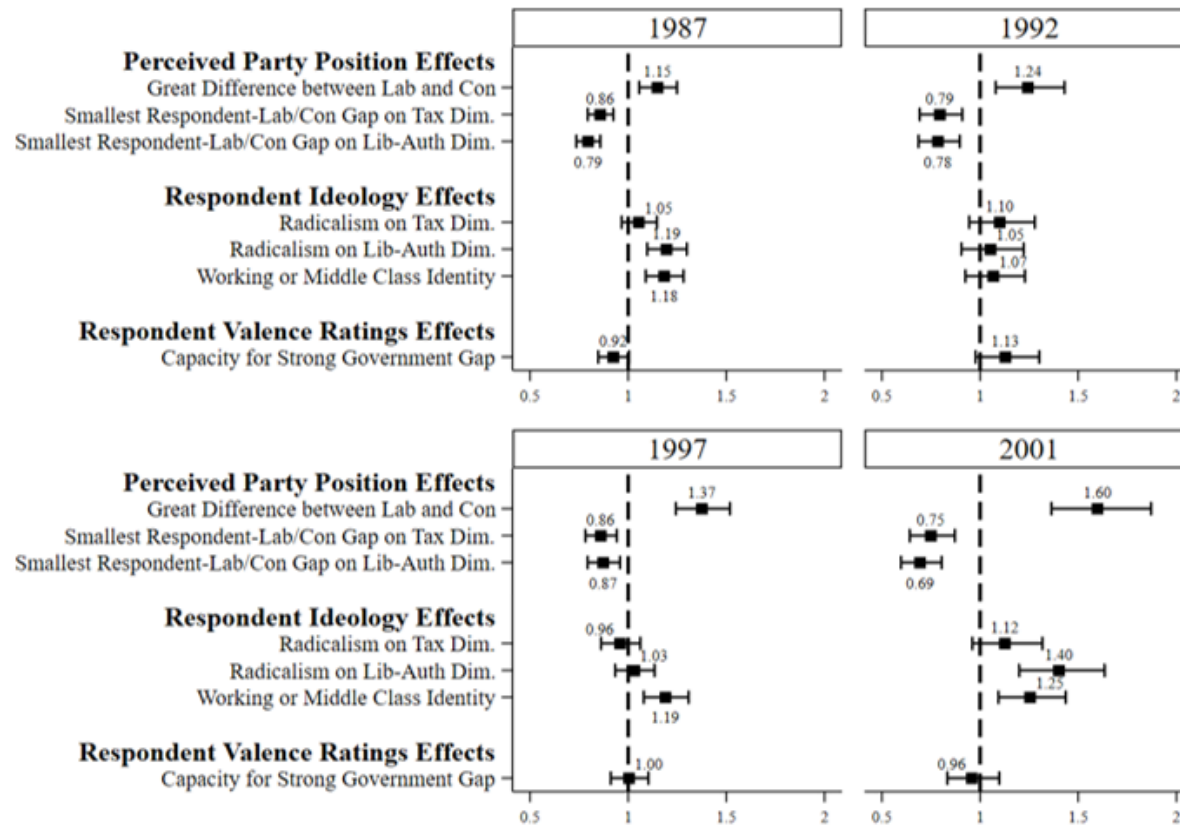
of left-right ideology. Importantly, perceptions were also responsive to the changes in the political scenery that took place after the 2015 election. Both of the aforementioned indicators saw a reversal as respondents became increasingly likely to emphasise the new divisions between the parties. There is, therefore, ample evidence to suggest that elite depolarisation and repolarisation has cut through to British voters in the last few decades.

Has recognition of the changing relative positions of Labour and the Conservatives had any effect on the behaviour of British voters? Research has already demonstrated that the electorate became more promiscuous and less likely to identify strongly with either party during this period. Fieldhouse et al.(2020: 9–14, 51–55) show that the proportion of BES respondents who switched parties in successive general elections rose almost consistently

from around 20% in the 1970s, to a peak of above 40% in 2015; while, in the same timeframe, the segment announcing that they had a ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ strong identification with a political party dropped from 80% to 55%. Patterns of dealignment were particularly strong amongst the non-university educated manual working classes – i.e. the group most likely to have lost their ‘natural’ party as Labour moved towards the Conservatives on issues of economic redistribution, and towards the Liberal Democrats on issues of identity and social liberalism (Evans and Mellon 2015; Evans and Tilley 2017; Ford and Goodwin 2014, 2016). The declining availability of meaningful political representation on offer to this subgroup (and hence motivation to vote at all) has been credibly linked to large-scale rising abstention rates amongst this group in UK general elections since the 1980s (Evans and Tilley 2017; Heath 2016).

Indeed, I myself can provide evidence attesting to the strength of the association between believing Labour and the Conservatives to be ideologically distinct entities, and developing an identification with one or the other. Figures 5.4 and 5.5 present several coefficient plots taken from a series of logistic regressions predicting whether or not a respondent “*considers themselves as Labour or Conservative*”. This measure of partisanship come from various BES surveys that took place between 1987 and 2017 and that also asked respondents about their perception of the ideological gulf between the two major British parties. I use responses to predict the likelihood of partisanship. In Figures 5.4, the main independent variable is whether or not the respondent considered there to be a ‘great difference’ between the two main parties; in Figure 5.5 I use the distance between the respondents’ placement of Labour and the Conservatives on an 11-point left-right dimension.

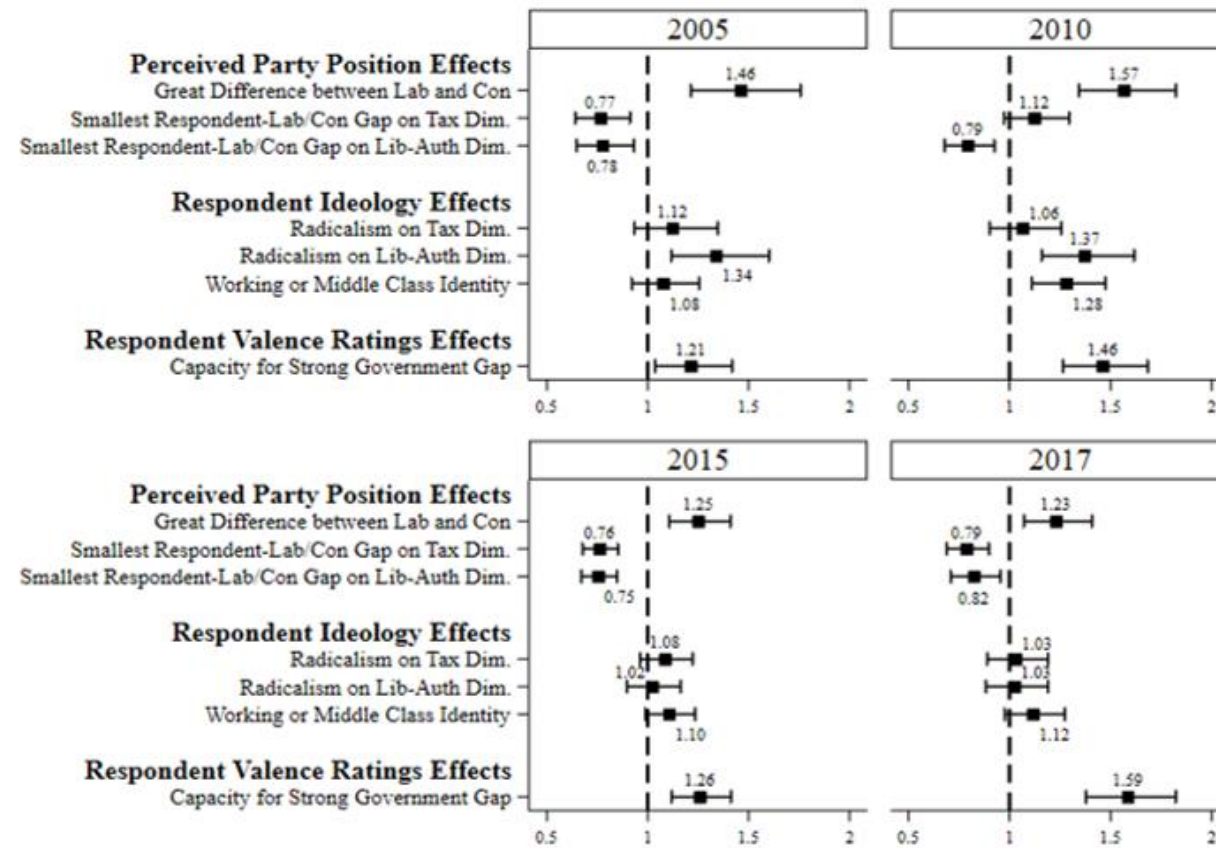
Figure 5.4: Changes in the Odds of being a Labour or Conservative Partisan, 1987-2017 – Version A



Note: This odds ratio coefficient plot shows the impact of a one standard deviation increase in each variable on the likelihood of a respondent feeling an attachment (partisanship) to either Labour or the Conservatives, and were derived from eight separate logistic regression models which are presented in Tables H.1-H.8 of Appendix H. Data were taken from each edition of the British Election Study, from 1987 to 2017. Here the original coefficients have been standardised and converted into odds ratios. I also display 95% confidence intervals for each point estimate. Each model controls for age, gender, education, occupational class, trade union membership, religion and home ownership, although these coefficients are not displayed here. The main variable of interest is the dummy variable that indicates a respondent believes that there is a 'great difference between (what) Lab(our) and (the) Con(servatives)' stand for. Even controlling for a wealth of factors, a standard deviation increase in this variable is consistently associated with an increase in the odds of mainstream partisanship, with the rise varying from 15% (1987) to 57% (2010).

Source: British Election Studies 1987 – 2017

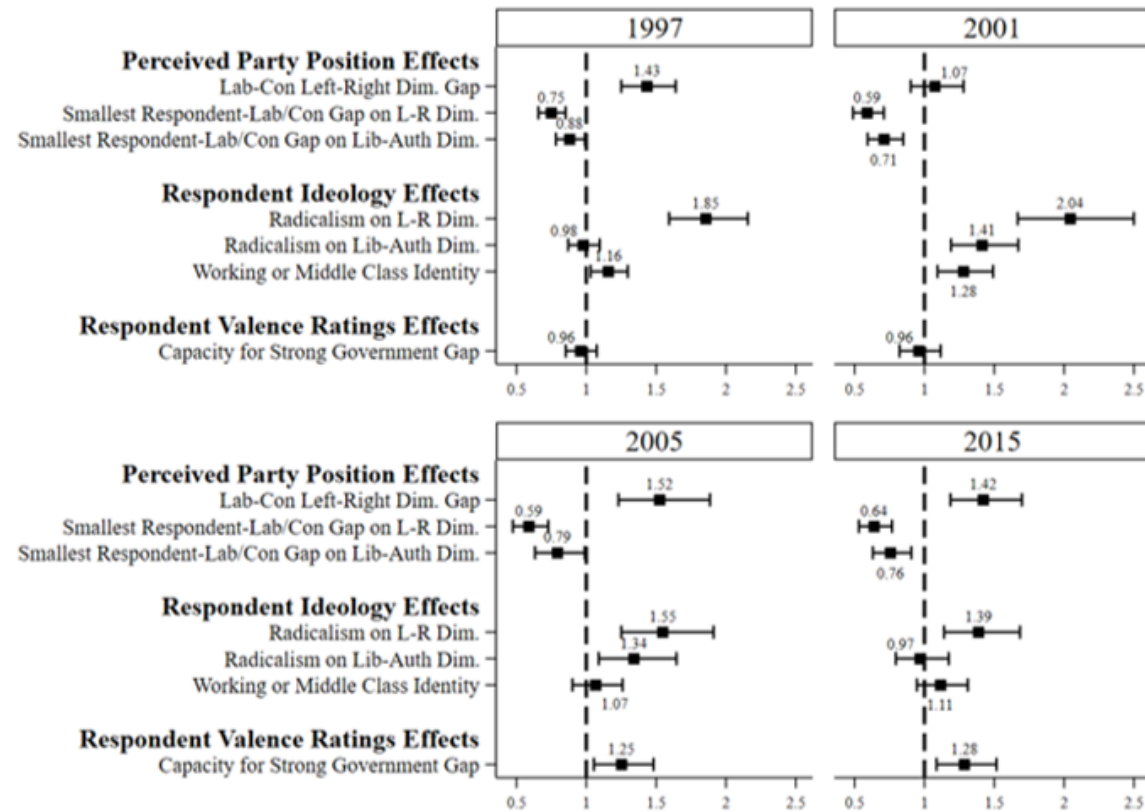
Figure 5.4 Cont'd: Changes in the Odds of being a Labour or Conservative Partisan, 1987-2017 – Version A



Note: Figure 5.4, continued.

Source: British Election Studies 1987 – 2017

Figure 5.5: Changes in the Odds of being a Labour or Conservative Partisanship, 1987 – 2017 – Version B



Note: This odds ratio coefficient plot shows the impact of a one standard deviation increase in each variable on the likelihood of a respondent feeling an attachment (partisanship) to either Labour or the Conservatives, and were derived from four separate logistic regression models which are presented in Tables H.9-H.12 of Appendix H. Data were taken from each edition of the British Election Study, from 1997 to 2015. Here the original coefficients have been standardised and converted into odds ratios. I also display 95% confidence intervals for each point estimate. Each model controls for age, gender, education, occupational class, trade union membership, religion and home ownership, although these coefficients are not displayed here. The main variable of interest is the interval variable 'L-R gap' that indicates how many spaces apart a respondent places Labour and the Conservatives on an 11-point left-right scale. With the exception of 2001, a standard deviation increase in this variable is consistently associated with an increase in the odds of mainstream partisanship, with the rise varying from around two-fifths to about one-half.

Source: British Election Studies 1987 – 2017

Given evidence that voters tend to place parties they like closer to their own position and those they dislike further away (Busch 2016; Granberg and Brown 1992), I control for perceptions of how close the respondent thinks that Labour and the Conservatives are to their own ideological position. I also control for how far from the centre the respondent places themselves given that, if voters do pull parties they like towards them, respondents with more centrist positions will tend to pull parties towards the centre, rather than the extremes, which means less perceived polarisation.

I do this using two types of 11-point scales: one about ‘classic’ left-right or economic issues, another relating to issues broadly related to the second-dimension of political contestation: the divide between so called libertarian and authoritarian value systems (Evans, Heath, and Lalljee 1996; Flanagan and Lee 2003). For the first scale, in the models using the ‘great difference’ dummy variable as the indicator of perceived polarisation (Figure 5.4), I use respondents’ self-placement and placement of the two-parties on a scale relating to the trade-off between “*cutting taxes and spending*” and “*raising taxes and spending on social services*”. In the models which use the left-right position gap (Figure 5.5), I instead stick to placements along this abstract ideological dimension. I use the same measures in both figures to record libertarian-authoritarian values; however, the exact question here differs by BES survey. Respondents in the 1987, 1992, 2001, 2005, and 2010 editions were asked to place themselves and Labour and the Conservatives on a scale running from prioritising “*protecting civil rights over cutting crime*” to “*prioritising cutting crime over protecting civil rights*”⁵¹. Respondents in 1997 were instead given a scale running from “*women should have an equal role with men in running business, industry and government*” to “*a woman’s*

⁵¹ In some editions the question wording substituted ‘the civil liberties’/‘rights of the accused’ for ‘civil rights’, but the principle of a trade-off with cutting or reducing crime was maintained in each.

place is in the home". Finally, those in 2015 and 2017 got a question about whether Britain should "*do all it can to unite fully with the European Union*" or "*do all it can to protect its independence*". Those with higher values on the 'Smallest Respondent-Lab/Con Gap on L-R (or Tax) Dimension' or 'Lib-Auth Dimension' see neither party as being particularly close to where they stand on the above issues. Those with higher values on the variables 'Radicalism on L-R (or Tax) Dimension' and 'Radicalism on Lib-Auth Dimension', place themselves further from the political centre when discussing these issues.

I also include two other variables which are conceivably linked to partisanship in the UK. The first is whether or not the respondent identifies with a social class. Though the tendency of the two parties to issue class-based political appeals has declined considerably in recent years (Evans and Tilley 2017; Thau 2019), the nexus between the working-class and Labour, and the middle-class and the Conservatives has historically been important in understanding political alignments in Britain (Butler and Stokes 1969). BES respondents were asked: "*Do you think of yourself as belonging to any particular class?*". They could reply "Yes, Middle Class", "Yes, Working Class", "Yes, Other", "No", or "Don't Know". I used these responses to create a dummy variable recording whether a respondent considers themselves "middle" or "working-class" (1), or gave any other response (0). The second variable is whether a respondent considers one of Labour or the Conservatives to have an advantage over the other in terms of capacity for delivering strong government. I include this variable in response to the arguments presented by proponents of the 'valence' model of partisanship, which state that political alignments in modern Britain are increasingly based on voters' 'running tallies' of how well different parties perform in office, rather than class identity or other non-rational psychological mechanisms (Clarke et al. 2004, 2009). BES respondents were asked "*On the whole, would you describe the [X] Party nowadays as capable of being a strong*

government, not capable of being a strong government, or neither/both?". Two of the parties that they were asked about were the Conservatives and Labour. I used responses to the questions to create a dummy variable indicating whether the respondent thinks that there is a difference between these parties in their capacity for 'strong government' (i.e. they say one party is capable and the other is not), or whether they think that there is no difference (i.e. both parties are equally capable/incapable, or the respondent does not know about whether they are or not). We can, therefore, begin to get a sense of the relative importance of perceived ideological polarisation to partisanship, in comparison to class-identity or evaluations of party competence.⁵²

Finally, I control for, though do not display, a multitude of demographic variables frequently linked to partisanship in the UK: age, gender, education, occupational class, trade union membership, religion, and homeownership⁵³. More information on how all of these variables were created, including the original BES variable codes and question wordings in addition to descriptive statistics, can be found in in Table G.1 of Appendix G. The original logistic regression models can be found in Tables H.1 to H.12 in Appendix H. Please note that here all coefficients have been standardised so that the numbers quoted in the figures

⁵² Inevitably, this is a somewhat crude test given that many of these factors will be causally interconnected. Later on in this chapter I use panel data and more vigorous model specification to tease out the true effects of perceptions of polarisation.

⁵³ Age is recorded in years. Education is a nominal variable with three categories of attainment (GCSE or lower, A-levels or equivalent, and degree-level and beyond). Occupational class has 5-categories (professional and managerial; routine non-manual; self-employed; skilled working class and foremen; semi and unskilled working class), with retirees assigned by reference to their last full-time position. Trade union membership is dichotomous based on current status. Housing tenure distinguishes between home-owners, social renters, and private renters. Religion distinguishes members of the Church of England/Scotland, from Catholics, other Christians, non-Christian minority religions, and those with no religion.

refer to the effect of a one standard deviation increase in each variable on the likelihood that a respondent identifies with either Labour or the Conservatives. I also display 95% confidence intervals for each point estimate.

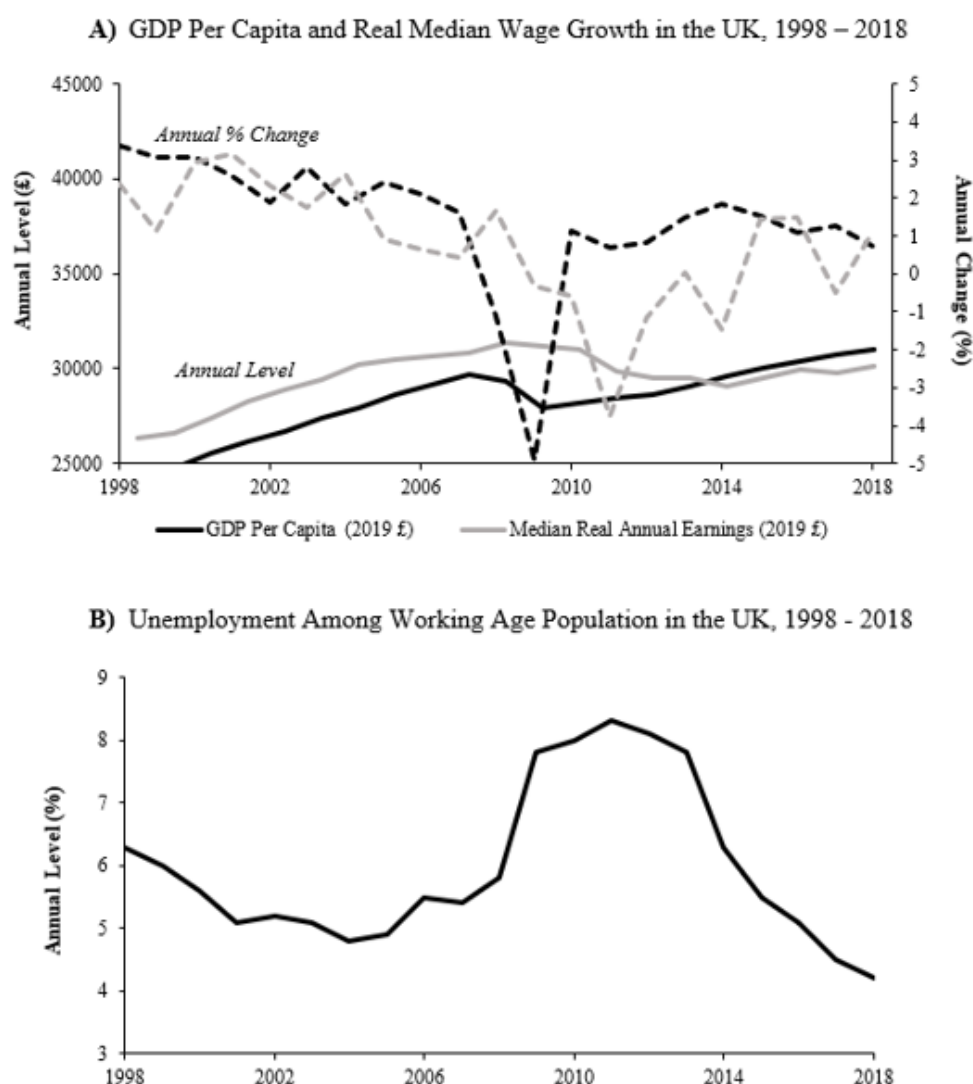
Beginning with Figure 5.4, one can clearly see that belief in there being a ‘great difference’ in what Labour and the Conservatives stand for is consistently associated with an increase in the odds of identifying with one of these parties. The rise in the odds varies from 15% in 1987, to as much as 60% in 2001. In fact, there seems to be a pattern in that belief in the parties being polarised matters more when, objectively (see Figure 5.1), they are most similar. In such situations, perhaps only the most hardcore of supporters continue to identify meaningful ideological differences in the philosophy of the two parties. These effect sizes compare very favourably to the impacts of having a class identity (which is only a significant predictor in five of the eight models) or believing that one of the parties has an advantage over the other in their capacity for delivering strong government (which is only a significant predictor in four). Interestingly, the importance of this ‘valence’ rating gap gets noticeably larger over time. It is an insignificant predictor between 1987 and 2001, but becomes gradually more influential thereafter. This may corroborate arguments which suggest that evaluations of governing competence have become more important over time (Clarke et al. 2004, 2009), perhaps as a consequence of voters having to use these heuristics as an alternative basis for party choice in a less ideologically polarised party system. As expected, those who feel that one of the parties is closer to their own ideological position (whether on classic left-right issues or the libertarian-authoritarian value trade-off) are also more likely to identify with one of the two major parties. The effect associated with having a non-centrist ideology oneself, however, is fairly inconsistent and rarely statistically significant.

These findings are repeated when we look at the results from the BES surveys that inquired about placements along the general left-right ideological spectrum (Figure 5.5). With the exception of 2001, placing Labour and the Conservatives further apart is a fairly reliable predictor of partisanship. It has a stronger association than having a class identity or believing that one party or another has a greater capacity for strong government. Feeling that one of the two parties is particularly close to you on the libertarian-authoritarian or general left-right spectrum is, again, a positive predictor of partisanship. Interestingly, however, unlike radicalism on tax issues (used in the last set of models), here having a non-centrist position on the left-right dimension is a very strong positive predictor of partisanship. Overall, though, the main take-home point is that, across time and controlling for a plethora of other factors, believing Labour and the Conservatives to be ideologically polarised is a fairly reliable predictor of having an attachment to one party or the other.

The ideological polarisation of political elites clearly seems to matter for partisanship in Britain. However, did the decline of ideological divisions and the erosion of old patterns of partisan loyalties lead to an uptick in support for anti-system parties? Before considering their fortunes during this period, it is worth considering the second part of my ‘crisis and convergence’ model of anti-system success. Ideological depolarisation, which reduces the ability of mainstream parties to ‘pull’ voters towards them, is a necessary condition, but it is not sufficient. A reduction in the quality of a valued policy output – namely, the economy – is also needed to provide the ‘push’ to an anti-system alternative.

Figure 5.6 provides an overview of macroeconomic trends during the last twenty years. While GDP per capita and the median UK income grew steadily to reach new peaks during

Figure 5.6: Economic Trends in the United Kingdom, 1998 - 2018



Note: The figures here indicate aggregate economic trends in the United Kingdom between 1998 and 2018. The top figure plots the trajectory of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita and the real (i.e. adjusted for inflation) UK median wage full time workers, both of which are recorded in terms of 2019 pounds sterling. The solid line indicates the absolute levels of these indicators; the dashed line indicates the annual change in percentage terms. The bottom figures indicates the seasonally adjusted level of unemployment amongst all UK residents aged 16 to 64. This data comes from a labour force survey and is equivalent to the International Labour Organisation (ILO)-defined unemployment rate (including all those who did at least one hour of paid work a week, unless on holiday or temporary sick leave).

Source: All data are taken from the UK's Office for National Statistics (2019a, 2019b, 2019c).

the Blair years (1997-2007), the financial crisis of 2007-08 took a large bite out of this progress, and sent both indicators hurtling downward. Growth remained sluggish and inconsistent in the decade after this critical juncture and neither measure had recovered to

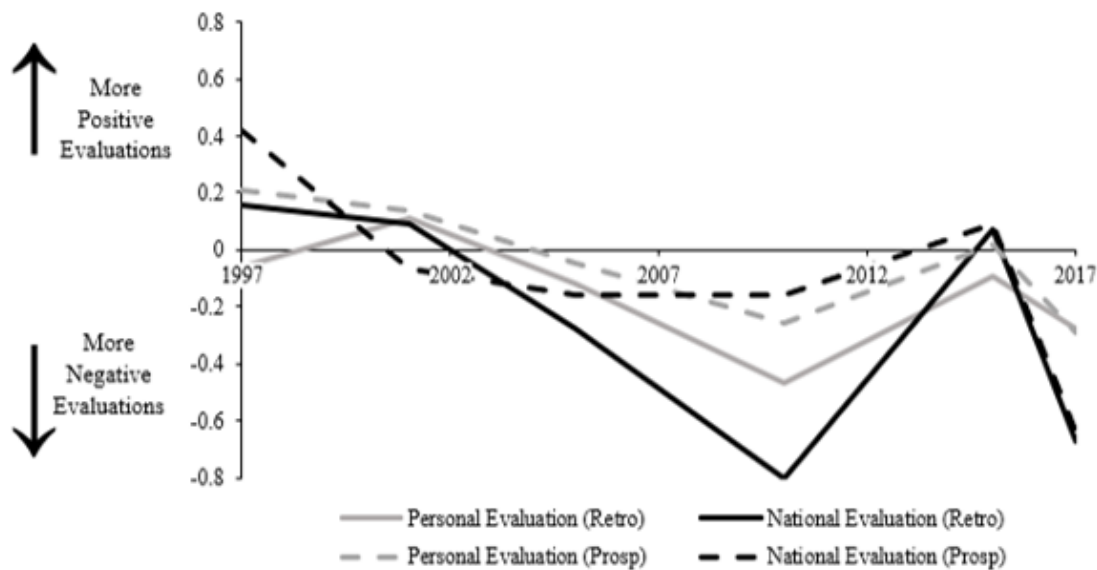
its pre-crisis levels (once inflation is adjusted for) by 2015. Similarly, unemployment, which decreased fairly consistently during the first half of New Labour's tenure, spiked sharply in the aftermath of the crisis, and remained high till around 2014. Though unemployment decreased quickly thereafter, this masks a substantial rise in the number of people on part-time and zero-hours contracts during this period (Edwards 2018), making it difficult for feelings of economic security to fully recuperate. Sure enough, as demonstrated in Figure 5.7, average economic evaluations – whether concerning the health of one's own pocketbook or the nation's – were much worse at the end of the 2000s than at the start. While they improved slightly by 2015, this improvement was relatively fleeting and was still noticeably below the levels reached during the early New Labour years.

Therefore, per my 'crisis and convergence' model, despite ideological depolarisation between Labour and the Conservatives lasting for most of the post-1992 era, one would expect the rise of anti-systems to be largely a post 2007-08 phenomena. Figure 5.8, which charts the electoral fortunes of parties outside the Great Britain's⁵⁴ 'big three' – Labour, the Conservatives, and the centrist Liberal Democrats – corroborate this speculation. Minor parties attained negligible level of success prior to the 1990s; however, support increased slowly during the New Labour years, before peaking in three elections after the financial crisis (and 2015 in particular). Figure 5.9 shows that this increase in support was driven primarily by the rise of the United Kingdom Independence Party [UKIP], but also the Greens and the Scottish National Party [SNP]⁵⁵.

⁵⁴ Northern Irish voters (less than 3% of the UK's electorate) are excluded from all of these figures, along with the rest of the analysis in this chapter, because of the very different party system in that country.

⁵⁵ The SNP's rapid growth is mostly obscured when looking at the party's support across Great Britain as a

Figure 5.7: Personal and National Economic Evaluations of BES Respondents, 1979 - 2017



Note: The figure here shows the extent to which respondents to BES surveys believe that both the national economy and their personal financial situation had improved over the past 12 months, and would further improve over the next 12 months. Responses are taken from various scales in different editions of the BES that asked respondents to rate the national economy and their 'household finances' over the past 12 months on a 5-point scale (retrospectively) from "got a lot worse" to "got a lot better" (with "no change" as the central value). The respondents were then asked to predict the likely future prospects for the national economy and their own household on a similar scale from "will get a lot worse" to "will get a lot better". I have rescaled all four of these items to run from -2 (got/will get a lot worse) to 2 (got/will get a lot better). Accordingly, negative values indicate poor perceptions of the economy and one's personal finances; positive values indicate greater levels of satisfaction and optimism.

Source: British Election Studies 1997 – 2017.

whole as the party only competes in Scotland. When considering just votes cast in that country, the party went from averaging around 20% of the vote between the 1987 and 2010 general elections to around 50% and 36% in the 2015 and 2017 contests, respectively (Audickas, Cracknell, and Loft 2020). Unlike UKIP and the Greens, it is worth noting that the SNP has participated in devolved governments, heading up the Scottish executive at Holyrood since 2007. However, as I mentioned in Chapter One, I only classify anti-system parties by reference to exclusion from national governments, given that voters are likely to consider the contests to regional bodies as 'second-order' (Reif and Schmitt 1980). As such, it is less easy to distinguish cheap 'protest voting' from committed political radicalism, which is the more likely interpretation when support is given to anti-system parties in contests for the more consequential national executive. Furthermore, decade-long experience of regional government has clearly not undermined the SNP's rhetorical penchant for self-characterisation as an outsider fighting back against the 'British' or 'Westminster' establishment (Masseti 2018). It is, therefore, not obvious that participation in regional government (as opposed to national executives) is as consequential for perceptions of, nor indeed behaviour by, anti-system parties.

Figure 5.8: Party Vote Shares in Great Britain, 1945 – 2017:
The Rise and Fall of ‘the Others’

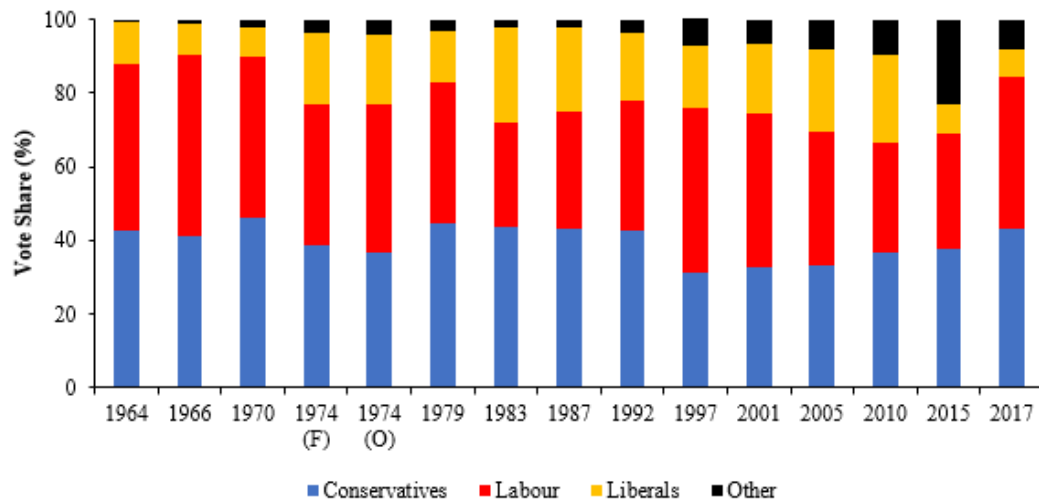
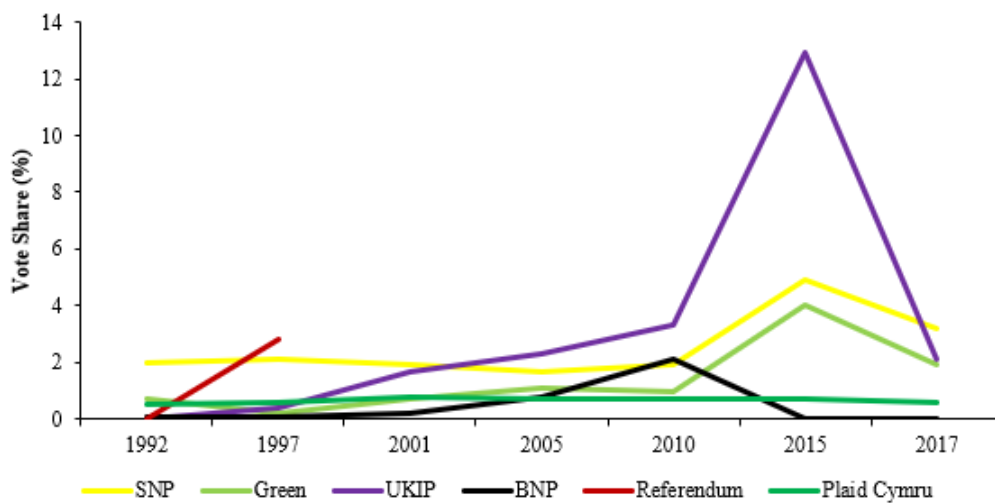


Figure 5.9: Specific Anti-System Party Vote Shares in Great Britain,
1992 – 2017: A Sharp Rise and a Swift Collapse



Note: These figures depict the vote shares for certain parties, or groups of parties, at various UK general elections. The shares are as a percentage of the total votes cast in Great Britain only.

Source: Audickas et al (2020).

These parties are ideologically eclectic. UKIP is principally a Eurosceptic and right-wing populist organisation (Ford and Goodwin 2014); the Greens are concerned with the environment and social liberalism, but also draw upon radical left language of protest and anti-capitalist sentiment (Dennison 2017); the SNP are known principally for their rejection

of Scottish membership of the United Kingdom. However, given that these three are the largest anti-system parties – they all reject the legitimacy of one or more of the basic values, norms, practices, institutions, and boundaries of their political community, and none have been involved in governing in Westminster – it is the determinants of their support that I shall focus on from this point onwards.

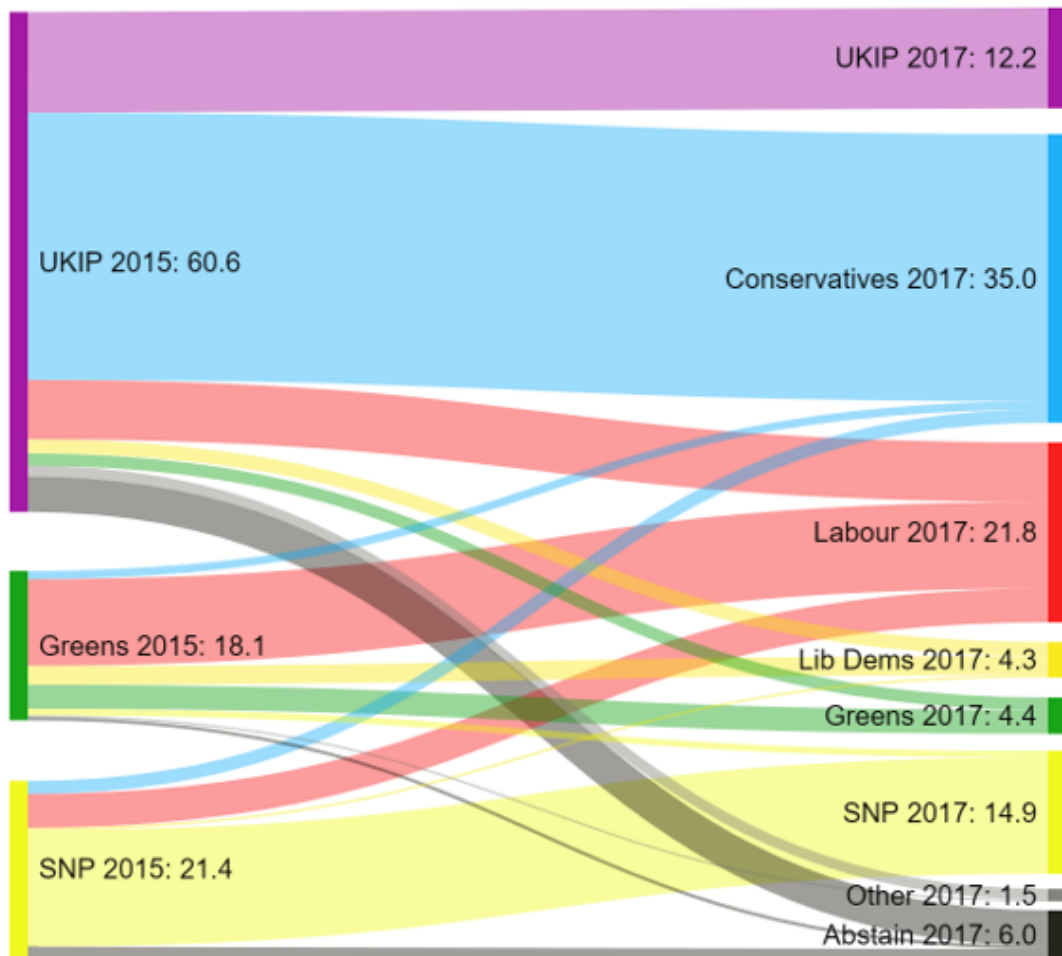
Repolarisation and the Decline of Three Anti-System Parties, 2015 – 2017

Given that we are dealing with an ideologically diverse group of parties, it is worth considering, before looking at any survey data, whether it is likely that UKIP, the SNP, and the Greens would stand to profit from ideological convergence. One important piece of evidence for this proposition is that all three parties have, at various points, tried to make political hay out of the notion that mainstream politicians in Britain are “all the same”. The tendency of UKIP to make this claim has already been highlighted (Figure 2.1), but the Greens and SNP have also played this card. For example, at the launch of their 2005 ‘people’s manifesto’, the leader of the SNP, Alex Salmond, stated that his party “*reject[ed] the false choice between one Tory who introduced the poll tax in Scotland - that was Mr Howard - and another Tory who dragged Scotland into an illegal war - that's Mr Blair*” (Scott 2005). The party, which became increasingly left-wing and working-class throughout the 1980s and 1990s, had long been seen as a potential threat to a Labour Party that might be portrayed as being too keen on “*chasing English Tory voters*” (Brand, Mitchell, and Surridge 1994: 226) and, sure enough, by 2015 many SNP-leaning voters were citing Labour’s “*increasing similarities to the Tories*” as a reason for their disillusionment with their former party (Green 2015). The Greens have also tried to woo disenchanted left-wing voters, pointedly titling their 2005 manifesto ‘Real Choice for Real Change’ (Webb 2005: 105).

Another piece of evidence corroborating the idea that mainstream convergence boosted these parties is looking at what happened once Labour and the Conservatives repolarised in 2017. Figures 5.8 and 5.9 clearly show a downturn in support for these parties, but was this actually driven by supporters returning to established parties, rather than to other minor parties or abstention)? To answer these questions, I turn to the 2014 – 2019 British Election Internet Panel [BESIP], a longitudinal dataset that was created by re-interviewing the same representative samples of British voters throughout this volatile period (Fieldhouse et al. 2019). Figure 5.10, which shows how supporters of the SNP, Greens and UKIP in 2015 went on to vote in the 2017 contest, is informative. The BESIP data clearly capture the scale of the losses by minor parties during this cycle. UKIP and the Greens lost over three-quarters of their 2015 electorates. The SNP did slightly better at retaining their voters, but still lost around one-third. Many 2015 anti-system voters (around three-fifths) preferred mainstream parties in 2017; with the Conservatives converting most former UKIP voters, and Labour picking up larger chunks of former-Green and SNP supporters. It is important to note that there were also very few defections to abstention (with only around 1 in 16 anti-system voters in 2015 choosing to sit out the 2017 contest). Finally, the behaviour of *mainstream* supporters between 2015 and 2017 – not featured in this figure, but the data is available upon request – demonstrates that these losses were not compensated by movement in the opposite direction. Only around 1% of 2015 Conservative voters, 2% of 2015 Labour voters and 3% of 2015 Liberal Democrat voters opted for any of these anti-system alternatives in 2017.

Mainstream parties, and Labour and the Conservatives in particular, were clearly successful in winning back radical voters 2017. This realignment was obviously correlated with changing perceptions of the ideological distance between these parties, but was it actually caused by it? This is certainly the idea promoted in several academic articles about the 2017

Figure 5.10: The Movement of Anti-System Party Voters in Britain, 2015-2017: A Return to the Mainstream



Note: This diagram depicts the vote choices at the 2017 UK general election made by all those who voted for the three major anti-system parties, UKIP, the Greens and the SNP, at the previous election in 2015 (N = 2709). The data was taken from the British Election Study's Internet Panel (BESIP) which reinterviewed the same voters shortly after both contests, in Wave 6 (8th May 2015 - 26th May 2015) and Wave 13 (9th Jun 2017 - 23rd Jun 2017) of their long-running project. The sample has been weighted to reflect the national electorate at both time points, as well as to account for the non-random tendency of different types of people to drop out of the panel between interview dates. The numbers in the diagram are as a percentage of the total number of voters choosing anti-system parties in 2015 rather than the overall electorate at either time point. So, for example, 60.6% of voters for all three parties chose UKIP in 2015, but only 12.2% of those same voters opted for UKIP in 2017.

Source: British Election Study Combined Wave 1-16 Internet Panel (Fieldhouse et al 2019).

general election. Dennison (2018) states that UKIP and the Greens effectively had the “*rug pulled from under them*” by the two major parties diverging and putting a squeeze on their membership base and ideological niche. Dorey (2017: 322-323) supports this assertion, arguing that SNP voters, and even a significant minority of UKIP supporters, were brought

back to Labour by the party's old-school redistributive and anti-austerity posturing. This is similar to the interpretation of Johns (2018: 101), who contends that the reignition of political conflict along economic divisions undermined the SNP by encouraging their supporters to put aside their constitutional preferences and join Corbyn's left-wing coalition against the Conservatives. To comprehensively answer this question, however, we clearly have to look at the extent to which individual anti-system voters thought that Labour and the Conservatives had changed over this period, and see what the relationship was between these updated perceptions and behaviour at the ballot box.

Some circumstantial evidence for the importance of mainstream polarisation can be gleaned from Figures 5.11 – 5.12. These bar charts indicate total percentage of respondents that considered there to be “a great difference” in what Labour and the Conservatives stood for, as well as the average distance between respondents' placements of the two parties on the aforementioned left-right scale. I cluster respondents according to their 2015 general election vote choice, and present their average responses at the time of that election, and at the following general election two years later. So, for example, the figures tell us that, in 2015, only 27% of UKIP supporters believed that there were “great differences” between Labour and the Conservatives; however, by the 2017 contest, that figure had risen to almost two-thirds (63%) of that same pool of 2015 UKIP voters. The results suggest that changes in Labour-Conservative polarisation cut through the electorate in general, and also anti-system party supporters specifically. Increases in perceived polarisation are largest when considering the ‘great difference’ variable. Though 2015-era supporters of Labour and the Conservatives remain the most convinced of the distinctions between their parties, the proportions of 2015 anti-system party voters who agreed with this statement increased from under one-third to a plurality in each case during the two intervening years. Ex-UKIP, SNP,

Figure 5.11: The % of Respondents Who See “a Great Difference” in what Labour and the Conservatives stand for by 2015 Party Support

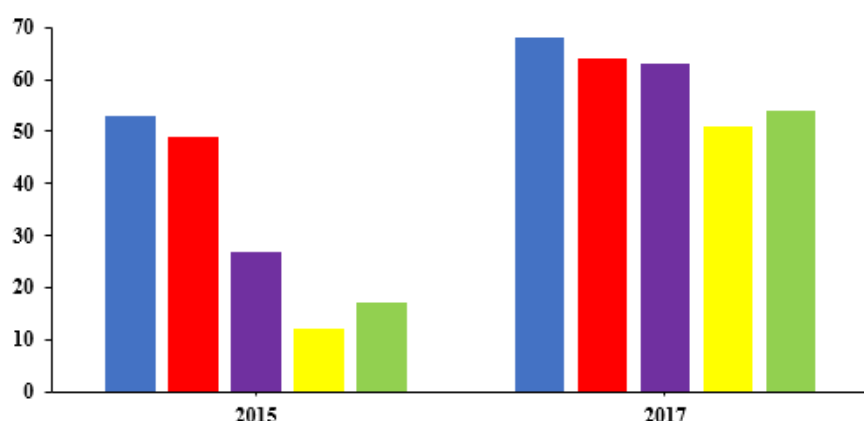
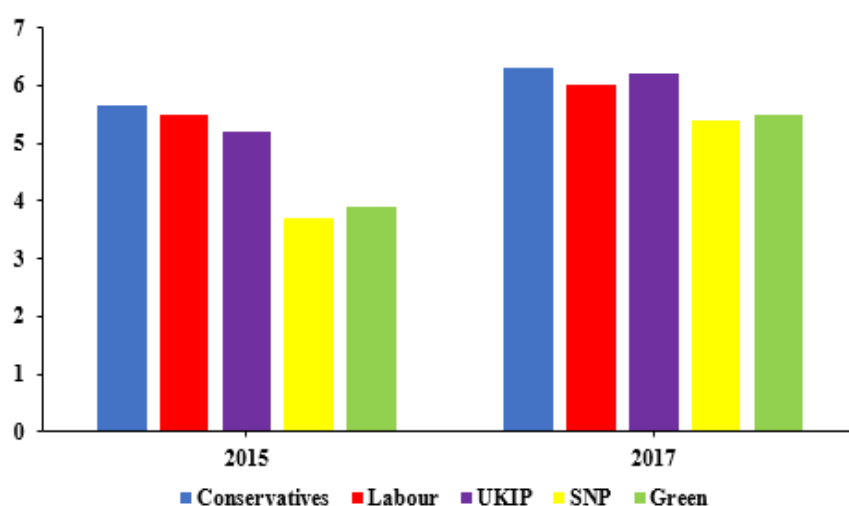


Figure 5.12: The Average Gap in Labour-Conservative Left-Right Axis Placements by 2015 Party Support



Note: These figures indicate levels of perceived polarisation between Labour and the Conservatives in both 2015 and 2017, among those who voted Labour, Conservative, UKIP, SNP, and Green in the 2015 general election. Data were weighted according to the standard sample weight for that survey wave (with the wave closest to the 2015 and 2017 general elections chosen in each case). Figure 5.11 indicates the proportion of BESIP respondents who believed that there were “great differences” between what Labour and the Conservatives “stand for”; Figure 5.12 indicates how far apart, on average, respondents placed those two parties on an 11-point scale of left-right ideology (see Appendix I for question wording details).

Source: British Election Study Combined Wave 1-16 Internet Panel (Fieldhouse et al. 2019).

and Green supporters also became more likely to place Labour and the Conservatives further apart on the 11-point left-right scale, with the average gap rising from 5.2, 3.7, and 3.9, respectively, in 2015, to 6.2, 5.4, and 5.5 in 2017. Whereas in 2015 these anti-system party supporters were a lot less likely to acknowledge ideological differences between the major parties than Labour-Conservative supporters, this was not really the case two years later.

On paper, then, these figures some support for the convergence hypothesis. However, it remains to be seen whether changing recognition of the increasing range of ideological choices on offer from Labour and the Conservatives actually caused 2015-era anti-system voters to defect from their previous parties and make a return to the political mainstream in 2017. Luckily, the panel data provided by the BESIP allow me to test for this. In what follows I present several tables featuring models predicting the likelihood of voting for the three British anti-system parties between 2015 and 2017⁵⁶, as opposed to any other party. I model support for the Greens, UKIP, and the SNP separately. The samples for the Greens and UKIP just feature respondents from England and Wales; the SNP sample is just for Scotland. For each party I present two sets of models: one for each of the measures of polarisation that I introduced previously. My hypothesis is that affirming there are “great differences” between what Labour and the Conservatives “stand for”, and placing the two

⁵⁶ That is Wave 6 (8th May - 26th May 2015) and Wave 12 (5th May – 7th June 2017) of the BESIP. These particular waves were used as they were the nearest ones to the 2015 and 2017 election that also inquired about several of the most important independent variables in models. Data from Wave 2 (22nd May - 25th June 2014) of the study were used for the lagged values for Wave 6. On a few occasions, I did still have to rely on assigning respondents their past value on a certain variable where this was not asked precisely in the same survey wave as the other questions (though this was always in a survey recorded at most a month prior to the others). All instances of this are outlined in the descriptive statistics section for this chapter in Table G.2 in Appendix G.

parties further apart on the left-right spectrum, should have a consistently negative relationship to one's likelihood of supporting any of the three anti-system parties.

The structure of panel data allows me to be more confident that I can prevent problems of reverse causality and omitted variable bias from biasing my coefficients. As we have values for the dependent variable that fluctuate within the same voter over time as well as between different voters, we can control for individual's past attitudes. With pure cross-sectional data, one cannot rule out the fact that certain individuals always have a greater underlying propensity to support anti-system parties, regardless of their beliefs about mainstream polarisation. By comparing those who believe that mainstream parties are "all the same" to those who do not, we could effectively be comparing apples to oranges given that these individuals could also differ by any number of underlying factors. With panel data, we can deal with this by controlling for past vote choice, and then studying how changes in the former affect whether or not the latter gets updated.

The conventional way to do this might be to specify a fixed-effects model, which would remove all time-invariant characteristics from consideration by gifting each unit (voter) its own intercept (i.e. a starting likelihood of anti-system voting). This would allow us to assess the net effect of any time-varying independent variable on the outcome variable, given that, if the unobserved variable does not change over time, then any changes in the likelihood of anti-system voting must be due to influences other than these fixed characteristics (Stock and Watson 2003: 289–290). This would fully remove the potential for omitted time-invariant characteristics, such as a psychological disposition towards conspiratorial or populist thinking (Bakker, Rooduijn, and Schumacher 2016), to systematically bias

perceptions of mainstream convergence or proclivity for anti-system voting, and we would know what the expected change in a person's likelihood of anti-system voting is when their value of perceived mainstream polarisation increases by one (Bell and Jones 2015).

That said, fixed-effect strategies are ill-suited to panel models of electoral choice. Respondents who do not change their party during the time-series cannot be included in a modelling strategy that is principally set up to examine how within-unit changes in the independent variable affect within-unit changes in the dependent variable (Bell and Jones 2015). This would mean that all respondents that voted for either anti-system or mainstream parties in both 2015 *and* 2017 would be removed from my sample (which is a very large group indeed, given that I am only studying two time points). This would mean that my inferences could not be said to come from a representative sample of the British electorate, and given that I could no longer compare anti-system defectors to anti-system loyalists, the whole exercise of studying the effects of updating one's perceptions of Labour-Conservative polarisation would be defeated.

An alternative approach, which I adopt here, is to use random-effects models with standard errors clustered at the level of the voter. This type of model specifications gets its name from that way in which we assume that a given voter's individual-specific effect is 'random' and uncorrelated with the variables in our model (Greene 2008: 183). What this means is that the individual-effect can be separated from other non-moving variables, allowing the effects of the latter to be modelled in the analysis. This also results in coefficients that, effectively, represent the weighted average of 'within-unit effects' (i.e. changes in the same voter over time) and 'between-unit effects' (i.e. differences between individual voters). So

here they represent the average effect of perceptions of Labour-Conservative polarisation on anti-system voting when these perceptions change over time *and* between respondents by one unit (Kennedy 2003: 307). While this means that respondents who do not change their perceptions or vote choice between 2015 and 2017 still contribute information to the model, there are potential downsides. The first is the slightly trickier interpretation of the coefficients, given that we are no longer just measuring the effect of an individual changing their perceptions over time (although, unlike in purely cross-sectional research, this is at least still considered). The second is that all individual-characteristics that may or may not influence the variables in our model must be included and separately modelled, rather than removed by use of unit-specific fixed-effects (Wooldridge 2002).

Luckily, the BESIP dataset is very rich in terms of available covariates, reducing my concern that important individual-level factors left outside the model will be confounding my results. In the models below (Table 5.1 – 5.6) I enter these variables sequentially. In Model A, I include only the perceived polarisation variable and demographic controls (age, gender, level of education, household income quintile and occupational class)⁵⁷. In Model B, I add several attitudinal controls.

⁵⁷ Age is recorded in years, education as a nominal variable with three categories of attainment (GCSE or lower, A-levels or equivalent, and degree-level and beyond), and occupational class as another nominal variable with nine potential categories (professionals or higher technical workers; managers or senior administrators; clerical workers or junior managers/administrators; sales and service workers; foremen or supervisors; skilled manual workers; semi or unskilled manual workers; others inactive in the labour market, such as students or retirees; long-term unemployed). None of these coefficients are presented in the tables below due to restrictions of space for presentation.

First, given research that ideological extremism and attachment to particular parties skew one's ability to locate party positions objectively (Granberg and Brown 1992; Busch 2016), I control for 'respondent L-R radicalism' and the 'smallest respondent Lab/Con gap on the L-R axis'. These two variables use the distance between the respondents' own self-placement on the 11-point scale and central value, and the distance between the respondent and wherever they placed Labour or the Conservatives (whichever is closer), respectively.

Secondly, while the two parties' 2017 campaigns generally focused on issues of domestic politics and party leaders (Prosser 2018: 1229), it is undeniable that attitudes towards the EU played an increasing role in structuring political loyalties in the aftermath of the 2016 referendum on the UK's membership (Ford and Goodwin 2017; Hobolt, Leeper, and Tilley 2020; Jennings and Stoker 2017; Mellon, Evans, E. Fieldhouse, et al. 2018). The danger is that 'Leave' and 'Remain' based sentiment could cause certain voters with strong opinions on the matter to both abandon the less committed mainstream parties for an anti-system alternative (UKIP was a clearly pro-'Leave' party; the SNP and the Greens firmly 'Remain'), and come to think of those same major parties as more similar in ideological terms. For this reason, I include a similar set of controls that capture how far from the centre a respondent places themselves on an 11-point scale concerning attitudes to EU-British relations (ranging from "*the UK should unite fully with the EU*" [0] to "*the UK should protect its independence*" [10]), and how far the respondent believes that the nearest party out of Labour and the Conservatives are from their own position on this scale. I also include the respondents' intended choice (Leave or Remain) were a rerun of the 2016 referendum held that day. For similar reasons, the models of SNP support also include a dummy variable capturing intended vote choice on a referendum on Scottish independence, given that attitudes towards

this constitutional issue have become increasingly important for structuring political loyalty in that country (Johns 2018).

In Model C of each table, I control for whether or not a respondent “thinks of themselves” as Labour or Conservative, in an attempt to provide more reassurance that the effect of perceptions of convergence will not be contaminated by the impact of longstanding partisan sentiment. To simplify the interpretation of the models, I use a dichotomous indicator here (either they do or they do not); however, if I was to use an interval scale (i.e. the extent to which the respondent sees themselves as Labour or Conservative), the results would be practically unchanged⁵⁸. Finally, for the models using left-right polarisation, Model D introduces lagged versions of both the dependent variable and the variable concerning belief in mainstream polarisation. Controlling for behaviour and attitude at the previous election means that my final model is explicitly assessing whether changing one’s opinion on the extent to which Labour and the Conservatives are polarised is associated with moving to and from anti-system parties between elections (which is the core question of interest here). Unfortunately, using lagged perceptions of whether or not there are “great differences” between Labour and the Conservatives is not possible as this question was not asked prior to the 2015 election; however, I do still add a lagged version of the dependent variable to this model. The wordings of the original BESIP questions, alongside descriptive statistics for all of these variables, has been included in Table G.2 of Appendix G.

The results reveal broad support for the mainstream party polarisation hypothesis. Believing that there is a ‘great difference’ between Labour and the Conservatives, as well as placing

⁵⁸ These results are available upon request.

these parties further apart on a left-right scale, is consistently negatively associated with Green, UKIP and SNP support, even after controlling for respondents' own political radicalism and self-described ideological and emotional proximity to the two major parties. In all six tables the inclusion of the lagged dependent and independent variable makes no difference: whether or not we are looking at the effects of perceiving polarisation on anti-system voting, or the effects of changes in one's perception on changing to or from an anti-system party, these beliefs remain decent predictors of vote choice. In addition, one's likelihood of voting for an anti-system party is also reduced if one feels close to either one of the two major parties, or believes that at least one of them occupies a similar left-right ideological position to oneself. Unsurprisingly, UKIP support is more common amongst those who wish to leave the EU and those who believe that Labour and the Conservative's preferences on the European issue are different from their own. Likewise, SNP voters are significantly more likely than all other voters to want a 'yes' vote in a future referendum on Scottish independence. Only Green supporters are likely to be more ideologically 'radical' (i.e. less centrist) than average once these other variables are controlled for; however, this relationship is only statistically significant in the models where perceived polarisation is also measured as the left-right gap between Labour and the Conservatives.

Beneath each of the tables above I have also included an odds ratio coefficient plot detailing the substantive impact of a one-standard deviation change in each variable (or a one-unit change in the case of dichotomous variables) on the odds that a respondent supports the given anti-system party. Relative to other potential predictors of radical party voting – for example, having a non-centrist ideology or believing that no mainstream party is close to your own ideological position – perceptions of Labour-Conservative polarisation have quite a sizeable effect. Once the full set of controls have been specified, the odds of Green Party

Table 5.1: Modelling Green Support in England and Wales, 2015 - 2017 – ‘Left-Right Axis Gap’ Random-Effects Models

<i>Random-Effects Logistic Regression Models</i>	Model A	Model B	Model C	Model D	Model E
	Demographic Controls	Ideology Controls	Partisan Controls	Lagged L-R Gap	Lagged DV
L-R Axis Gap between Lab-Con	- 0.36 ** (0.07)	- 0.31 ** (0.06)	- 0.27 ** (0.06)	- 0.27 ** (0.06)	- 0.20 ** (0.05)
Smallest Respondent – Lab/Con Gap on L-R Axis		0.40 ** (0.09)	0.28 ** (0.09)	0.28 ** (0.09)	0.16 * (0.07)
Smallest Respondent – Lab/Con Gap on EU Axis		0.15 * (0.06)	0.11 (0.06)	0.10 (0.06)	0.09 (0.05)
Respondent Radicalism on L-R Axis		0.19 (0.10)	0.31 ** (0.10)	0.31 ** (0.10)	0.12 (0.07)
Respondent Radicalism on EU Axis		- 0.09 (0.09)	- 0.11 (0.08)	- 0.11 (0.08)	- 0.07 (0.06)
EU Ref Remain (Intention)		1.07 ** (0.34)	1.05 ** (0.34)	1.05 ** (0.33)	0.54 * (0.24)
Lab-Con Partisanship			- 1.74 ** (0.30)	- 1.73 ** (0.30)	- 0.69 ** (0.23)
L-R Axis Gap (Lagged)				Included	Included
Green Support (Lagged)					Included
Demographic Controls	Included	Included	Included	Included	Included
Constant	- 2.65 (1.05)	- 4.39 (1.12)	- 3.77 (1.07)	- 3.75 (1.06)	- 3.29 (0.73)
N - Observations	4872	4872	4872	4872	4872
N – Individuals	2436	2436	2436	2436	2436
Survey Waves	2	2	2	2	2

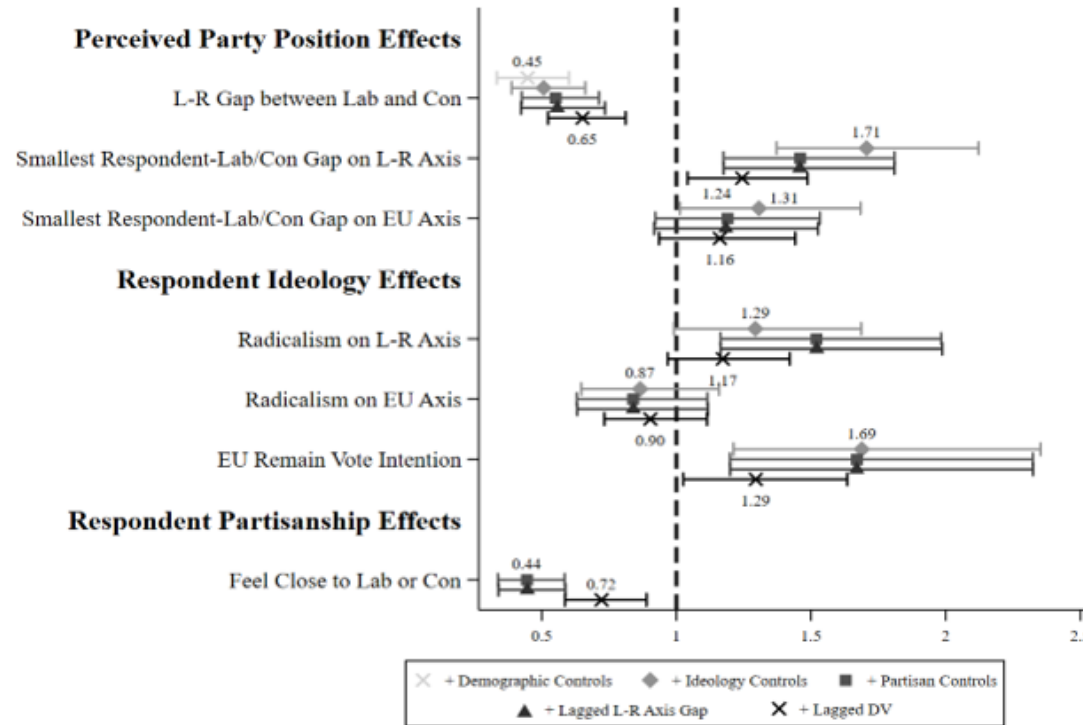
* p -value < 0.05; ** p -value < 0.01

Note: These models are predicting an intended general election vote choice for the Green Party vs any other party in Wave 6 (8th May - 26th May 2015) and Wave 12 (5th May – 7th June 2017) of the BESIP among English and Welsh respondents. Data from Wave 2 (22nd May - 25th June 2014) of the study were used for the lagged values for Wave 6. Standard errors were clustered by respondent. Perceived polarisation is here measured as a respondent placing Labour and the Conservatives further apart on an 11-point left-right ideological spectrum.

Controls (coefficients not displayed): Age, Gender, Education, Income Quintile, Occupational Class.

Source: British Election Study Combined Wave 1-16 Internet Panel (Fieldhouse et al 2019).

Figure 5.13: Changes in the Odds of Green Party Support in England and Wales, 2015-2017 – ‘Left-Right Axis Gap’ Random-Effects Models



Note: This odds ratio coefficient plot shows the impact of a one standard deviation increase in each variable on the likelihood of a respondent declaring their intention to vote for the Green Party of England and Wales in Wave 6 (8th May - 26th May 2015) and Wave 12 (5th May - 7th June 2017) of the BESIP. The reference category is any other party. The coefficients were taken from Models A to E in Table 5.1, though here they have been standardised and converted into odds ratios. I also display 95% confidence intervals for each point estimate. Standard errors were clustered by respondent. In addition, the models control for age, gender, education, income quintile, and occupational class. The first set of coefficients control for demographics only, the second add all other concurrent variables bar Labour or Conservative partisanship, which is in turn introduced in the third model. The last two models account for respondents' previous left-right placement of Labour and Conservatives and whether they previously supported the Green Party, respectively (though these coefficients are not displayed). Data from Wave 2 (22nd May - 25th June 2014) of the study were used for the lagged values for Wave 6. The main variable of interest is the interval variable 'L-R gap' that indicates how many spaces apart a respondent places Labour and the Conservatives on an 11-point left-right scale. Even controlling for a wealth of factors, a standard deviation increase in this variable is associated with a reduction in the odds of Green Party support of at least one-third.

Source: British Election Study Combined Wave 1-16 Internet Panel (Fieldhouse et al 2019).

Table 5.2: Modelling UKIP Support in England and Wales, 2015 - 2017 – ‘Left-Right Axis Gap’ Random-Effects Models

<i>Random-Effects Logistic Regression Models</i>	Model A	Model B	Model C	Model D	Model E
	Demographic Controls	Ideology Controls	Partisan Controls	Lagged L-R Gap	Lagged DV
L-R Axis Gap	- 0.26 **	- 0.18 **	- 0.14 **	- 0.13 **	- 0.13 **
between Lab-Con	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Smallest Respondent – Lab/Con Gap on L-R Axis		0.21 ** (0.05)	0.11 * (0.05)	0.11 * (0.05)	0.10 * (0.05)
Smallest Respondent – Lab/Con Gap on EU Axis		0.36 ** (0.06)	0.29 ** (0.03)	0.29 ** (0.03)	0.24 ** (0.03)
Respondent Radicalism on L-R Axis		0.07 (0.05)	0.14 ** (0.05)	0.14 ** (0.05)	0.07 (0.04)
Respondent Radicalism on EU Axis		0.23 ** (0.06)	0.21 ** (0.06)	0.21 ** (0.06)	- 0.04 (0.06)
EU Ref		- 3.01 **	- 2.97 **	- 2.97 **	- 1.60 **
Remain (Intention)		(0.30)	(0.29)	(0.29)	(0.27)
Lab-Con Partisanship			- 1.44 ** (0.15)	- 1.42 ** (0.15)	- 0.66 ** (0.14)
L-R Axis Gap (Lagged)				Included	Included
Green Support (Lagged)					Included
Demographic Controls	Included	Included	Included	Included	Included
Constant	- 2.27 (0.64)	- 2.24 (0.57)	- 1.55 (0.53)	- 1.55 (0.52)	- 2.60 (0.49)
N - Observations	4872	4872	4872	4872	4872
N – Individuals	2436	2436	2436	2436	2436
Survey Waves	2	2	2	2	2

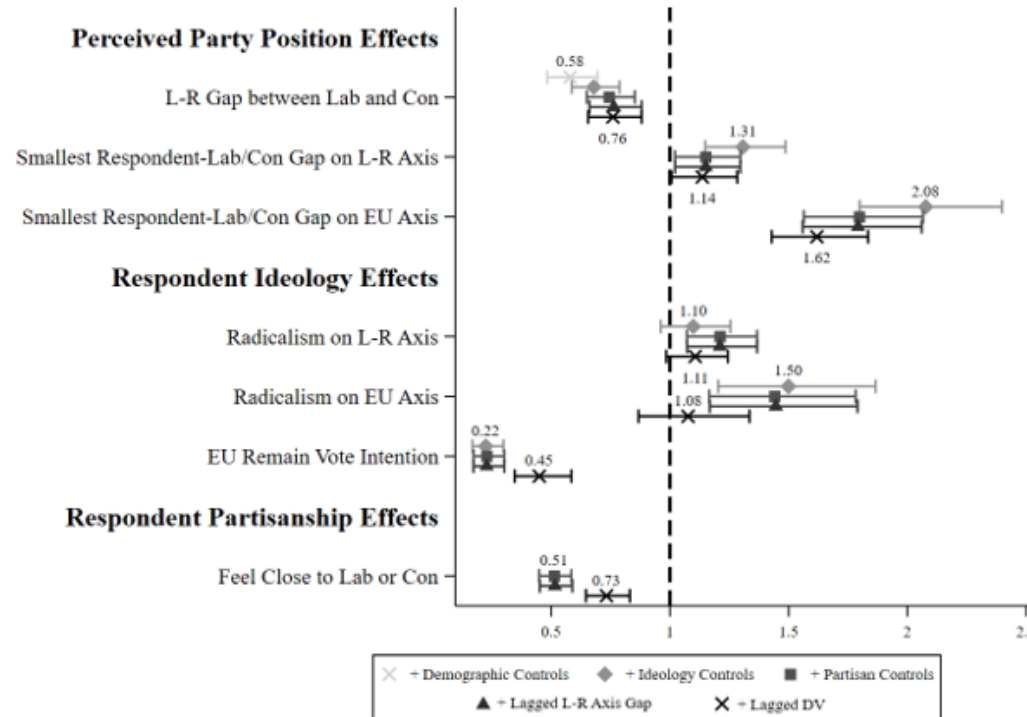
* *p*-value <0.05; ** *p*-value <0.01

Note: The models are predicting an intended general election vote choice for UKIP vs any other party in Wave 6 (8th May - 26th May 2015) and Wave 12 (5th May – 7th June 2017) of the BESIP among English and Welsh respondents. Data from Wave 2 (22nd May - 25th June 2014) of the study were used for the lagged values for Wave 6. Standard errors were clustered by respondent. Perceived polarisation is here measured as a respondent placing Labour and the Conservatives further apart on an 11-point left-right ideological spectrum.

Controls (coefficients not displayed): Age, Gender, Education, Income Quintile, Occupational Class.

Source: British Election Study Combined Wave 1-16 Internet Panel (Fieldhouse et al 2019).

Figure 5.14: Changes in the Odds of UKIP in England and Wales, 2015-2017 – ‘Left-Right Axis Gap’ Random-Effects Models



Note: This odds ratio coefficient plot shows the impact of a one standard deviation increase in each variable on the likelihood of English and Welsh respondents declaring their intention to vote for UKIP in Wave 6 (8th May - 26th May 2015) and Wave 12 (5th May - 7th June 2017) of the BESIP. The reference category is any other party. The coefficients were taken from Models A to E in Table 5.2, though here they have been standardised and converted into odds ratios. I also display 95% confidence intervals for each point estimate. Standard errors were clustered by respondent. In addition, the models control for age, gender, education, income quintile, and occupational class. The first set of coefficients control for demographics only, the second add all other concurrent variables bar Labour or Conservative partisanship, which is in turn introduced in the third model. The last two models account for respondents' previous left-right placement of Labour and Conservatives and whether they previously supported UKIP, respectively (though these coefficients are not displayed). Data from Wave 2 (22nd May - 25th June 2014) of the study were used for the lagged values for Wave 6. The main variable of interest is the interval variable 'L-R gap' that indicates how many spaces apart a respondent places Labour and the Conservatives on an 11-point left-right scale. Even controlling for a wealth of factors, a standard deviation increase in this variable is associated with a reduction in the odds of UKIP support of around one-quarter.

Source: British Election Study Combined Wave 1-16 Internet Panel (Fieldhouse et al 2019).

Table 5.3: Modelling SNP Support in Scotland, 2015 - 2017 – ‘Left-Right Axis Gap’ Random-Effects Models

<i>Random-Effects Logistic Regression Models</i>	Model A	Model B	Model C	Model D	Model E
	Demographic Controls	Ideology Controls	Partisan Controls	Lagged L-R Gap	Lagged DV
L-R Axis Gap between Lab-Con	- 1.20 ** (0.14)	- 0.21 ** (0.08)	- 0.20 * (0.08)	- 0.18 * (0.08)	- 0.21 ** (0.07)
Smallest Respondent – Lab/Con Gap on L-R Axis		0.45 ** (0.10)	0.24 * (0.10)	0.25 ** (0.10)	0.25 ** (0.08)
Smallest Respondent – Lab/Con Gap on EU Axis		0.11 (0.08)	- 0.03 (0.08)	- 0.03 (0.08)	- 0.02 (0.07)
Respondent Radicalism on L-R Axis		- 0.05 (0.14)	0.29 * (0.14)	0.29 * (0.14)	0.18 (0.11)
Respondent Radicalism on EU Axis		- 0.21 (0.12)	- 0.16 (0.12)	- 0.16 (0.12)	- 0.10 (0.09)
EU Ref		0.64	0.52	0.51	0.44
Remain (Intention)		(0.40)	(0.43)	(0.43)	(0.29)
Scot Indy Ref		- 6.99 **	5.95 **	5.91 **	2.84 **
Yes (Intention)		(1.05)	(0.88)	(0.86)	(0.51)
Lab-Con			- 4.10 **	- 4.07 **	- 2.09 **
Partisanship			(0.74)	(0.73)	(0.41)
L-R Axis Gap (Lagged)			Included	Included	Included
Green Support (Lagged)					Included
Demographic Controls	Included	Included	Included	Included	Included
Constant	7.10 (3.32)	- 4.22 (1.67)	- 2.92 (1.63)	- 2.92 (1.62)	- 2.82 (1.02)
N - Observations	1356	1356	1356	1356	1356
N - Individuals	678	678	678	678	678
Survey Waves	2	2	2	2	2

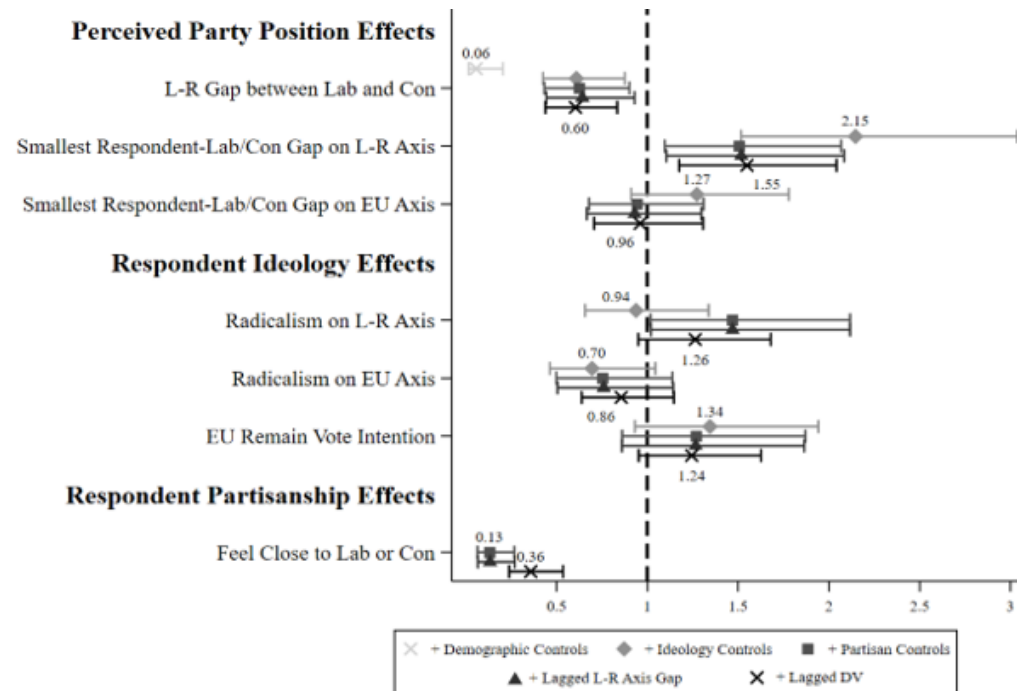
* *p*-value <0.05; ** *p*-value <0.01

Note: The models are predicting an intended general election vote choice for the SNP vs any other party in Wave 6 (8th May - 26th May 2015) and Wave 12 (5th May – 7th June 2017) of the BESIP among Scottish respondents. Data from Wave 2 (22nd May - 25th June 2014) of the study were used for the lagged values for Wave 6. Standard errors were clustered by respondent. Perceived polarisation is here measured as a respondent placing Labour and the Conservatives further apart on an 11-point left-right ideological spectrum.

Controls (coefficients not displayed): Age, Gender, Education, Income Quintile, Occupational Class.

Source: British Election Study Combined Wave 1-16 Internet Panel (Fieldhouse et al 2019).

Figure 5.15: Changes in the Odds of SNP Support in Scotland, 2015-2017 – ‘Left-Right Axis Gap’ Random-Effects Models



Note: This odds ratio coefficient plot shows the impact of a one standard deviation increase in each variable on the likelihood of Scottish respondents declaring their intention to vote for SNP in Wave 6 (8th May - 26th May 2015) and Wave 12 (5th May - 7th June 2017) of the BESIP. The reference category is any other party. The coefficients were taken from Models A to E in Table 5.3, though here they have been standardised and converted into odds ratios. I also display 95% confidence intervals for each point estimate. Data were weighted reflect the national electorate at both time points, as well as to account for the non-random tendency of different types of people to drop out of the panel between interview dates. In addition, the models control for age, gender, education, income quintile, and occupational class (not displayed). The first set of coefficients control for demographics only, the second add all other concurrent variables bar Labour or Conservative partisanship, which is in turn introduced in the third model. The last two models account for respondents' previous left-right placement of Labour and Conservatives and whether they previously supported the SNP, respectively (though these coefficients are not displayed). Data from Wave 2 (22nd May - 25th June 2014) of the study were used for the lagged values for Wave 6. Please note that, as with Table 5.3, the models from 'Ideology Controls' on also control for a 'yes' vote intention in a hypothetical second referendum on Scottish independence. These coefficients are not displayed though as they dwarf all others (increasing the odds of an SNP vote by around 10 times in some models). The main variable of interest is the interval variable 'L-R gap' that indicates how many spaces apart a respondent places Labour and the Conservatives on an 11-point left-right scale. Even controlling for a wealth of factors, a standard deviation increase in this variable is associated with a reduction in the odds of SNP support of around two-fifths.

Source: British Election Study Combined Wave 1-16 Internet Panel (Fieldhouse et al 2019).

Table 5.4: Modelling Green Support in England and Wales, 2015 - 2017 – ‘Great Differences’ Random-Effects Models

<i>Random-Effects Logistic Regression Models</i>	Model A	Model B	Model C	Model D
	Demographic Controls	Ideology Controls	Partisan Controls	Lagged DV
‘Great Difference’ between Lab-Con	- 1.83 ** (0.33)	- 1.71 ** (0.33)	- 1.52 ** (0.33)	- 0.99 ** (0.26)
Smallest Respondent – Lab/Con Gap on L-R Axis		0.38 ** (0.09)	0.29 ** (0.10)	0.14 (0.08)
Smallest Respondent – Lab/Con Gap on EU Axis		0.19 ** (0.07)	0.15 * (0.07)	0.13 * (0.06)
Respondent Radicalism on L-R Axis		0.27 * (0.11)	0.36 ** (0.11)	0.16 * (0.08)
Respondent Radicalism on EU Axis		- 0.08 (0.09)	- 0.09 (0.09)	- 0.06 (0.07)
EU Ref		1.20 ** (0.39)	1.19 ** (0.39)	0.66 * (0.27)
Remain (Intention)				
Lab-Con Partisanship			- 1.54 ** (0.33)	- 0.63 * (0.25)
Green Support (Lagged)				Included
Demographic Controls	Included	Included	Included	Included
Constant	- 3.85 (1.23)	- 5.62 (1.33)	- 4.99 (1.29)	- 3.78 (0.84)
N - Observations	3844	3844	3844	3844
N – Individuals	1922	1922	1922	1922
Survey Waves	2	2	2	2

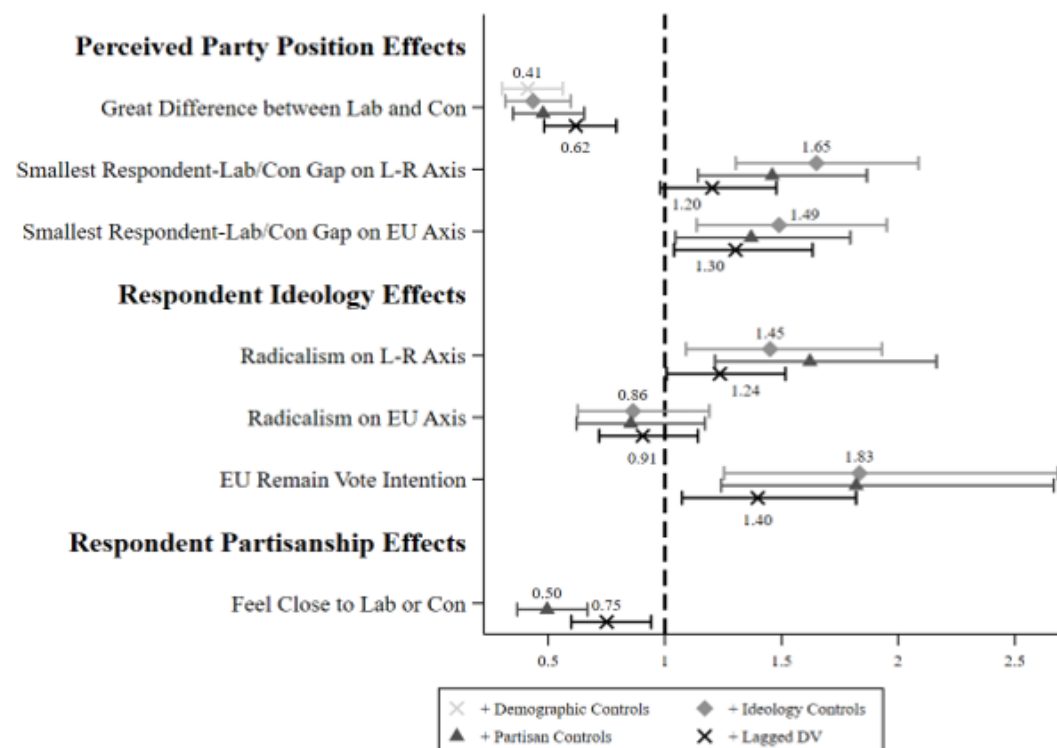
* p -value < 0.05; ** p -value < 0.01

Note: The models are predicting an intended general election vote choice for the Green Party vs any other party in Wave 6 (8th May - 26th May 2015) and Wave 12 (5th May – 7th June 2017) of the BESIP among English and Welsh respondents. Data from Wave 2 (22nd May - 25th June 2014) of the study were used for the lagged values for Wave 6. Standard errors were clustered by respondent. Perceived polarisation is here measured as a respondent stating that there is “a great difference” between what Labour and the Conservatives stand for (as opposed to only “some” or “not much” difference).

Controls (coefficients not displayed): Age, Gender, Education, Income Quintile, Occupational Class.

Source: British Election Study Combined Wave 1-16 Internet Panel (Fieldhouse et al 2019).

Figure 5.16: Changes in the Odds of Green Party Support in England and Wales, 2015-2017 – ‘Great Difference’ Random-Effects Models



Note: This odds ratio coefficient plot shows the impact of a one standard deviation increase in each variable on the likelihood of a respondent declaring their intention to vote for the Green Party of England and Wales in Wave 6 (8th May - 26th May 2015) and Wave 12 (5th May - 7th June 2017) of the BESIP. The reference category is any other party. The coefficients were taken from Models A to E in Table 5.4, though here they have been standardised and converted into odds ratios. I also display 95% confidence intervals for each point estimate. Standard errors were clustered by respondent. In addition, the models control for age, gender, education, income quintile, and occupational class. The first set of coefficients control for demographics only, the second add all other concurrent variables bar Labour or Conservative partisanship, which is in turn introduced in the third model. The last model accounts whether the respondent previously supported the Green party (though these coefficients are not displayed). Data from Wave 2 (22nd May - 25th June 2014) of the study were used for the lagged values for Wave 6. The main variable of interest is the dummy variable that indicates a respondent believes that there is a ‘great difference between (what) Lab(our) and (the) Con(servatives)’ stand for. Even controlling for a wealth of factors, a standard deviation increase in this variable is associated with a reduction in the odds of Green Party support of over one-third.

Source: British Election Study Combined Wave 1-16 Internet Panel (Fieldhouse et al 2019).

Table 5.5: Modelling UKIP Support in England and Wales, 2015 - 2017 – ‘Great Differences’ Random-Effects Models

<i>Random-Effects Logistic Regression Models</i>	Model A	Model B	Model C	Model D
	Demographic Controls	Ideology Controls	Partisan Controls	Lagged DV
‘Great Difference’ between Lab-Con	- 1.86 ** (0.21)	- 1.47 ** (0.18)	- 1.21 ** (0.17)	- 0.92 ** (0.16)
Smallest Respondent – Lab/Con Gap on L-R Axis		0.18 ** (0.06)	0.11 * (0.06)	0.09 (0.06)
Smallest Respondent – Lab/Con Gap on EU Axis		0.32 ** (0.04)	0.26 ** (0.04)	0.19 ** (0.03)
Respondent Radicalism on L-R Axis		0.06 (0.06)	0.13 * (0.06)	0.08 (0.05)
Respondent Radicalism on EU Axis		0.33 ** (0.08)	0.30 ** (0.07)	0.14 (0.07)
EU Ref Remain (Intention)		- 3.34 ** (0.40)	- 3.31 ** (0.39)	- 1.92 ** (0.36)
Lab-Con Partisanship			- 1.44 ** (0.18)	- 0.65 ** (0.17)
Green Support (Lagged)				Included
Demographic Controls	Included	Included	Included	Included
Constant	- 2.57 (0.80)	- 2.24 (0.72)	- 1.52 (0.66)	- 2.46 (0.57)
N - Observations	3844	3844	3844	3844
N – Individuals	1922	1922	1922	1922
Survey Waves	2	2	2	2

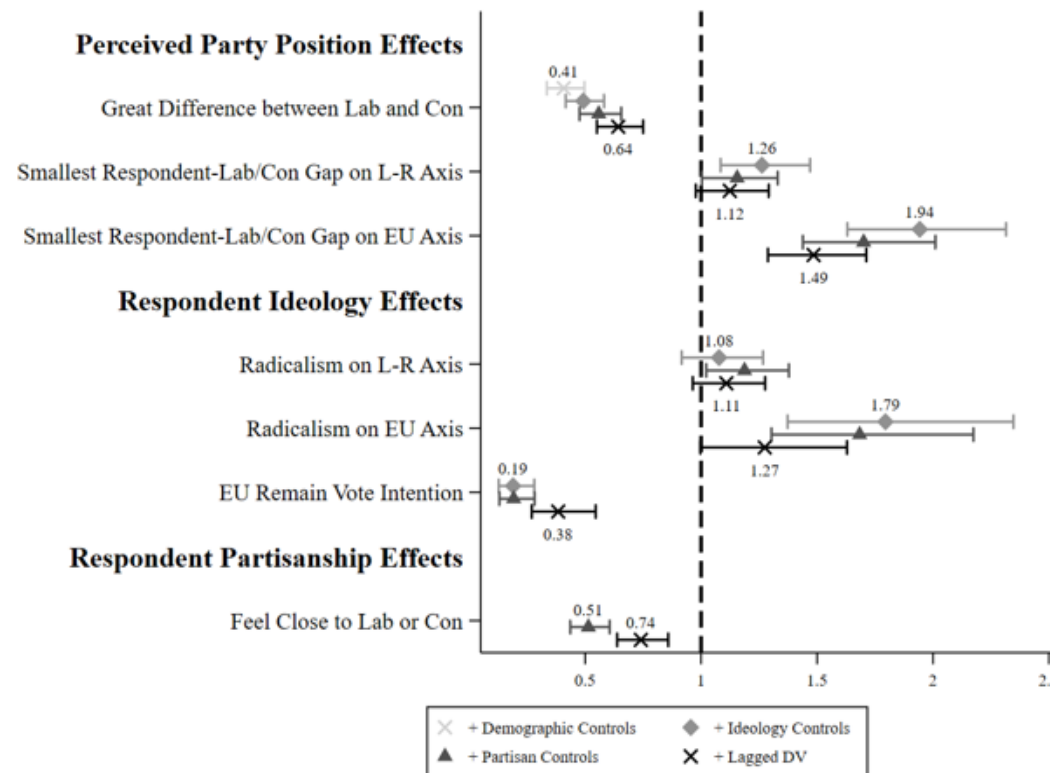
* *p*-value < 0.05; ** *p*-value < 0.01

Note: The models are predicting an intended general election vote choice for UKIP vs any other party in Wave 6 (8th May - 26th May 2015) and Wave 12 (5th May - 7th June 2017) of the BESIP among English and Welsh respondents. Data from Wave 2 (22nd May - 25th June 2014) of the study were used for the lagged values for Wave 6. Standard errors were clustered by respondent. Perceived polarisation is here measured as a respondent stating that there is “a great difference” between what Labour and the Conservatives stand for (as opposed to only “some” or “not much” difference).

Controls (coefficients not displayed): Age, Gender, Education, Income Quintile, Occupational Class.

Source: British Election Study Combined Wave 1-16 Internet Panel (Fieldhouse et al 2019).

Figure 5.17: Changes in the Odds of UKIP Support in England and Wales, 2015-2017 – ‘Great Difference’ Random-Effects Models



Note: This odds ratio coefficient plot shows the impact of a one standard deviation increase in each variable on the likelihood of English and Welsh respondents declaring their intention to vote for UKIP in Wave 6 (8th May - 26th May 2015) and Wave 12 (5th May - 7th June 2017) of the BESIP. The reference category is any other party. The coefficients were taken from Models A to E in Table 5.5, though here they have been standardised and converted into odds ratios. I also display 95% confidence intervals for each point estimate. Standard errors were clustered by respondent. In addition, the models control for age, gender, education, income quintile, and occupational class. The first set of coefficients control for demographics only, the second add all other concurrent variables bar Labour or Conservative partisanship, which is in turn introduced in the third model. The last model accounts whether the respondent previously supported UKIP (though these coefficients are not displayed). Data from Wave 2 (22nd May - 25th June 2014) of the study were used for the lagged values for Wave 6. The main variable of interest is the dummy variable that indicates a respondent believes that there is a ‘great difference between (what) Lab(our) and (the) Con(servatives)’ stand for. Even controlling for a wealth of factors, a standard deviation increase in this variable is associated with a reduction in the odds of UKIP support of around one-third.

Source: British Election Study Combined Wave 1-16 Internet Panel (Fieldhouse et al 2019).

Table 5.6: Modelling SNP Support in Scotland, 2015 - 2017 – ‘Great Differences’ Random-Effects Models

<i>Random-Effects Logistic Regression Models</i>	Model A	Model B	Model C	Model D
	Demographic Controls	Ideology Controls	Partisan Controls	Lagged DV
‘Great Difference’ between Lab-Con	- 6.55 ** (0.81)	- 1.24 ** (0.40)	- 0.88 * (0.42)	- 0.82 ** (0.37)
Smallest Respondent – Lab/Con Gap on L-R Axis		0.51 ** (0.12)	0.36 ** (0.12)	0.34 * (0.10)
Smallest Respondent – Lab/Con Gap on EU Axis		- 0.03 (0.09)	- 0.18 * (0.09)	- 0.13 (0.08)
Respondent Radicalism on L-R Axis		- 0.17 (0.15)	0.17 (0.16)	0.10 (0.12)
Respondent Radicalism on EU Axis		- 0.16 (0.13)	- 0.12 (0.13)	- 0.08 (0.09)
EU Ref		0.98**	0.93 *	0.62
Remain (Intention)		(0.48)	(0.47)	(0.39)
Scot Indy Ref		- 7.33 **	- 6.45 **	- 3.08 **
Yes (Intention)		(1.30)	(1.21)	(1.08)
Lab-Con			- 4.39 **	- 2.27 **
Partisanship			(0.95)	(0.67)
Green Support (Lagged)				Included
Demographic Controls	Included	Included	Included	Included
Constant	3.90 (3.09)	- 6.23 (2.05)	- 4.74 (1.94)	- 3.86 (1.40)
N - Observations	1048	1048	1048	1048
N - Individuals	524	524	524	524
Survey Waves	2	2	2	2

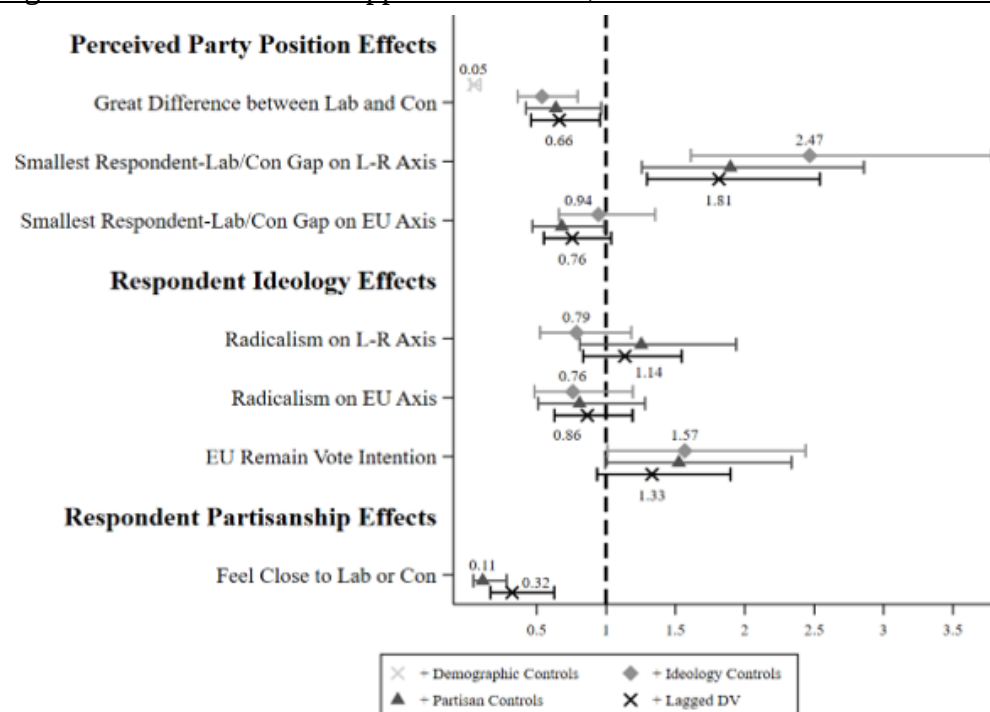
* *p*-value < 0.05; ** *p*-value < 0.01

Note: The models are predicting an intended general election vote choice for the SNP vs any other party in Wave 6 (8th May - 26th May 2015) and Wave 12 (5th May - 7th June 2017) of the BESIP among Scottish respondents. Data from Wave 2 (22nd May - 25th June 2014) of the study were used for the lagged values for Wave 6. Standard errors were clustered by respondent. Perceived polarisation is here measured as a respondent stating that there is “a great difference” between what Labour and the Conservatives stand for (as opposed to only “some” or “not much” difference).

Controls (coefficients not displayed): Age, Gender, Education, Income Quintile, Occupational Class.

Source: British Election Study Combined Wave 1-16 Internet Panel (Fieldhouse et al 2019).

Figure 5.18: Changes in the Odds of SNP Support in Scotland, 2015-2017 – ‘Great Difference’ Random-Effects Models



Note: This odds ratio coefficient plot shows the impact of a one standard deviation increase in each variable on the likelihood of Scottish respondents declaring their intention to vote for SNP in Wave 6 (8th May - 26th May 2015) and Wave 12 (5th May - 7th June 2017) of the BESIP. The reference category is any other party. The coefficients were taken from Models A to E in Table 5.6, though here they have been standardised and converted into odds ratios. I also display 95% confidence intervals for each point estimate. Standard errors were clustered by respondent. In addition, the models control for age, gender, education, income quintile, and occupational class. The first set of coefficients control for demographics only, the second add all other concurrent variables bar Labour or Conservative partisanship, which is in turn introduced in the third model. The last model accounts whether the respondent previously supported previously supported the SNP (though these coefficients are not displayed). Data from Wave 2 (22nd May - 25th June 2014) of the study were used for the lagged values for Wave 6. Please note that, as with Table 5.16, the models from ‘Ideology Controls’ on also control for a ‘yes’ vote intention in a hypothetical second referendum on Scottish independence. These coefficients are not displayed though as they dwarf all others (increasing the odds of an SNP vote by around 10 times in some models). The main variable of interest is the dummy variable that indicates a respondent believes that there is a ‘great difference between (what) Lab(our) and (the) Con(servatives)’ stand for. Even controlling for a wealth of factors, a standard deviation increase in this variable is associated with a reduction in the odds of SNP support of around one-third.

Source: British Election Study Combined Wave 1-16 Internet Panel (Fieldhouse et al 2019).

voting are decreased by around 35% and 38% for a one-standard deviation increase in placing Labour and Conservatives further apart on the left-right scale and affirming “great differences” between the parties, respectively. For UKIP, these figures are 24%, and 36%; for the SNP they are 40% and 34%. Therefore, even with a highly conservative model specification strategy, perceptions of mainstream party polarisation matter for anti-system voting, and the magnitude of these effects are generally comparable to the more intuitive impact of believing oneself to be further apart from the major parties on ideological issues.

Perceiving Polarisation and Feelings of Partisanship: Untangling the Relationship

Using lagged variables and controls for partisanship is one way of combatting the threat of the confounding effects of attachment to mainstream parties. However, I can improve on these approaches still further. Firstly, lagged dependent variables are a somewhat blunt tool. They have the potential to pick up the effects of both other factors outside the model and sufficiently highly trended variables that are included and, therefore, they can often have highly inflated coefficients which suppress the effects of other variables in the model (Achen 2001). Secondly, using a control for partisanship is still not explicitly comparing the relative size of the effect of mainstream partisanship on perceptions of mainstream party polarisation with that of perceptions on partisanship. This is an important exercise. Without knowing in what direction the relationship between these two variables primarily runs, we cannot make causal claims for the effects of perceptions of convergence.

Luckily, there is a way that we can get some leverage on this puzzle. The presence of time-ordered data from the same individuals permits me to make use of cross-lagged structural equation models [CLSEMs], which were specifically designed to estimate the directional

influence that different variables have on each other over time (Kearney 2017). This type of model works by using simultaneous equations to model values of variable X and variable Y at time t as functions of the values of both of these variables at time $t-1$. The logic behind the model is that X can be said to cause Y if the previous observation of X is associated with the present observations of Y, even holding constant the prior observations of Y itself (Finkel 1995: 25–26)⁵⁹. Therefore, I can say that perceived Labour-Conservative polarisation causes attachment to one of these two parties if the belief in how different these parties were in 2015 is a strong predictor of Labour-Conservative partisanship in 2017, controlling for partisanship in 2015. Moreover, if after standardisation this effect is larger than the impact of partisanship in 2015 on perceptions of polarisation in 2017 (controlling for perceptions in 2015), which I am simultaneously estimating, I can say that perceptions are the dominant relationship in the potentially reciprocal tango between the two variables.

The use of CLSEMs has become more popular in political science in recent years. For instance, they have been adopted by researchers seeking to disentangle the relationship between partisanship and perceptions of the economy (Evans and Pickup 2010) or policy preferences (Milazzo, Adams, and Green 2012). However, I am, once again, taking my cue from the work of Noam Lupu. Lupu (2015) is also interested in whether a growing

⁵⁹ As Kearney (2017: 1) notes, “these models are “crossed” because they estimate relationships from one variable to another and vice-versa. They are considered “lagged” because they estimate relationships between variables across different time point”. The meaning behind the name becomes even clearer if one observes the visual representation of this model in Figure 5.19. The main strength of CLSEMs, as opposed to conventional lagged dependent variable models, is that we are estimating the cross-lagged or instantaneous effects of X on Y, while controlling for the initial correlation between the two variables, as well as the autoregressive effects of both. They do, however, depend on the assumptions, which I am prepared to make here, that no other trait-like differences outside the model endure, that there are no inter-individual differences in stability (autoregressions), and that the relationship between the variables is the same over time (Kearney 2017).

ideological gulf between parties encourages voters to develop a partisan attachment to one side or the other. Using a sample of US high-school graduates first interviewed in 1965 (and subsequently re-interviewed in 1973, 1982, and 1997) he uses a CLSEM to demonstrate that affirming that there are “important differences” between what the Democrat and Republican parties stand for increases the likelihood of one identifying with either party. He also finds no evidence of reverse causality: once previous perceptions of polarisation are controlled for, past values of partisanship are unrelated to present perceptions of the differences between the two parties (Lupu 2015: 350).

Lupu’s dataset covers an impressively long period in American political history. Given that variables like partisanship and perceptions of party polarisation are likely to be slow-moving and fairly resistant to regular updating, it clearly has an advantage over my own dataset (which covers just three years) in ability to identify the causes of attitudinal change. That said, his analysis does have a couple of major limitations. Firstly, the analysis does not control for respondents’ own ideological position or their feelings about how close they see the parties to this ideal spot. This may be problematic given that I, and others (Busch 2016; Granberg and Brown 1992), have shown these factors matter for both partisanship and perceptions of party polarisation. Secondly, and more importantly, Lupu’s sample is a selection of US highschool graduates in a single year, so he cannot make inferences to a broader population. This may bias his results given that his sample will be more educated than the average American during this time period and, in turn, education has been linked to both ability to place parties on a left-right scale (Busch 2016: 168) and strength of partisan sentiment (Albright 2009; Dalton 1984). In contrast, the BESIP dataset contains a wealth of information about respondents’ personal attitudes that can be used as covariates in the model, and its sample population can be weighted to be representative of the wider British

population (Fieldhouse et al. 2019)⁶⁰. Therefore, my own analysis can test for the relationship between perceptions of polarisation and partisanship in a more robust manner than has ever previously been attempted.

As before, I run two sets of models: one for each of my aforementioned measures of polarisation. I specify these models both with only demographic controls (age, gender, education, income, occupational class, and a dummy for Scottish residency), and also with time-varying attitudinal covariates. These include EU referendum vote intention and perceived distance from Labour and Conservatives on 11-point left-right and EU integration spectrums, as well as the extent to which respondents take a ‘non-centrist’ position on both of those scales (i.e. the absolute difference between their own self-placement and the scales’ central values). I implemented these models in Stata 13 using a maximum-likelihood estimator (Acock 2013), and I specified nationally-representative panel weights to account for non-random patterns of attrition.

The first row of coefficients in Table 5.10 are predicting the likelihood that a respondent has a partisan attachment to Labour or the Conservatives; those in the second row are predicting the likelihood that they see these parties as ideologically polarised. Because the model con-

⁶⁰ Out of curiosity, I reran my models using Lupu’s model specification (which uses only gender and a political knowledge score as covariates). In Table H.13 of Appendix H, I present Lupu’s own results (Model A), a replication using my full sample (Model B), just sixth-form graduates (the equivalent educational cohort to US highschool leavers) (Model C), and the same model without applying any panel weights, which Lupu does not include (Model D). I standardise all these coefficients to make them comparable to those in Lupu’s model. Interestingly, the results that I obtain are extremely similar – in direction, significance, and magnitude – to those used by Lupu with a very different time-frame and different national sample. This gives me a lot of confidence in my conclusion that perceptions of polarisation generally have a larger effect on partisanship than vice versa.

Table 5.7: Cross-Lagged Structural Equation Models Relating Perceived Polarisation and Feeling Close to Labour or the Conservatives

Cross-Lagged Structural Equation Model	Model A Polarisation = ‘Lab-Con Left-Right Axis Gap’		Model B Polarisation = ‘Lab-Con “Great Difference”’	
	Model A1	Model A2	Model B1	Model B2
Lab-Con Partisanship				
<u>Perceived Lab-Con Polarisation (lagged)</u>	<u>0.01 (0.00) **</u>	<u>0.01 (0.00) *</u>	<u>0.08 (0.02) **</u>	<u>0.06 (0.02) **</u>
<u>Lab-Con Partisanship (lagged)</u>	<u>0.66 (0.02) **</u>	<u>0.62 (0.02) **</u>	<u>0.61 (0.03) **</u>	<u>0.57 (0.03) **</u>
Demographic Controls	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>
Attitudinal Controls		<i>Included</i>		<i>Included</i>
Constant	0.05 (0.04)	0.08 (0.04)	0.02 (0.05)	0.06 (0.06)
Perceived Lab/Con Polarisation				
<u>Perceived Lab-Con Polarisation (lagged)</u>	<u>0.47 (0.02) **</u>	<u>0.43 (0.02) **</u>	<u>0.29 (0.03) **</u>	<u>0.27 (0.03) **</u>
<u>Lab-Con Partisanship (lagged)</u>	<u>0.07 (0.09)</u>	<u>0.08 (0.09)</u>	<u>- 0.00 (0.03)</u>	<u>- 0.02 (0.03)</u>
Demographic Controls	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>
Attitudinal Controls		<i>Included</i>		<i>Included</i>
Constant	1.46 (0.24)	0.76 (0.24)	0.28 (0.08)	0.24 (0.10)
Cov (Lagged Partisanship, Lagged Polarisation)	0.26 (0.03) **	0.24 (0.01) **	0.07 (0.01) **	0.02 (0.01) **
Error Cov (Partisanship, Polarisation)	0.03 (0.02) *	0.02 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01) **	0.07 (0.01) **
N – Observations	5352	5352	2874	2874
N – Respondents	3826	3826	2874	2874

* *p*-value <0.05; ** *p*-value <0.01

Note: This table presents the results of six cross-lagged structural equation models (CLEMs) which simultaneously estimate the effect of past identification with Labour or the Conservatives on present perceptions of Labour-Conservative polarisation and the effect of past perceptions of polarisation on present identifications, while also controlling for autocorrelation (i.e. the effect of lagged values of the same variable with itself at the present time). The top panel shows the effect of lagged values on subsequent partisanship; the bottom panel shows their effects on subsequent level of belief in polarisation. ‘Partisanship’ is a simple dummy variable; ‘perceived polarisation’ is measure differently in each of the three larger ‘models’. First as the distance between where each respondent places either party on an 11-point left-right scale, then as a dummy variable for whether or not the respondent affirms that there are “great differences” in what the two parties stand for. Data were taken from successive waves of the BESIP. For the ‘gap method’ models I can use three waves of the BESIP (Waves 2, 6, and 12: 22nd May - 25th June 2014, 8th - 26th May 2015, and 5th May - 7th Jun 2017); for the ‘great difference’ model just two (Waves 6 and 12). The sample was weighted to reflect the national electorate, as well as to account for non-random panel attrition (dropouts) between waves. The models made use of a maximum likelihood estimator.

Demographic Controls: Age (years), and dummy variables for university-level education, top income quintile membership, gender (female), and Scottish residency. **Attitudinal Controls:** EU referendum vote intention (remain); respondent ideological radicalism on both the left-right and EU integration axes; the smallest possible gap between the respondent and Labour or the Conservatives on the L-R and EU integration axes (whichever party is nearest to the respondent, according to their own placement). See Table G.2 in Appendix G for more detail on the creation of these variables.

Source: British Election Study Combined Wave 1-16 Internet Panel (Fieldhouse et al 2019).

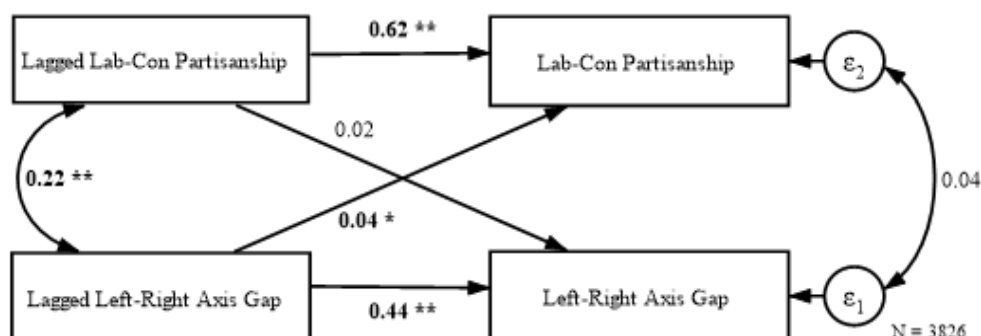
-trols for both variables' values at the previous time point, the lagged effects of polarisation on partisanship and of partisanship on polarisation can be interpreted as the effect of one variable on changes in the other variable over time (Finkel 1995). Regardless of whether or not one controls for other potentially confounding attitudinal covariates, there is no sign of reverse causality at all. Placing Labour and the Conservatives further apart on a left-right scale, or affirming that there is a “great difference” between what they stand for, at time $t-1$, means that a respondent is more likely to identify with one of these parties at time t . In contrast, being a partisan at time $t-1$ has no statistically significant effect on the values of either of these variables at time t .

What are the relative sizes of these effects? Figure 5.19 visualises the structure of a cross-lagged structural equation model, and standardises the path coefficients from Models A2, and B2 in Table 5.10. In the diagram, the ‘crossed’ lines indicate lagged effects, and the ‘horizontal’ lines the autoregressive effects. The ‘curved’ lines at the beginning indicate the initial correlation, and those at the end highlight the error covariance. You can interpret the standardised coefficients in the same manner that you would those taken from a linear probability model.

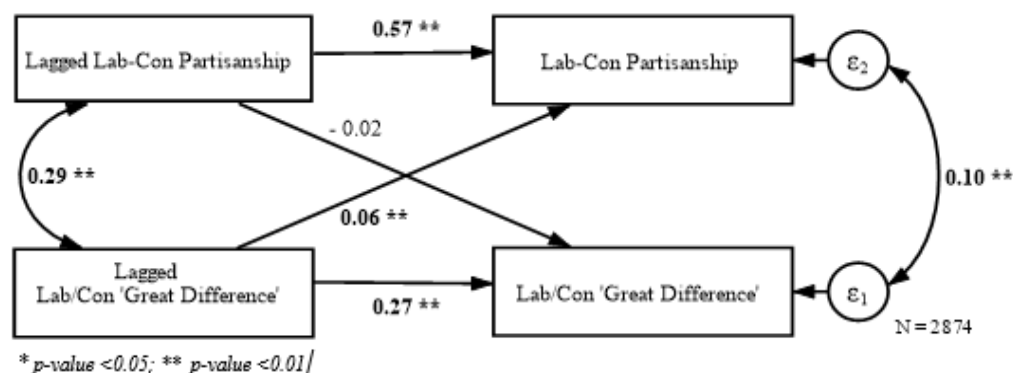
In both models, partisanship is considerably more ‘stable’ between waves than perceptions of polarisation. This is not particular surprising. The former is often considered as a long-running form of social identity that should be unlikely to change rapidly in such a short time frame as the one that I am covering (Achen and Bartels 2017; Campbell et al. 1960). In contrast, we *would* expect perceptions of polarisation to change quite significantly in this time period given the evidence that I have shown about the changes in the Labour Party’s

Figure 5.19: Cross-Lagged Models of Perceived Lab-Con Polarisation and Lab-Con Partisanship

A.) Left-Right Axis Gap between Lab and Con Method (Table 5.10, Model A2)



B.) 'Great Difference' between Lab and Con Method (Table 5.10, Model B2)



* p -value < 0.05; ** p -value < 0.01

Note: These diagrams display standardised path coefficients from cross-lagged structural equation models [CLSEMs] of feeling close to Labour or the Conservatives and how polarised respondents believe those two parties are. The latter is measured by perceptions of how far apart these parties are on an 11-point left-right scale (Figure A) and whether respondents see a “great difference” between what they stand for (Figure B). Coefficients are taken from Models A2 and B2 in Table 5.7. For the ‘gap method’ models I can use three waves of the BESIP (Waves 2, 6, and 12: 22nd May - 25th June 2014, 8th - 26th May 2015, and 5th May - 7th Jun 2017); for the ‘great difference’ model just two (Waves 6 and 12). The models control for gender, age, income, education, and Scottish residency, as well as EU referendum vote intention, how ‘non-centrist’ one’s own position is on the left-right (or redistribution) and EU integration spectrums, and the distance between one’s own position on these dimensions and where one thinks the nearest party of Labour and the Conservatives are (no controls are displayed here). The sample was weighted to reflect the national electorate, as well as to account for non-random panel attrition (dropouts) between waves. Here I have standardised the coefficients displayed in Table 5.7. Here the ‘crossed’ lines indicate the lagged effects; the ‘horizontal’ lines the autoregressive effects. The ‘curved’ lines at the beginning indicate the initial correlation; those at the end highlight the error covariance. The standardised coefficients can be interpreted in the same manner that one would a linear probability model. Perceived polarisation is dominant over partisanship in both models.

Source: British Election Study Combined Wave 1-16 Internet Panel (Fieldhouse et al 2019).

positioning (in particular) between 2015 and 2017. The most important coefficients to compare, however, are the cross-lagged effects. A one standard deviation increase in perceptions of Labour-Conservative left-right distance and believing there to be “great difference” between the two parties increases the likelihood of future partisanship by 4 and 6 percentage points, all else equal.

This is a fairly strong effect given that I am using data from only a short window of time, and partisanship is traditionally conceptualised as a variable that changes glacially, if at all, once a citizen reaches adulthood (Butler and Stokes 1969; Campbell et al. 1960). Furthermore, this effect takes place in a political context that has been characterised by fading rates of identification with mainstream parties for some time (Fieldhouse et al. 2020: 55). In this respect, it is interesting to find any evidence of respondents actually becoming more strongly attached to Labour or the Conservatives during this period. More long-running data will clearly be needed to test whether these effects actually leave a lasting mark on voters. However, evidence that respondents do alter their perceptions of mainstream party polarisation based on real world events, and that they use these cues to update their attachment to these parties in the short-run, is an interesting and novel finding in terms of the literature on partisanship in advanced democracies.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this chapter, I have made extensive use of British survey data, and presented a series of statistical models that corroborate the underlying assumptions of my ‘crisis and convergence’ model of anti-system party success.

First, I demonstrated that the electorate has been attentive to the changes in the political supply-side that took place from the mid-1980s onwards. Britons first became increasingly likely to de-emphasise major ideological differences between Labour and the Conservatives, in accordance with the centripetal tendencies of both these parties. However, when repolarisation occurred in the space of a few years following 2015, perceptions of ideological divisions followed suit. In the aggregate, the public is not ignorant of fluctuations in the amount of political choice presented to them over time.

Second, I demonstrated that the late 2000s and early 2010s should have presented anti-system parties with a historic opportunity for a breakthrough. Perceptions of polarisation, which I showed to be a historically strong predictor of mainstream partisanship, were at a low ebb, and the economy was doing badly in terms of both objective indicators and the evaluations of the public themselves. Per my ‘crisis and convergence’ model, there had been a malfunction in the ‘output’ of the political system and, increasingly, the conventional ‘inputs’ were not offering a variety of choice for course correction. The time was right, therefore, for an outsider challenger. Aggregate data presented some circumstantial evidence for this claim. The three elections following the financial crash of 2008-09 were indeed the three most successful elections for parties outside the ‘big three’ – Labour, Conservatives, and the Liberals – since before the Second World War. While the performance of anti-system parties did decline considerably between 2015 and 2017, this is, once again, exactly what I would predict given my theoretical model: by this point mainstream parties had repolarised and the economy (in relative terms) was now performing more strongly.

Given the old adage that correlation is not causation, my third contribution was to test whether movement to and from anti-system parties in recent years was systematically related to the beliefs that voters held about mainstream party ideological diversity. Using data from the British Election Study Internet Panel (Fieldhouse et al. 2019), a series of random-effects logistic regressions revealed that voters became less likely to support the Greens, UKIP, and SNP between 2015 and 2017 if they believed that there was a “great difference” between what Labour and the Conservatives stood for, or they placed those two parties further apart on the left-right spectrum. The use of lagged variables provided evidence that changes in perceptions of polarisation were as important as levels. Switching from an anti-system alternative to mainstream parties was more likely if you became more convinced about the distinctions between Labour and Conservatives over the intervening two years.

Finally, and most importantly, I implemented several cross-lagged structural equation models [CLSEMs] in order to determine causal predominance between identifying with a mainstream party, and believing that party holds a particularly distinct ideological position. The argument for reciprocal causation is strong here, and cannot be ruled out using the conventional statistical tests employed by most observational studies. The logic of CLSEMs however, is based on using simultaneous equations to model a current dependent variable (Y) and a current independent variable (X) as functions of the prior values of both (Y-1, X-1). This means that X can be called a cause of Y if X-1 is associated with Y, holding constant Y-1 (Finkel 1995; Kearney 2017). Here, this means that perceived polarisation causes partisanship if prior perceived polarisation is associated with current partisanship, holding constant prior partisanship. Happily, this is exactly what I found. After standardising the coefficients in the model, I showed that perceived polarisation is clearly causally predominant over partisanship when the former is measured as a general left-right gap or the

belief in “great differences” between the two major British parties. In fact, partisanship had seemingly no effect on changes in perceptions of polarisation over time. Accordingly, I have much stronger evidence that voters’ beliefs about mainstream party distinctions cause them to “pick a side”, than I do evidence that “having a side” causes voters to believe in the distinctiveness of their mainstream party.

What do these results tell us? First and foremost, they corroborate the assumptions that underpinned my cross-sectional and aggregate-level results in previous chapters. Voters do react to changes in mainstream party polarisation in a fairly objective manner. They are not mindless automatons who emphasise how different their party is from its rivals no matter the empirical foundation for this claim. Furthermore, I now have more robust data than ever before which suggests that, when they do lose sight of the ideological gulf between the two ostensibly rival parties vying for the leadership of government, voters often react by defecting to an anti-system alternative. One could also speculate that the British experience tells us that, if one has a normative concern about the dangers of rising support for radical parties, a good solution might be to encourage mainstream centre-left and centre-right parties to return to their roots. Here, the repolarisation of Labour and the Conservatives appears to have helped reverse the gains made by minor parties in the years leading up to the 2015 general election.

What of the wider implications for political science? The findings that I have presented can make an obvious contribution to the debate about the causes of partisan dealignment in Western democracies. Several studies have found that today’s voters are much less likely to identify with a major party in their country than their parents and grandparents were (Dalton

2013; Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; Dassonneville, Hooghe, and Vanhoutte 2012; Mair 2013: 35), which has led to an increase in inter-election voter promiscuity (Bischoff 2013; Dassonneville 2015; Drummond 2006; Fieldhouse et al. 2000: 9-14; Mair 2013: 33). The reasons for these changes are hotly debated, however.

Broadly speaking, there are two camps. The first consists of scholars who argue that the electorates of contemporary, wealthy democracies have simply outgrown the need for partisanship. This could be because the (allegedly) increasingly homogenous lifestyles in advanced, ever-more secular, affluent societies have reduced the necessity for lasting ties to parties that were originally established to cater to the needs of specific, balkanised classes and ethnoreligious groups (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Dogan 2001). Alternatively, it could be because today's voters are now generally much more educated and better informed than their predecessors, meaning that they are less dependent upon the partisan heuristic to help them comprehend and engage with the political process (Dalton 1984, 2013; Dalton, McAllister, and Wattenberg 2000). Whatever the exact relevant societal change, these 'demand-side' scholars are united in their argument that parties exist to serve a functional need, and with societal modernisation that need has largely disappeared.

The second camp rejects the idea that changes in society have caused dealignment, and argues that, instead, it is changes in the behaviour of political elites that have proved crucial. That is, it is shifts in political 'supply' that matter, rather than 'demand'. Ties between particular groups of voters and a party are not 'natural' or set in stone. They require that parties continue to take positions that certain groups of voters prefer over others to make the salience of these group identities relevant to politics. If they do not, then the importance of

particular parties to voters' livelihoods and sense of self begin to fade, and the idea of strongly identifying with one political team or another becomes fairly pointless (Elff 2007; Evans 1999; Evans and Tilley 2017; Thomassen 2005). This perhaps expressed most clearly by (Hetherington 2001: 624): "*as party elites began to clarify ideological cues, citizens became less inclined to see the parties as Tweedledee and Tweedledum. When people perceive that who wins and loses will lead to distinct futures, they should develop more partisan feelings and become more inclined to organize politics in partisan terms.*" The idea here is that the latent 'need' for a close relationship between groups of voters and their representatives has not declined, but instead, the parties have simply become less interested in playing that role.

While I have looked at partisanship on average, rather than within specific groups of voters⁶¹, my research does seem to better support the work of the supply-side theorists than those who contend that the increased instability which we are witnessing in advanced party systems is all down to the changing preferences of voters. My findings show that, controlling for factors like education and personal ideology, when parties depart swiftly from each other on fundamental ideological questions voters will pick a side. While it is clearly too early to tell if the repolarisation of Labour and the Conservatives will last and contribute to a significant reversal in the decline of partisan sentiment in Britain, the evidence that I have presented shows that the potential is there.

Overall, then, the study of British panel data has been a productive exercise that has alleviated concerns about the endogeneity of perceptions of party position to one's partisan

⁶¹ I return to the importance of group representation in my conclusion.

preferences. That said, there are two ways in which my research agenda can still be extended. Firstly, the British case study presents, perhaps, a fairly ‘soft’ test of my hypotheses, in the sense that the ideological polarisation between 2015 and 2017 was particularly dramatic and widely discussed. Secondly, though the cross-lagged structural equation models that I have used here can generate robust findings, they are still not the ‘gold standard’ for causal inference. Ideally, one would randomise the assignment of information suggesting more or less ideological convergence to different groups of voters, and then see if those voters are systematically more likely to emphasise the extent of polarisation between parties in a manner consistent with their treatment. Only with this random assignment could one rule out any other confounding factor causing the different outcomes between the groups. For these reasons, my next chapter realises this experimental ideal, but in a different case country, Germany. Though there has been a lively debate about the consequences of long-term party depolarisation within this country, there has not been such a universally accepted ‘repolarisation’ on the scale seen in Britain. Finding similar results to those outlined here while using different methods against the backdrop of a very different political conditions would provide good evidence that my hypothesis can withstand extensive scrutiny.

Chapter Six – Are Perceptions of Convergence Endogenous? Part Two: Evidence from an Original Survey Experiment in Germany

Abstract

In the previous chapters, I gradually built up the case for my ‘crisis and convergence’ model of anti-system party success. As I have discussed at length, the validity of this model rests upon the premise that voters do react to changes in mainstream party positions and, if the economic conditions are right, do so by moving to an anti-system alternative. In this final empirical chapter I use a survey experiment and random assignment of treatment (the ‘gold standard’ for causal inference) to present different groups of adult German citizens with information concerning political parties in their country. Some received information suggesting that established parties in their country had become more similar in recent years; others got information suggesting they had actually become more distinct. I hypothesised that exposure to information suggesting convergence should weaken attachments to mainstream parties, and increase the likelihood of voting for radical outsider parties. However, while respondents mostly do update their perceptions of how different mainstream parties are in accordance with the assigned information, there appears to be no effect on subsequent vote intention. Additionally, the information only seems to alter the sense of partisanship held by supporters of the major centre-left party. Partisans of other parties do not seem to adjust the strength of their attachments. I end with a discussion of these asymmetric effects, and present arguments for why social democratic parties might be particularly susceptible to the risks of depolarisation.

Introduction

Building off the theories and findings of several scholars of Latin American politics (Lupu 2016; Morgan 2011; Roberts 2013; Seawright 2012; Stokes 2001), so far in thesis I have uncovered a fairly robust link between mainstream party convergence, the state of the economy, and radical party success rates. That said, these findings have been almost entirely based on the analysis of observational data. This sort of analysis permits the study of a very

wide range of countries and elections; however, it raises two potential questions that have, so far, yet to be answered conclusively.

The first is whether reverse causality or confounding variables might be manipulating the observed relationship between mainstream convergence and anti-system success. Do voters support radical parties because they believe mainstream parties have converged; or do they believe this because they support radical parties and therefore accept the populist rhetoric telling them this? Alternatively, perhaps those who do not believe that mainstream parties are “all the same” are just different from who do in terms of some crucial as-of-yet unmeasured factor (perhaps due to lower levels of trust or a psychological tendency for conspiratorial thinking).

These concerns were partially alleviated through the use of panel data in the previous chapter; however, even this sort of analysis cannot help to answer the second question. While I have focused (for reasons of data availability) on mainstream parties taking on similar ideological positions, it could be that actually ‘relational’ convergence is more important than ‘positional’ depolarisation. That is, perhaps it is the fact that mainstream parties are increasingly diluting their traditional brands by entering into coalitions with their historic rivals – and denying the electorate an effective mainstream opposition to the actions of government – that really matters to voters, rather than taking similar positions on certain political issues *per se*⁶². While these different phenomena might be more or less relevant to

⁶² As I mentioned in Chapter Two, this has become increasingly common in advanced European democracies following the financial crisis. The electorates of Austria, Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands have experienced government by an alliance of the largest centre-left and centre-right parties in their countries for at least half of the years between 2008 and 2018.

would-be anti-system voters, in practice they tend to be very highly correlated in the real world, given that reducing future intragovernmental ideological diversity is one of the more important considerations during coalition negotiations (Golder 2006; Martin and Stevenson 2001). This means that it is fairly difficult to disentangle the two factors and generate a relative ranking of how important their effects are when using observational data.

In this chapter, I address these questions via an original survey experiment, which was fielded to a sample of adult German citizens in July 2019. Participants were randomly assigned real information about politics in their country which was framed to make mainstream parties to appear more or less similar in terms of policy, and also more or less likely to enter into coalitions with parties usually considered to be from the opposite side of the ideological spectrum. I then assigned them several follow-up questions to determine whether or not these ‘treatments’ made them more likely to perceive mainstream parties as ideologically polarised, and whether or not this affected their vote intention or how they felt about mainstream parties.

This methodology combines the unique benefits of a survey (a sample that is actually representative of the wider electorate) with those of an experiment (a balance on pre-treatment variables and the establishment of a clear causal order). I am also able to distinguish between the impact of parties entering coalitions together from the impact of those parties offering similar policies. Furthermore, because people are not always aware of the influences certain factors have on their judgements – and are thus incapable of explicating such influences when asked about them – it has been argued that the factorial

survey approach is particularly appropriate when researchers want to study the actual determinants of human judgements (Auspurg and Hinz 2015; Mutz 2011; Wallander 2009).

In addition, as I shall soon show, Germany is perhaps the best possible place to implement this experiment. The country has experienced the relatively recent rise of two large anti-system parties: the populist radical right Alternative for Germany [AfD], and the ‘populist socialist’ Left Party (Arzheimer and Berning 2019; Berning 2017; Elff and Rossteutscher 2011: 124–125; March 2011: 16–20). Crucially, while the two largest political parties remain, as they have since 1949, the centre-left Social Democratic Party [SPD] and the centre-right Christian Democratic Union [CDU]⁶³, both have engaged in the sort of ‘brand diluting’ activities that scholars of Latin American politics have cited as undermining support for the political mainstream in that region. In the last few decades they have often implemented fairly similar policies, and even shared office on several occasions. Consequently, there is a very real and active debate as to whether these two parties can be adequately distinguished, and what that says about the state of democratic competition in contemporary Germany (Greven 2013; Gross and Stalinski 2017; Inhoffen 2018; Somaskanda 2018; Turner 2018: 119-120).

In what follows, I present a more detailed overview of the changes that have taken place to party competition in Germany in the years following reunification, before introducing my experiment treatment vignettes and presenting their effects. While I fail to find any notable

⁶³ Together, these two parties have provided eight of Germany’s nine post-war Chancellors, and they have continuously held over 50% of seats in the Bundestag since the restoration of national elections in 1949 (author’s calculations).

effects on vote choice, there is some evidence that exposure to information suggesting ideological convergence makes SPD partisans feel less close to their party. Therefore, while there is no evidence that mainstream depolarisation offends voters sensibilities to the extent that they will instantly respond by switching to an anti-system party, by decreasing emotional connections to at least one type of major party, convergence may well lay the ground work for future radical party growth.

Convergence and (Re)Polarisation in German Party Politics, 1990 – 2017

Traditionally the major parties in Germany were seen as representing fairly distinct ideological and sociological niches. The CDU, along with its sister party in Bavaria, the Christian Social Union [CSU], was the party of practicing Christians (particularly Catholics), administrative workers, landowners, farmers, and the petit bourgeoisie (Green, Timmins, and Miskimmon 2008: 85; Müller 1999; Pappi 1984). While never as ideologically orthodox as its conservative counterparts in other European countries (Wiliarty 2018: 116–117)⁶⁴, the party was widely associated with traditional social mores, fiscal prudence, and an aversion to excessive state interference in the market economy (Clemens 2009: 129; Pappi 1984: 13-14). In contrast, the SPD fashioned itself as the representative of the trade union-affiliated manual working classes (Müller 1999; Pappi 1984) and, while not explicitly hostile to capitalism since their 1959 ‘Godesberger Programm’, the party tended to demand greater levels of equality and welfare state provision, as well as more tolerance for unconventional lifestyles (Lösche 1988; Pappi 1984).

⁶⁴ For example, the party was committed to the maintenance of the welfare state and the law of ‘codetermination’, whereby half of the members of supervisory boards of German enterprises are union representatives (Pappi 1984: 13–14).

In recent decades, however, the more-or-less clear blue water separating these parties has begun to recede. From the late 1990s onward, in response to external pressures from the economy and international events, as well as the rising electoral relevance of young professionals and the decline of the unionised and church-going populations, first the SPD, and then the CDU, made significant shifts away from their traditional platforms.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, Germany faced significant problems concerning the long-term financial sustainability of its welfare state, as well as persistently high rates of unemployment. While some of these pressures were due to the long-term ageing of the German population, the unemployment-welfare conundrum was also interconnected. Because of the German system of employer-provided social security, rising rates of job losses had increased costs to businesses in the form of contributions to unemployment insurance funds, which were in turn inflating the cost of labour and further disincentivising hiring (Caldwell and Hanshew 2018). The 1998-2005 SPD-Green coalition, led by Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, aimed to address this vicious cycle by fundamentally reforming the labour market and large aspects of the welfare state. Schröder had co-authored a 1999 report (the 'Neue Mitte' or 'New Centre') with fellow centrist Tony Blair, which urged social democratic parties to be less hostile to ideas of individual responsibility and entrepreneurship (Blair and Schröder 1999). This concern for market-based solutions and an end to unconditional state support was reflected in the eventual centre-piece of the new SPD programme: the 'Agenda 2010'.

The series of reforms undertaken as part of Agenda 2010 (which was mostly implemented between 2003 and 2005) are examined in greater depth elsewhere (Caldwell and Hanshew

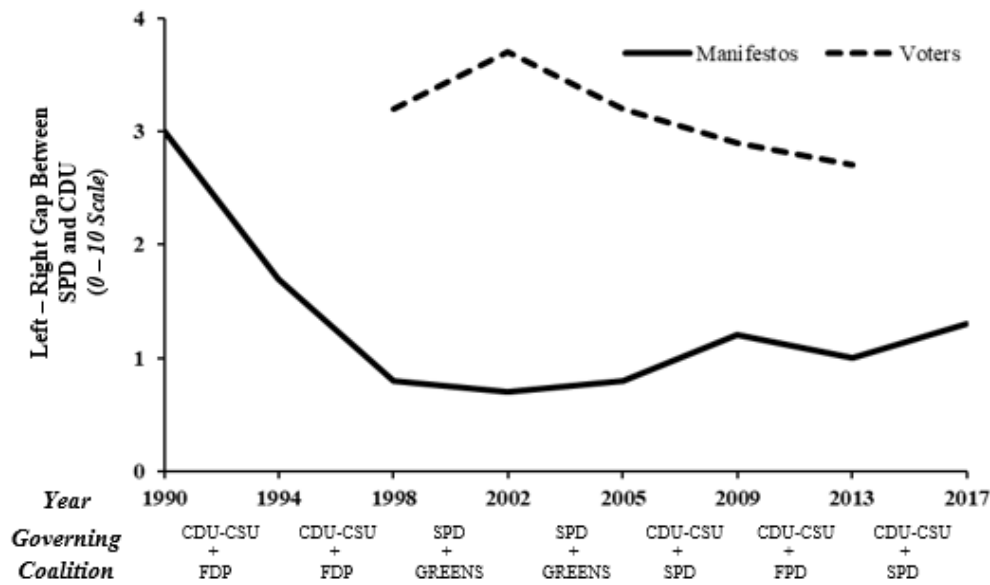
2018; Odendahl 2017; Zohlnhöfer 2014) but, to summarise these reviews, the most controversial elements included cuts in corporation tax, a reduction in the generosity of the pension system, and a radical shake-up of the German labour market. The latter was achieved by implementing a series of recommendations proposed by the Hartz Commission, which had been established by the government to draw-up innovative solutions to the country's employment problems. The most infamous of these recommendations, the so-called 'Hartz IV' reform, aimed to make the German economy more competitive by giving employers greater ability to hire short-term workers, reducing employee protections against dismissal, and providing significant cutbacks to welfare support for the long-term unemployed.

This was a significant departure from traditional SPD positions, and the reforms were heavily debated internally. The movement toward more market-oriented policies led the party's finance minister Oskar Lafontaine – who had wanted to take the more traditionally Keynesian approach of expanding the welfare state to inject money into the economy – to resign in December 1999 (Caldwell and Hanshew 2018; Marx and Schumacher 2013). The reforms, which were passed with the support of the CDU and the small, liberal Free Democratic Party [FDP], also met with a lot of societal opposition. After the passage of the act in 2004, more than 100,000 protested on the streets for several consecutive weeks to voice their opposition, and the majority of trade unions were also strongly critical of the legislation (Kemmerling and Bruttel 2006: 104–105). The vocal opposition of organised working-class to SPD policy can probably be expected to have further diluted the social brand of the party (Lupu 2016), especially because many of the Hartz commission members were drawn from big business. Peter Hartz himself was the human resources director of Volkswagen (Kemmerling and Bruttel 2006: 91). The effective convergence of centre-left

and centre-right was subsequently cemented when, following a fall in SPD support in the 2005 election, the two parties entered into government together for the first time in 35 years (Williams 2008).

While much of the convergence in German politics has been produced by the SPD moving to the right, there have been some notable instances of CDU also moderating its traditional positions. For example, under the ‘modernising’ leader Angela Merkel (2000 – 2018), the party embraced some aspects of social liberalism in an effort to appeal to younger voters and, in particular, university-educated women (Clemens 2009). Against internal opposition, Merkel pushed the party to expand its conception of the family to include unmarried couples with offspring, as well as to declare its ‘respect’ for single-sex relationships (Clemens 2009: 127). The party also reversed its traditional opposition to a vote on the legalisation of same-sex marriage which, though Merkel personally voted against it, was nevertheless passed under a CDU chancellorship in 2017 (Noack 2017). Other socially liberal shifts included the decision to phase out nuclear energy following the 2011 Fukushima disaster and the decision to allow roughly one million refugees into the country following the escalation of the Syrian civil war (Noack 2017; Wiliarty 2018), which clearly contrasted previous CDU policy of restricting non-ethnic German refugees and migrants (Clemens 2009: 128). There were also shifts to the centre on economic issues. Merkel ended the longstanding opposition of the party to a statutory minimum wage, and openly admitted “*adopting*” the SPD’s plans to ban landlords increasing new rents beyond a certain level (Die Welt 2013; Göppfarth 2017). She had, in the words of one commentator, become adept at “*stealing issues*” from the CDU’s longstanding political rivals (Seils 2013).

Figure 6.1: Mainstream Party Convergence in Germany, 1990 - 2017



Note: This figure demonstrate the declining ideological gulf between the SPD and the CDU-CSU in post-unification Germany. The solid black line indicates the ideological gap – on an 11-point left-right scale – between the SPD and CDU-CSU in their election programmes between 1990 and 2017. This data was taken from the Comparative Manifesto Project Dataset – which counts the relative number of times each party mentions certain ‘left-wing’ or ‘right-wing’ themes - using the scaling method of Prosser (2014) that was discussed in Chapter Three. The dashed line indicates the average gap perceived between the SPD and CDU-CSU among respondents to various waves of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems surveys who were asked to place the parties on a similar 11-point left-right ideological scale (voter placements are available at every election from 1998 to 2013). The parties listed in the row beneath the line plots lists the parties that headed the federal government during each of the parliaments between the various elections.

Manifesto Data Source: Comparative Manifesto Project Dataset [Version 2019b] (Volkens et al 2019).

Survey Data Source: Comparative Study of Electoral Systems Integrated Module Dataset (CSES 2019).

This convergence can be demonstrated empirically. Figure 6.1 presents the average distance between the CDU and the SPD on an 11-point left-right ideological scale for all elections in the post-unification era (1990 – 2017). The solid dark line shows the gap in positions as derived from manifesto data using Prosser’s aforementioned scaling method (Prosser 2014; Volkens et al. 2019). Compared to the early 1990s, the 2000s were a period defined by only very narrow degrees of ideological distinction between the two major parties. This was reflected in the changing make-up of governing coalitions during this time. The first four

elections that took place in unified Germany yielded essentially ideologically cohesive cabinets: the CDU-CSU were joined with the FDP, and the SPD coupled with the centre-left Green Party. In contrast, three of the four elections to have taken place since 2005 (if we include the post-2017 government) have led to a ‘grand coalition’ of the SPD and CDU-CSU⁶⁵. There is abundant anecdotal evidence that these developments have led to voters struggling to see major differences between the two parties (Farand 2017; Schumacher 2017; Turner 2018) – which contributed to a fierce debate within the Social Democrats over whether to renew their coalition with the Christian Democrats post-2017 (Somaskanda 2018) – and this is partly reflected by the dashed line in Figure 6.1. This represents the average gap between placements of the SPD and CDU-CSU made by respondents to successive national election surveys undertaken by the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES 2018). Though I only have a much shorter time series here, one can clearly see that voters began to perceive greater degrees of convergence from the early 2000s, which of course correlates with the Schröder-Merkel reforms of their respective parties, and the start of a series of grand coalitions between them.

As I discussed in Chapter Two, there are good reasons to believe that the depolarisation of SPD and CDU-CSU should have significantly eroded the strength of the ties between voters and the German political establishment. If we recall the idea of ‘comparative fit’ from social identity theory (Hogg et al. 2004; Turner 1999), individuals should be more likely to categorise themselves as members of some exclusive ‘team’ (such as tribe or political party) the stronger that the resemblance is between themselves and that team’s prototypical

⁶⁵ To put it another way, writing in late 2020, the SPD and the CDU-CSU have shared government for 11 of the 15 years since the 2005 election. In contrast, prior to that contest they had been in coalition for only 3 of the previous 56 years of post-war German democracy.

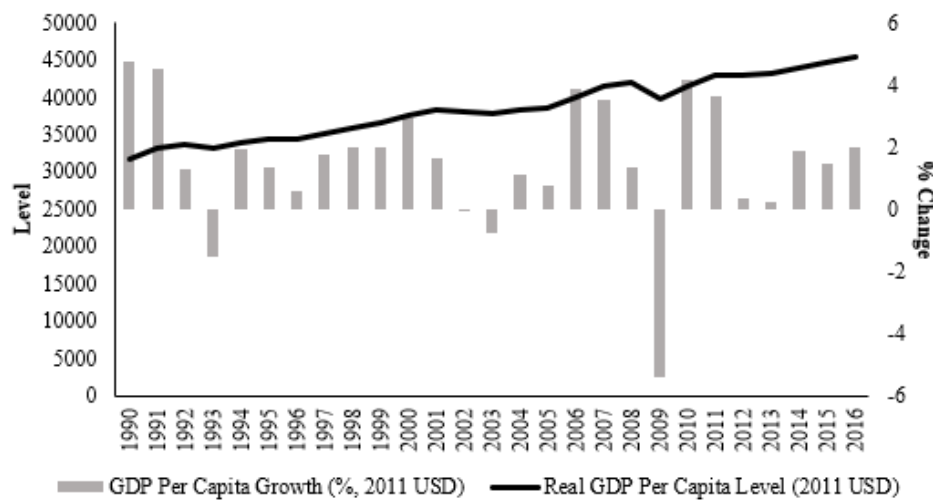
member, as well as the greater the distance between themselves and the paradigmatic member of a rival team. Therefore, a German voter should feel less attached to the SPD and CDU-CSU when those parties' 'brands' drift closer together, as well as when they move away from the ideal ideological position of said voter (Lupu 2013: 51-52). For this reason, ideological convergence could be expected to spread dealignment throughout the nation's electorate, rather than just concentrating it among the relatively small group of voters who hold radically non-centrist ideological stances. This appears to be what we find: throughout this period, feelings of partisan sentiment declined to new lows. By 2009, fully 64% of citizens in western Germany had either only a 'weak' attachment to a political party or none at all; the highest total since records began in 1972, when this figure was just 40% (Dalton 2014: 63)⁶⁶.

Before looking to see whether anti-system parties benefited from these trends, it is worth considering the state of the economy during this time period, given the interactive theory that I have proposed in this thesis. Figure 6.2 presents information on German GDP per capita (in terms of both levels and the yearly percentage change), as well as the annual unemployment and average wage growth rates, between 1990 and 2016 (Feenstra, Inklaar, and Timmer 2015; OECD 2020a). The GDP and average wage growth data is expressed in constant 2011 and 2018 US dollars, respectively; unemployment is of the percentage of the population that either has work or are actively seeking it. For the most part, the data suggest that Germany, unlike many of its fellow advanced European democracies, weathered the 2008-09 downturn fairly well. GDP returned to growth fairly quickly and unemployment,

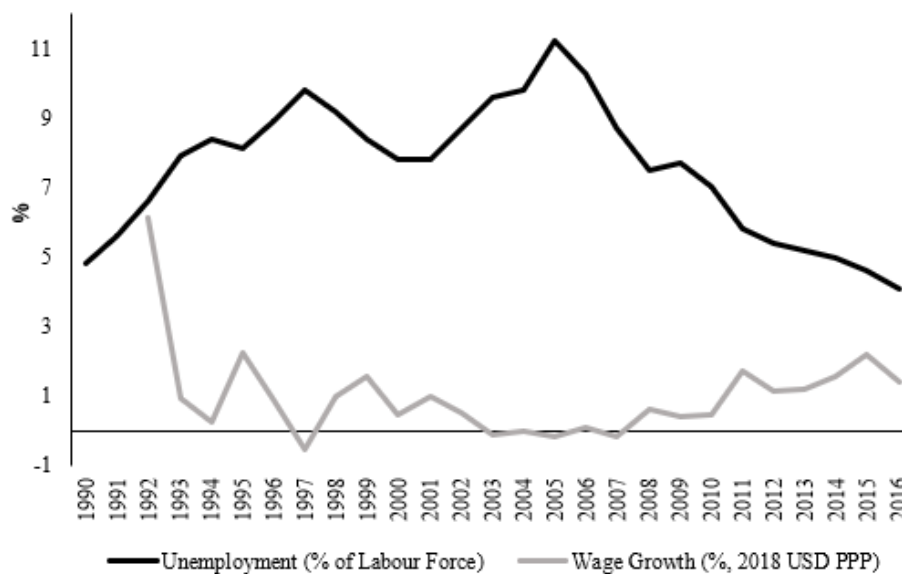
⁶⁶ Rates of non-alignment were even higher in eastern Germany, but this should be expected given the less extensive experience of democratic competition on this side of the former Iron Curtain.

Figure 6.2: Economic Trends in Germany, 1990 - 2016

A) GDP Per Capita Growth, 1990 – 2016



B) Unemployment Rate and Wage Growth, 1990 – 2016



Note: The charts here indicate aggregate economic trends in Germany between 1990 and 2016. The top figure plots the trajectory of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, using both absolute levels and percentage annual growth rates. Both figures are for real GDP per capita, expressed in terms of constant 2011 US dollars. The second figure indicates both the annual level of unemployment (expressed as a percentage of the total labour force -i.e. those that have, or are actively looking for work) and annual wage growth (in constant 2018 US dollars, with the international purchasing power parity adjustment).

GDP Source: Penn World Table, Version 9 (Feenstra et al 2015)

Unemployment and Wage Growth Source: OECD Annual Labour Force Statistics (OECD 2020)

possibly as a consequence of the SPD's labour market reforms (Rinne and Zimmermann 2011), actually fell fairly consistently during this period. That said, framed slightly

differently, it is also true that three out of the six weakest years for German growth since reunification have been experienced in the period between the financial crash and the 2017 election. In addition, the data also show that average wage growth has been largely stagnant in recent decades. This corroborates the research of Odendahl's (2017: 8), who found that, in 2014, up to 20% of Germans, including 39% of East Germans, had earnings below the 'low wage threshold' of two-thirds of the national median (i.e. they earned less than €10.50 per hour). This compared to fewer than 10% in nearby countries such as Denmark, France, Switzerland, Sweden, Belgium, and Italy.

By the late 2000s/early 2010s, then, there may well have been a sizeable contingent of voters left unimpressed by the recent output of the SPD-CDU-CSU consensus. Did anti-system parties snatch these new opportunities? Figure 6.3 presents the vote share for the 'big four' parties in Germany – the CDU-CSU, SPD, FDP, and Greens – as well as the combined total for all minor parties for each election in the post-unification era. One can clearly see a fairly linear increase in 'fifth party' support from 2002 to 2017, as well as the significant decline in support for the SPD. Which sort of minor parties benefited in particular? Figure 6.4 depicts the vote shares for all seven parties that could be classified as 'anti-system'. Two parties clearly stand out from the pack: the anti-capitalist 'Die Linke' [Left Party], and the Eurosceptic (latterly radical right) 'Alternative für Deutschland' [AfD].

The history of these parties is somewhat different. The Left Party started life as the Party for Democratic Socialism [PDS], a successor to the ruling communist party that had led the former East Germany between 1949 and 1990. For much of its time competing in the new democratic Federal Republic, its support was largely limited to easterners who felt that they

Figure 6.3: Party Vote Shares in Germany, 1990 – 2017: The Rise of ‘the Others’

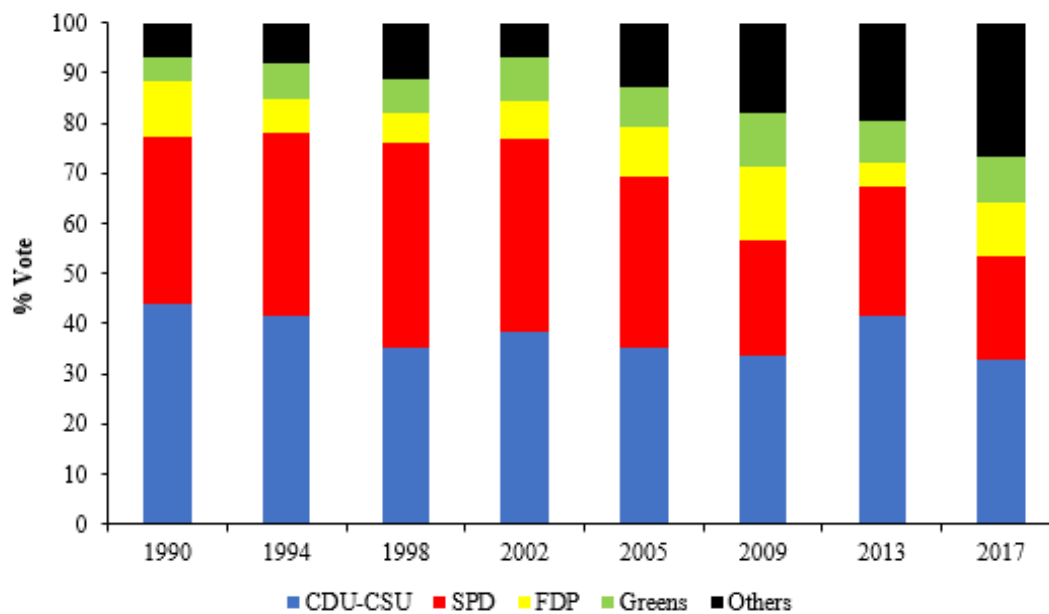
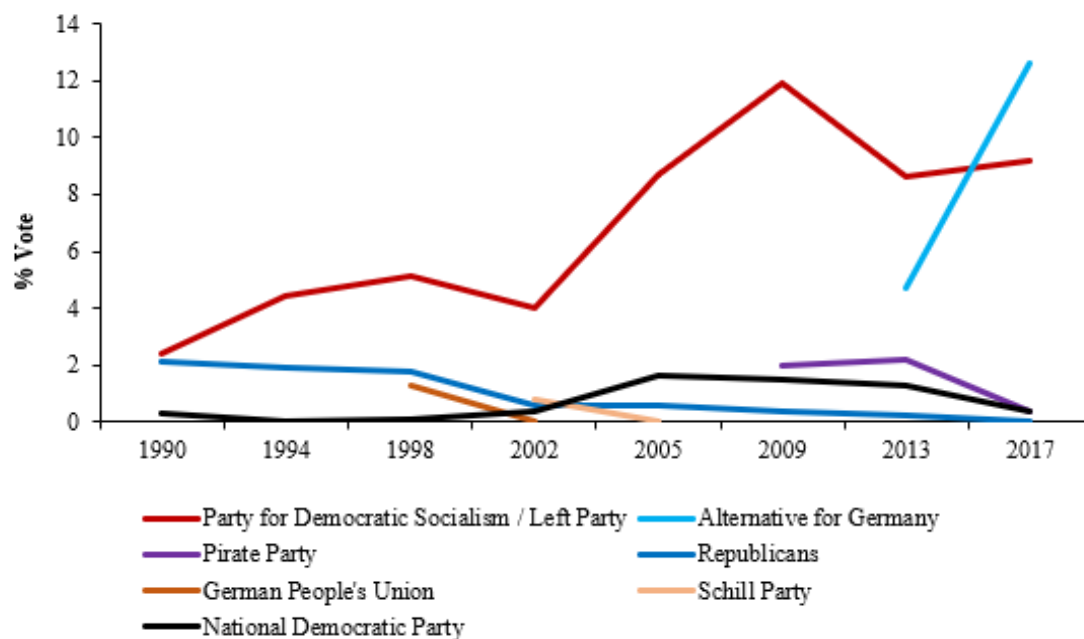


Figure 6.4: Specific Anti-System Party Vote Shares in Germany, 1990 – 2017



Note: These figures depict the vote shares for certain parties, or groups of parties, at various German federal elections. The shares are as a percentage of the total ‘second’ votes cast (i.e. ballots in the proportional list system, not those for direct constituency candidates).

Source: Official Federal Returning Officer Statistics (Bundeswahlleiter 2020)

had lost out in the dual transition to democracy and the market economy, and were attracted by the PDS’s proposals to increase the use of referenda and take more radical steps to

equalise living standards between east and west (Hough 2000). Given its authoritarian heritage, the party was largely viewed with suspicion and animosity by the established parties from western Germany; a situation not helped by persistent charges that its leader had been a major Stasi collaborator (Thompson 1996). Racked with infighting and consistently failing to make inroads in the west, its long-term prospects looked bleak. In the words of one party chronicler, the PDS faced a “*serious struggle to survive as a long-term significant political force in a unified Germany*” (Thompson 1996: 450).

However, after suffering a near electoral wipe-out in 2002, the party was suddenly thrown a lifeline in the aftermath the SPD’s right-ward turn with Agenda 2010. After profiting from widespread discontent with the reforms among left-wing voters in 2005, the party made an alliance with the ‘Labour and Social Justice Alternative’ (itself an SPD splinter group) to form the ‘Left Party’ in 2007 (Coffé and Plassa 2010). As if to underline its potential to provide a home for disaffected SPD voters, the party’s first leader was ex-SPD finance minister Oskar Lafontaine, who had quit his former party in opposition to its move away from traditional social democracy. Since then, the party has reached new heights by combining populism with a strongly anti-globalisation and fiscally-expansionist economic programme (March 2011). Though the Left Party has largely retained the PDS’s pariah status in the party system, the hostility appears to be mutual. The Left’s most recent leader rejected any notion of cooperation with the SPD’s “*part in shaping predatory capitalism*” (Thurau 2017).

In contrast, the AfD is of much more recent vintage. The party was founded in late 2012 on an almost single-issue platform of opposition to Germany’s continued membership of the

Eurozone. While this was itself a fairly controversial position in the context of Germany's near-universally Europhile political elite, the party would not become explicitly anti-establishment until after the 2013 election and, in particular, the refugee crisis of 2015 (Arzheimer 2015; Arzheimer and Berning 2019). Since then, the party has articulated a platform of socially conservative nativism, a hostility to existing democratic institutional arrangements, and a suspicion of free trade agreements and other manifestations of economic globalisation that is fairly similar to the appeals made by the continent's more established populist radical right parties (Arzheimer and Berning 2019; Olsen 2018: 76–80; Siri 2018).

In many ways, then, these parties are the mirror image of each other. They have both benefited from SPD-CDU convergence and the new spaces opening up on the fringes of either side of the political spectrum (Olsen 2018; Williams 2008). Hornsteiner and Saalfeld (2014) argued that German politics increasingly optimised Katz and Mair's (1995) 'cartel party thesis', whereby right and left coalesce to restrict the political choices available to voters, and allow themselves to hold office together in the centre despite declining public support. To what extent can Left Party and AfD voting be interpreted as a backlash against perceptions of such a 'mainstream cartel'? In the next section I introduce an original survey experiment that I fielded to address this question.

A Survey Experiment Concerning Anti-System Voting

In this section of the chapter, I explore the extent to which perceptions of mainstream party convergence can be said to have fuelled rising support for the Left Party and the AfD. The data come from an original survey of German citizens conducted in July 2019 using a

representative sample of the adult national population⁶⁷. The main purpose of this project was to work around the aforementioned potential endogeneity of perceptions of the major parties to partisanship by way of experimental manipulation of treatment. To this end, respondents were to be randomly assigned to read real information that was framed to make mainstream parties seem more or less similar to each other, depending on one's treatment group.

Before introducing the experiment, I shall first present evidence that belief in mainstream party depolarisation is associated with anti-system support in a conventional observational dataset. Table 6.1 displays the results of a multinomial logit regression of vote intention (were an election held tomorrow) on the following question, which was posed to a randomly chosen sixth of my sample who did not receive any additional information about the parties at all: *“When considering everything that the SPD and the CDU-CSU stand for, some say that these parties are very similar today; others say that there are many important differences between them. On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is “Very similar” and 10 is “Very different”, how different do you think that these parties are?”*. The advantage of this measure is that no abstract understanding of ‘left’ and ‘right’ is required, and the question is

⁶⁷ The survey was designed by the author in English and then translated into German by a team of native speakers conducting research in political science. I am very grateful to Lisa Bischoff, Friederike Haberstroh, Filip Bubenheimer, Leo Maedje, Celine Le, and Theresa Feicht for their invaluable contributions to this project. Descriptive statistics from the survey can be found in Table I.1 in Appendix I, and the entire original survey script (in German and English) is available in Appendix J. The sample population was recruited by YouGov, a leading internet survey company. YouGov uses a very similar methodology to that employed by Harris Interactive in the US: respondents are selected randomly from an online research panel of over 100,000 adults living in Germany. YouGov uses sophisticated recruitment, response-quality screening, and weighting schemes to offset sampling biases, and offers modest financial incentives to bolster response rates. The survey was implemented from the 3rd-5th July 2019. I am very grateful for the financial support that I received from the University of Oxford's John Fell Fund, which allowed me to carry out this research.

explicitly relational. The dependent variable distinguishes between support for the incumbent mainstream parties (the SPD and CDU-CSU) with either the FDP, the Greens, the AfD, Die Linke, ‘other’⁶⁸, or choosing to abstain (which also included those responding with “*don’t know*”). I hold constant age, and use dummy variables to record the respondent’s gender, whether or not they had a university education, a nationally top quartile income, or resided in the former East Germany, a region where populists have performed disproportionately strongly (Arzheimer and Berning 2019; Olsen 2018). In addition, I use another dummy variable to capture whether respondents had a partisan attachment to the SPD or CDU-CSU, and also hold constant respondents’ self-described political interest (a proxy for political sophistication and, likely, greater knowledge of the positions of the parties) and political radicalism (position on an 11-point left-right spectrum, recoded as distance from the centre)⁶⁹. The coefficients for these control variables are not displayed, but are available from the author upon request. Descriptive statistics from the survey can be found in Table I.1 in Appendix I, and the entire original survey script (in German and English) is available in Appendix J.

The results indicate that believing that the two largest (and incumbent) mainstream parties in Germany are “very different” decreases the likelihood of voting for the two major anti-system parties, the AfD and the Left Party, although the result does not reach conventional

⁶⁸ This option was chosen by less than 6% of the sample. Unfortunately, we do not know exactly which ‘type’ of party (radical or not) that voters who selected this option had in mind. However, the survey was taken shortly after the European Parliament election in which the next biggest parties after those named here were the satirical ‘Die Partei’ and the regionalist ‘Free Voters’.

⁶⁹ Results are robust to the inclusion of additional controls, such as whether the respondent believes politicians keep their promises or whether they live in an urban or rural location.

Table 6.1: The Impact of Perceived Mainstream Party Differences on Vote Intention in an Original German Survey (2019)

Multinomial Logit Model	Vote Intention				
	FDP	Greens	AfD	Left Party	Abstain
Perceived SPD – CDU-CSU Polarisation	0.26 (0.15) †	- 0.06 (0.11)	- 0.36 (0.13) **	- 0.21 (0.15)	- 0.10 (0.13)
Reference Category: Voting for the SPD or CDU-CSU					
N – Respondents: 258					

† *p*-value <0.10, * *p*-value <0.05; ** *p*-value <0.01

Note: Data were sourced from an original representative survey of the German electorate designed by the author and conducted 2nd – 5th July 2019 by YouGov. The original survey was conducted online (in German), and subsequently translated back into English for presentation here. The key variable the respondent's answer to the following question. "When considering everything that the SPD and the CDU-CSU stand for, some say that these parties are very similar today; others say that there are many important differences between them. On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is "Very similar" and 10 is "Very different", how different do you think that these parties are?". I use responses to predict subsequent vote intentions for the FDP, Greens, AfD, the Left Party, or abstention, vs the reference category of voting for the SPD or CDU-CSU. Please note that the sample for this model only included those who were not exposed to any of the experimental manipulation that the rest of the survey population experienced.

Controls: Gender; University Degree Dummy; Top Quartile Household Income Dummy; Age (Years); Respondent L-R Radicalism (L-R self-placement recoded as distance from ideological centre, range: 0 - 5); Political Interest (range: 0 - 4); an East Germany Dummy, and a dummy variable indicating whether a respondent has a Partisan Attachment to the SPD or CDU-CSU. The analysis also employed standard YouGov survey weights to account for underrepresentation of certain groups in the survey respondent pool. All of these variables were measured prior to the start of the survey.

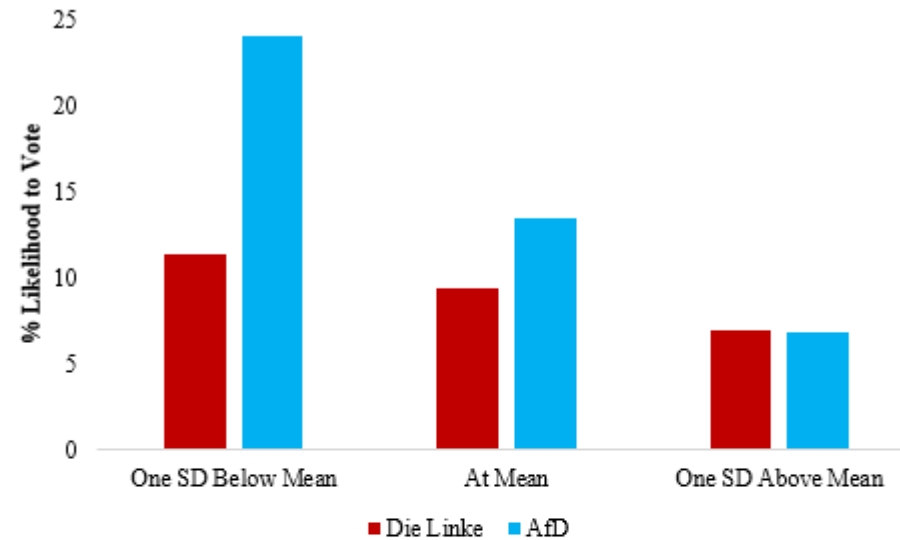
Source: Original YouGov Survey in Germany, 2nd – 5th July 2019

levels of statistical significance for the latter⁷⁰. A belief in SPD-CDU-CSU convergence is also associated with abstention and Green Party voting, although these effects are not statistically significant, and are notably smaller than that associated with anti-system party voting. For the FDP, however, the effect is reversed: respondents are more likely to vote for this party if they see the two parties as remaining different. There is some evidence, therefore, that voters who are unhappy with the state of establishment depolarisation are more likely to shift to the more radical political options provided by their party system.

How sizeable is this association? Converting these coefficients into predicted probabilities, as in Figure 6.5, indicates that the likelihood of voting for the AfD, holding all else constant,

⁷⁰ That said, if analysis is restricted to only the 198 respondents based in the former West Germany, there is a statistically significant negative relationship between a one point increase in belief in perceived SPD – CDU-CSU polarisation and the likelihood of support for both the AfD [$\beta = -0.52$; SE = 0.17**] and the Left Party [$\beta = -0.37$; SE = 0.17*]. The weaker relationship between Left Party support and perceived mainstream party convergence in eastern Germany may be due to that party's slightly longer history and different connotations in the former-German Democratic Republic [GDR]. As the successor to the ruling communist party that led the former East Germany between 1949 and 1990, the Left Party (or Party for Democratic Socialism, as it was known from 1990 to 2007) has been much more popular in that region, partly because it functions as a vehicle for pre-unification nostalgia and protest voting against domination by the larger and more economically successful former West Germany (Hough 2000). Similarly, the party system in general has long been more fluid and less structured by partisan affiliations towards the major parties in the more-recently democratised former GDR (Dalton 2014; Dassonneville, Hooghe, and Vanhoutte 2012). Given that attachments to the SPD were never particularly deeply-rooted, the sense of 'betrayal' following the party's early 2000s neoliberal turn that was so evident in parts of western Germany may simply not have been so acutely felt in the east. Therefore, while in western Germany the Left Party's appeal may lie in its rejection of Agenda 2010 and the SPD's convergence with the CDU-CSU (Coffé and Plassa 2010), in the east, its popularity may be less about the depolarisation of the larger parties and more about a general sense of dissatisfaction with the dual transition to democracy and the market economy, as well the desire to express a distinctively 'east Germany' political identity. Please note, however, that none of my subsequent experimental results are changed substantively if the treatment pool is restricted to one side of the former Berlin Wall.

Figure 6.5: Likelihood of Voting for Left Party or the AfD by Belief in SPD-CDU Polarisation



Note: This figure displays respondents' predicted likelihood of voting for two large anti-system parties, the AfD and the Left Party, given different levels of belief that the two largest mainstream parties, the SPD and the CDU-CSU, "stand for very different things". These marginal predictions are based on the model in Table 6.1. Likelihoods are displayed for when belief in mainstream party distinctions are at their mean, and one standard deviation above and below it. All other variables in the model are held at their mean value. While greater levels of belief in SPD-CDU polarisation are negatively associated with support for both anti-system parties, this clearly much truer for the AfD than the Left Party. A respondent with a one-standard deviation below the mean belief in mainstream party polarisation would be an average of 17 percentage points more likely to vote for the AfD than an otherwise identical respondent whose belief in polarisation is one standard deviation above the mean.

Source: Original YouGov Survey in Germany, 2nd – 5th July 2019

decreases from just under a one in four chance to around one in sixteen when belief in SPD – CDU/CSU difference is increased from one standard deviation below the sample mean to one standard deviation above. The effect on support for the Left Party is substantially smaller (and, as discussed, not statistically significant). The likelihood shrinks from about 11% to nearer 6%. That said, given a fairly small sample size of just over 250 respondents, the data do seem to provide some corroboration for the claim that these parties might profit from the more centrist-style of politics being offered by the two major parties (Williams 2008).

It is important to determine whether this relationship is truly causal. Observational survey data alone cannot rule out the possibility that unobservable confounding variables could manipulate the relationship between perceptions of party position and underlying sentiment toward that party (Busch 2016; Granberg and Brown 1992). Do the supporters of the AfD and the Left Party featured in Table 6.1 support radicals because they believe that mainstream parties have converged, or do they believe this because they have fallen out of love with mainstream parties for other reasons, and therefore accept the populist rhetoric that attempts to shame the establishment?

Furthermore, which type of ‘convergence’ might be driving this backlash? Is it the positional aspects of convergence (i.e. parties having similar policies) or the relational aspects (i.e. how these parties interact in the political system)? As already detailed, the SPD and CDU-CSU have entered coalition with each other increasingly frequently over the last two decades. This could have had a number of effects on party support. For one, it has been shown that who parties enter government with influences where voters place them in

ideological terms (Fortunato and Stevenson 2013). This has the potential to dilute a party's longstanding brand, which is often constructed in negative terms – i.e. who a party is opposed to – as much as positive ones – i.e. who a party supports – in the eyes of supporters (Lupu 2013; Turner 1999). Furthermore, as a more visible concrete action, unlike manifesto promises that few voters read and many more might treat sceptically, cross-ideology coalition-making probably has the potential to filter through to, and to be weighted more heavily by, relatively low-information voters (Fortunato and Stevenson 2013). Using an experimental survey in Argentina and Belgium, respectively, Lupu (2013) and Gschwend and Hooghe (2008) have already shown that exposing respondents to information reminding them of past or future plans by particular parties to enter into a coalition with their traditional rivals can decrease supporters' loyalty and levels of attachment to those parties. I therefore consider both positional and relational convergence in my own study.

To address potential endogeneity issues and distinguish between the effects of promiscuous coalition-making and convergent policies, respondents to the survey (other than the one-sixth assigned to the aforementioned null group) were randomly assigned to different sorts of treatment. My 'treatment' comprised of a vignette of information regarding the four established mainstream parties (the SPD, CDU-CSU, Greens, and the FDP). While consistently truthful, the information presented in the descriptions was selected to make these parties appear more or less similar. Following randomised exposure to the different information, I subsequently gauged respondents' likely future vote choice, and recorded their levels of attachment to the existing mainstream parties. The 'convergence' hypothesis predicts that exposure to information suggesting mainstream party convergence should lead to respondents updating their perceptions of these parties to think of them as more similar, increase their likelihood of voting for an anti-system party, and weaken existing emotional

Table 6.2: Experimental Treatment Groups and Hypothesised Effects on Anti-System Voting

	Group		Treatment Description	Predicted Effect
Group 1	Basic Information Group		Receives uncontroversial descriptive information about each party's age and traditional ideology.	None – Reference Group
Group 2	Coalition Group	Convergence	Receives all the basic information along with an additional statement noting examples of how each mainstream party has become increasingly willing to enter coalition with their traditional rivals on the other side of the political spectrum.	Increases support for the AfD and the Left Party at the expense of the four mainstream parties.
Group 3	Policy Convergence Group		Receives all the basic information along with an additional statement noting examples of how each mainstream party has introduced or supported legislation at odds with their traditional ideological platform, and more associated with that of their political opponents.	Increases support for the AfD and the Left Party at the expense of the four mainstream parties.
Group 4	Coalition and Convergence Group	Policy	Receives all of the basic information, alongside the 'coalition convergence' and 'policy convergence' group statements.	Increases support for the AfD and the Left Party at the expense of the four mainstream parties.
Group 5	Policy Polarisation Group		Receives all the basic information along with an additional statement noting examples of how each mainstream party has actually recommitted themselves to their traditional ideology.	Decreases support for the AfD and the Left Party; shores up support for the four mainstream parties.

connections to existing mainstream parties. Given that the treatment is randomly assigned, we can then take any subsequent differences on these dependent variables to be tantamount to the causal effect of treatment, moving us on from the correlational evidence presented earlier in this chapter.

The five treatment groups, along with their hypothesised effects, are outlined in Table 6.2. All respondents receive the parties' logos, names, and basic biography, in addition to the same short summary of the positions held the Left Party and AfD in case they were not familiar with these parties. This is all the information that respondents in the 'basic information group' receive. Respondents in the 'coalition convergence group' also get a short summary reminding them that parties on the left (the Greens and the SPD) have

increasingly made allies out of parties of the right (the FDP and the CDU-CSU) in federal and state-level government. Those in the ‘policy convergence’ group instead get examples of these parties making policy that seems to conflict with their supposed position on the classic left-right spectrum. Those in the ‘policy polarisation group’ get the opposite: examples of the parties returning to their traditional ideological niche. An additional group get both ‘coalition and policy convergence’ information, i.e. the maximum amount of depolarising text possible. The information was presented to the respondents in German, and on three successive screens that they had to click through once they finished reading. The first screen always contained information on the SPD and CDU-CSU, the second on the Greens and FDP, and the third on the AfD and Die Linke.

The cue for this experiment was taken from Lupu’s work in Argentina (2013). However, Lupu did not test the effects of two different types of policy information (polarised vs converged). This is because a) he could not find enough high salience political issues in Argentina where the parties were promising policies inconsistent with their ideology, and b) to talk about different issues in the ‘polarisation’ and ‘convergence’ treatment groups would confound the experiment, as the difference would then not merely be position on these issues, but the issues themselves. For example, it would not be appropriate to mention how a left-wing parties tax plan was particularly redistributive in the polarisation category, but then discuss how their attitudes to criminal justice were surprisingly conservative in the convergence vignette. These are two different issues with very different levels of salience and implications for partisan sentiment.

I get around this issue by exploiting recent attempts by the parties to distinguish themselves more thoroughly from each other. For example, while in the early 2000s Gerhard Schröder moved the SPD much closer to the traditionally more economically right-wing CDU-CSU with the aforementioned high profile ‘Agenda 2010’ and ‘Hartz IV’ reforms, the (then) most recent leader of the SPD in July 2019, Andrea Nahles, strongly distanced herself from these policies. She claimed that the Hartz-era welfare sanctions and reduced unemployment benefits would be at least partially reversed (BR 24 2019; Isenson 2019), putting the SPD once more into conflict with the CDU-CSU (Kettenbach, Fischhaber, and Greil 2019; The Local 2019). Similarly, though the CSU-CDU itself seemed to have moderated significantly on the issue of state intervention in the economy in the late 2000s (as the party implemented a minimum wage and allowed a temporary rental price for the housing sector), in more recent years the CDU-CSU seem to have rejected this path. For instance, the party has flatly refused to consider further intervention in the economy in terms of the SPD’s proposed raise in the minimum wage and extension of the rent price break (Scheele, Groll, and Zacharakis 2019; Tagesschau 2019). Similar ‘then’ and ‘now’ statements were found for the FDP and the Greens, the other two mainstream parties in Germany⁷¹. In this manner, I was able to keep the subjects of contention (or agreement) consistent, even while the framing of the position was altered to give the appearance of policy polarisation or convergence. The statements that were provided to the respondents are presented below in English, and in their original German-language format in Appendix J.

Before examining whether vote intention subsequently varied by treatment group, it is worth pausing to consider whether the treatment actually had the desired effect. Were respondents’

⁷¹ I am, once again, grateful to my aforementioned native speaking research assistants for their help in selecting these statements.

Treatment Group #1: Basic Information⁷²



Social Democratic Party (SPD)

Centre-left party formed in 1863. Traditionally supports strong trade union rights and social justice.



Christian Democratic Union / Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU)

Centre-right alliance formed in 1949. Traditionally supports family values, limited state intervention in the economy, and fiscal responsibility.



The Greens

Centre-left party formed in 1980. Traditionally supports the protection of the environment and the rights of social minorities.



Free Democratic Party (FDP)

Centre-right party formed in 1948. Traditionally supports personal freedoms, privatisations, and reductions in taxation and regulation.



Alternative for Germany (AfD)

Right-wing party formed in 2013. Supports a great reduction in immigration, the size of the public sector, and the influence of the EU.

Highly critical of all the old parties and their policies. Has never entered national government.



The Left

Left-wing party formed in 2007. Supports overcoming a capitalism based on “inequality, exploitation, expansion and competition”.

Highly critical of all the old parties and their policies. Has never entered national government.

⁷² **Note:** The original survey was conducted in German; this page only indicates the original English script from which the translators worked from. Some words and terms were necessarily altered in the final German language version in order to reflect natural use of language in that country. The actual format of the presentation involved three successive slides: SPD-CDU/CSU; FDP-Greens; AfD-Left Party, with care to make the text and imagery equally sized for all parties. See Table J.2 of Appendix J for the authentic German-language vignettes.

Treatment Group #2: Coalition Convergence



Social Democratic Party (SPD)

Centre-left party formed in 1863. Traditionally supports strong trade union rights and social justice.

Historically prefers to govern with centre-left parties. Nevertheless, has been in coalition with the CDU-CSU in 3 out of the last 4 national governments. Currently also rules with the CDU in 5 state parliaments.



Christian Democratic Union / Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU)

Centre-right alliance formed in 1949. Traditionally supports family values, limited state intervention in the economy, and fiscal responsibility.

Historically prefers to govern with centre-right parties. Nevertheless, has been in coalition with the SPD in 3 out of the last 4 national governments. Currently also rules with the SPD in 5 state parliaments, and with the Greens in 4.



The Greens

Centre-left party formed in 1980. Traditionally supports the protection of the environment and the rights of social minorities.

Historically prefers to govern with centre-left parties. Nevertheless, rules with the CDU in 4 state parliaments and with the FDP in 2. Negotiated a national coalition with the CDU-CSU and FDP after the 2017 national elections but talks failed.



Free Democratic Party (FDP)

Centre-right party formed in 1948. Traditionally supports personal freedoms, privatisations, and reductions in taxation and regulation.

Historically prefers to govern with centre-right parties. Nevertheless, has formed coalitions with the SPD. Currently rules with the SPD in one state, and with the Greens in two.



Alternative for Germany (AfD)

Right-wing party formed in 2013. Supports a great reduction in immigration, the size of the public sector, and the influence of the EU.

Highly critical of all the old parties and their policies. Has never entered national government.



The Left

Left-wing party formed in 2007. Supports overcoming a capitalism based on "inequality, exploitation, expansion and competition".

Highly critical of all the old parties and their policies. Has never entered national government.

Treatment Group #3: Policy Convergence



Social Democratic Party (SPD)

Centre-left party formed in 1863. Traditionally supports strong trade union rights and social justice.

Many experts think that their policies have become more centrist recently. For example, they introduced the “Agenda 2010” and “Hartz IV” reforms that cut taxes, reduced unemployment benefits, and introduced sanctions for some welfare recipients.



Christian Democratic Union / Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU)

Centre-right alliance formed in 1949. Traditionally supports family values, limited state intervention in the economy, and fiscal responsibility.

Nonetheless, many experts think that their policies have become more centrist. For example, they supported interventions in the economy by introducing a minimum wage and a rent price break.



The Greens

Centre-left party formed in 1980. Traditionally supports the protection of the environment and the rights of social minorities.

Nonetheless, many experts think that their policies have become more centrist. For example, the party assisted the introduction of the “Agenda 2010” and “Hartz IV” reforms that cut taxes, reduced unemployment benefits, and introduced sanctions for welfare recipients.



Free Democratic Party (FDP)

Centre-right party formed in 1948. Traditionally supports personal freedoms, privatisations, and reductions in taxation and regulation.

Nonetheless, many experts think that their policies have become more centrist. For example, the party only implemented relatively modest cuts to tax and spending the last time they served in a federal government.



Alternative for Germany (AfD)

Right-wing party formed in 2013. Supports a great reduction in immigration, the size of the public sector, and the influence of the EU.

Highly critical of all the old parties and their policies. Has never entered national government.



The Left

Left-wing party formed in 2007. Supports overcoming a capitalism based on “inequality, exploitation, expansion and competition”.

Highly critical of all the old parties and their policies. Has never entered national government.

Treatment Group #4: Coalition and Policy Convergence



Social Democratic Party (SPD)

Centre-left party formed in 1863. Traditionally supports strong trade union rights and social justice.

Many experts think that their policies have become more centrist recently. For example, they introduced the “Agenda 2010” and “Hartz IV” reforms that cut taxes, reduced unemployment benefits, and introduced sanctions for some welfare recipients.

Historically prefers to govern with centre-left parties. Nevertheless, has been in coalition with the CDU-CSU in 3 out of the last 4 national governments. Currently also rules with the CDU in 5 state parliaments.



Free Democratic Party (FDP)

Centre-right party formed in 1948. Traditionally supports personal freedoms, privatisations, and reductions in taxation and regulation.

Nonetheless, many experts think that their policies have become more centrist. For example, the party only implemented relatively modest cuts to tax and spending the last time they served in a federal government.

Historically prefers to govern with centre-right parties. Nevertheless, has formed coalitions with the SPD. Currently rules with the SPD in one state, and with the Greens in two.



Christian Democratic Union / Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU)

Centre-right alliance formed in 1949. Traditionally supports family values, limited state intervention in the economy, and fiscal responsibility.

Nonetheless, many experts think that their policies have become more centrist. For example, they supported interventions in the economy by introducing a minimum wage and a rent price break.

Historically prefers to govern with centre-right parties. Nevertheless, has been in coalition with the SPD in 3 out of the last 4 national governments. Currently also rules with the SPD in 5 state parliaments, and with the Greens in 4.



Alternative for Germany (AfD)

Right-wing party formed in 2013. Supports a great reduction in immigration, the size of the public sector, and the influence of the EU.

Highly critical of all the old parties and their policies. Has never entered national government.



The Greens

Centre-left party formed in 1980. Traditionally supports the protection of the environment and the rights of social minorities.

Nonetheless, many experts think that their policies have become more centrist. For example, the party assisted the introduction of the “Agenda 2010” and “Hartz IV” reforms that cut taxes, reduced unemployment benefits, and introduced sanctions for welfare recipients.

Historically prefers to govern with centre-left parties. Nevertheless, rules with the CDU in 4 state parliaments and with the FDP in 2. Negotiated a national coalition with the CDU-CSU and FDP after the 2017 national elections but talks failed.



The Left

Left-wing party formed in 2007. Supports overcoming a capitalism based on “inequality, exploitation, expansion and competition”.

Highly critical of all the old parties and their policies. Has never entered national government.

Treatment Group #5: Policy Polarisation



Social Democratic Party (SPD)

Centre-left party formed in 1863. Traditionally supports strong trade union rights and social justice.

In fact, many experts think that their policies have moved further to the left recently. For example, leading SPD officials said they will “leave Agenda 2010 and Hartz IV behind” and increase taxes and unemployment benefits while ending certain welfare sanctions.



Free Democratic Party (FDP)

Centre-right party formed in 1948. Traditionally supports personal freedoms, privatisations, and reductions in taxation and regulation.

In fact, many experts think that their policies have moved further to the right recently. For example, the party has come out strongly in favour of substantial cuts to tax and state spending.



Christian Democratic Union / Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU)

Centre-right alliance formed in 1949. Traditionally supports family values, limited state intervention in the economy, and fiscal responsibility.

In fact, many experts think that their policies have moved further to the right recently. For example, the party strongly opposes SPD attempts to intervene in the economy to raise the minimum wage or extend the rent price break.



Alternative for Germany (AfD)

Right-wing party formed in 2013. Supports a great reduction in immigration, the size of the public sector, and the influence of the EU.

Highly critical of all the old parties and their policies. Has never entered national government.



The Greens

Centre-left party formed in 1980. Traditionally supports the protection of the environment and the rights of social minorities.

In fact, many experts think that their policies have moved further to the left recently. For example, the party wants the abolition of the “Agenda 2010” and “Hartz IV” welfare sanctions and reverse cuts to unemployment benefits and tax.



The Left

Left-wing party formed in 2007. Supports overcoming a capitalism based on “inequality, exploitation, expansion and competition”.

Highly critical of all the old parties and their policies. Has never entered national government.

perceptions of the extent of mainstream party polarisation actually manipulated in the ‘correct’ way by the treatment vignettes? Without checking whether one’s treatment is effective, the causal story behind any subsequent findings will always be subject to debate (Mutz 2011: 84). For example, it could be that voters in the ‘coalition convergence’ group reduce their attachment to mainstream parties not because they are frustrated at the lack of political choice per se, but because they believe, as several editorials in Germany have stated, that a grand coalition undermines democracy by denying the people an appropriately opposition party to scrutinise government (Greven 2013; Gross and Stalinski 2017).

In Table 6.3 I check whether my vignettes had the intended effect by using treatment status to predict the extent to which respondents believed that the SPD and CDU-CSU “*stand for very different things*”. I then followed this up with a second question asking the extent to which they felt that about “*all the parties that have served in national government*” (i.e. the SPD, CDU-CSU, Greens, and FDP)⁷³. If my treatment is effective, those in the ‘policy polarisation’ group should be systematically more likely to emphasise differences than those who read the other texts.

I make three brief adjustments to model specification. First, following the example of Lupu (2013), I restrict my analysis to the treatment effects upon the actually-treated population by systematically removing respondent who did not read their assigned text. To do this I used data measuring the amount of time each respondent spent on the ‘treatment’ slides of the survey. Any respondent who spent fewer than 15 seconds (i.e. an average of 5 seconds a

⁷³ Please note that these questions were asked post-treatment and also after the measurement of my dependent variables (so there is no chance that they influenced responses to earlier questions).

slide) reading the treatment vignettes was removed, as were the relatively few who spent more than 15 minutes⁷⁴. Making this adjustment is important, as including many respondents who simply clicked through the information without reading adds far too much noise to the data. Secondly, following Brader and Tucker (2018), I interact treatment category with a measure of political engagement (here, self-described interest in politics on a 5-point scale)⁷⁵. This is important: I will likely have heterogeneous treatment effects given that the most informed voters will be more likely to have come across this information before and already updated their priors about the parties to reflect this. They may, therefore, effectively be ‘pre-treated’. Accordingly, the effect of treatment should be noticeably larger among those with less underlying interest in politics. Finally, to check that my treatment was not simply reactivating partisan sentiment, I present my results with and without a control for whether the respondent identifies with the SPD or CDU-CSU, or any mainstream party (depending on the relevant dependent variable), which had been recorded prior to my survey in an earlier YouGov questionnaire.

The OLS regression indicates that, in most cases, even controlling for respondents’ prior partisan affiliations, my treatment has the intended effect to a statistically significant degree. Those exposed to limited information, or information suggesting that mainstream parties have converged in policy are less likely to state that these parties are very different than

⁷⁴ My results are robust to moving this threshold up or down slightly. This threshold was not applied to the ‘null treatment group’ used for the models in Table 6.1, as they had no such information to read.

⁷⁵ Lupu (2013) and Fortunato and Stevenson (2013) also find that the effects of information about party coalition making are stronger for those with weaker priors, e.g. the young and less politically knowledgeable. Unfortunately I am unable to test for the effects of political knowledge here (it is hoped that self-described interest is an acceptable proxy), but I do not find any strong conditioning effects of age.

Table 6.3: Survey Experiment Manipulation Check: Do Treatments Induce Perceptions of Mainstream Party Polarisation?

Ordinary Least Squares Regressions	DV 1: “The SPD and the CDU-CSU are very different” (0 – 10 Scale, Higher = Agree)		DV 2: “The SPD, CDU-CSU, Greens, and FDP are very different” (0 – 10 Scale, Higher = Agree)	
	Model A	Model B	Model C	Model D
Treatment Group				
Basic Treatment	- 2.76 (0.78) **	- 2.54 (0.76) **	- 1.69 (0.79) *	- 1.84 (0.76) *
Coalition Convergence Treatment	- 0.90 (0.76)	- 0.69 (0.75)	- 0.08 (0.76)	- 0.03 (0.75)
Policy Convergence Treatment	- 1.72 (0.79) *	- 1.64 (0.78) *	- 2.15 (0.79) **	- 2.04 (0.77) **
Policy and Coalition Convergence Treatment	- 1.57 (0.79) *	- 1.36 (0.77) †	- 1.03 (0.81)	- 0.92 (0.78)
(Ref: Polarisation Treatment)				
Political Interest	- 0.45 (0.17) **	- 0.45 (0.17) **	- 0.12 (0.17)	- 0.18 (0.17)
Treatment Group * Political Interest				
Basic Treatment	0.83 (0.24) **	0.76 (0.23) **	0.51 (0.24) *	0.56 (0.23) *
Coalition Convergence Treatment	0.30 (0.23)	0.25 (0.23)	0.07 (0.23)	0.07 (0.23)
Policy Convergence Treatment	0.45 (0.25) †	0.46 (0.24) †	0.59 (0.25) *	0.59 (0.24) *
Policy and Coalition Convergence Treatment	0.48 (0.24) *	0.42 (0.24) †	0.26 (0.25)	0.23 (0.24)
Partisanship 1				
Partisan Attachment to SPD or CDU-CSU		1.04 (0.15) **		
Partisanship Attachment to SPD, CDU-CSU, Greens, or FDP				1.22 (0.15) **
Constant	6.56 (0.57)	6.13 (0.56)	6.37 (0.57)	5.89 (0.55)
N - Respondents	1070	1068	1063	1063
R-Squared	0.02	0.06	0.02	0.08

† p -value < 0.10; * p -value < 0.05; ** p -value < 0.01.

Note: The models are predicting the extent to which the respondent believes that the SPD and the CDU-CSU (DV1) or all mainstream parties (DV2) stand for “very different things”. Responses are scaled from 0-10.

Source: Original YouGov Survey in Germany, 2nd – 5th July 2019

those that received information about the parties increasingly repolarising their policy positions. However, information about these parties entering coalitions with non-traditional partners has essentially no independent effect on convergence perceptions. As expected, treatments are most effective on those with lower levels of political interest. I can, therefore, be relatively confident that any subsequent effects of treatment are likely to have been mediated by changing the perceptions of how polarised mainstream parties are in Germany⁷⁶.

My treatment can move perceptions, but is it strong enough to change respondents' actual political behaviour? Here I am interested in whether exposure to information suggesting mainstream polarisation or convergence can affect two potential outcomes: respondents' proclivity to support anti-system parties, and respondents' attachment to mainstream parties themselves. If the 'convergence breeds backlash' thesis is correct, exposure to information suggesting that mainstream parties had become more similar should have a swift impact on increasing levels of support for anti-system parties, and reducing levels of attachment to the larger parties. Table 6.4 presents the results from a multinomial logit model that uses treatment status (once again interacted with political interest) to predict vote intentions were an election held tomorrow. The reference category is supporting either of the incumbents (the SPD or the CDU-CSU).

⁷⁶ I also tested the possibility, hypothesised by Lupu (2016), that the convergence treatment really lowers partisan sentiment by provoking feelings that politicians break their promises, rather than brand dilution per se (see Stokes (2001) for more on this). However, my vignettes have essentially no effect on belief that politicians do or do not keep their promises. These results are available on request.

As you can see, there are effectively no effects of treatment. Though the results are generally in the expected direction regarding AfD support (with policy convergence, if not coalition convergence, having a positive association with this vote choice), the same is not true for the Left Party; low-information voters exposed to convergence are less likely to support the party. In any case, the standard errors are larger than the coefficients in both of these cases. I cannot conclude from these experimental results that perceiving similarities between mainstream parties makes one more likely to support radical alternatives⁷⁷.

The next test is to see whether the convergence treatment reduces the strength of attachments towards mainstream parties. This is what the aforementioned social identity theories of the importance of ‘comparative fit’ would predict (Hogg et al. 2004; Turner 1999) and, indeed, this is what Lupu (2013) found in his own experiment in Argentina. While I have not found any short-run effects of convergence on anti-system voting, evidence that depolarisation causes partisans to abandon their old attachments could suggest that the barriers facing would-be political insurgents can at least be eased by such developments, perhaps creating an opportunity for a successful anti-system campaign in the long-run, if sustained. The convergence-fuelled collapse of many of Latin America’s traditional ruling parties was, after all, a necessary actor in facilitating the eventual rise of figures such Chávez, Fujimori, and Morales (Lupu 2014; Morgan 2011; Roberts 2013; Seawright 2012; Stokes 2001). If German voters were to act in a similar manner as their South American counterparts, reducing their affinity in response to the blurring of party brands, this would still be highly compatible with some of the expectations of my ‘crisis and convergence’ theory.

⁷⁷ Please also note that, unlike my observational analysis (see Footnote 70), none of these experimental results are substantively changed by restricting the sample pool to only citizens of the former West Germany.

Table 6.4: The Impact of Experimental Treatment on Vote Intention in an Original German Survey (2019)

Multinomial Logit Model	Vote Intention				
	FDP	Greens	AfD	The Left	Abstain
Treatment Group					
Basic Treatment	1.60 (1.40)	0.39 (0.94)	- 0.71 (1.09)	0.64 (1.15)	0.73 (0.99)
Coalition Convergence Treatment	0.82 (1.29)	0.71 (0.90)	- 0.34 (1.00)	- 0.79 (1.13)	- 0.15 (0.91)
Policy Convergence Treatment	- 1.01 (1.43)	0.30 (0.97)	0.43 (1.00)	- 1.10 (1.15)	- 0.20 (0.98)
Policy and Coalition Convergence Treatment	0.88 (1.36)	0.00 (0.95)	0.43 (0.99)	- 0.17 (1.12)	- 0.58 (0.94)
(Ref: Polarisation Treatment)					
Political Interest	0.09 (0.29)	0.00 (0.20)	0.06 (0.21)	- 0.06 (0.24)	- 0.72 (0.24) **
Treatment Group * Political Interest					
Basic Treatment	- 0.57 (0.44)	- 0.05 (0.28)	0.16 (0.32)	- 0.23 (0.36)	- 0.21 (0.35)
Coalition Convergence Treatment	- 0.20 (0.90)	- 0.18 (0.28)	0.10 (0.29)	0.25 (0.34)	0.18 (0.32)
Policy Convergence Treatment	0.36 (0.42)	- 0.07 (0.30)	- 0.09 (0.31)	0.39 (0.35)	0.17 (0.35)
Policy and Coalition Convergence Treatment	- 0.26 (0.42)	0.07 (0.29)	- 0.09 (0.30)	0.10 (0.34)	- 0.13 (0.34)
Constant	- 2.00 (0.98)	- 0.79 (0.67)	- 1.08 (0.70)	- 1.05 (0.79)	0.92 (0.69)
Reference Category: Voting for the SPD or CDU-CSU					
N – Respondents: 1147					
† p-value < 0.10; * p-value < 0.05; ** p-value < 0.01					

Note: The dependent variable is intended vote choice. The reference category is voting for either of the two incumbent mainstream parties, the SPD or the CDU-CSU.

Source: Original YouGov Survey in Germany, 2nd – 5th July 2019

In order to conduct such a test, I separated my sample according to the partisan identity that each respondent expressed in an earlier survey fielded by YouGov following the 2017 general election⁷⁸. Here I only wanted to examine those who previously had an attachment to any of the four mainstream parties: the CDU-CSU, the SPD, the Greens, and the FDP. Those who did not have a partisan identity, or felt close to a minor party, were dropped. Mainstream partisans are the respondents who might be most put-off by any perceived change in proximity of ‘their’ party to its erstwhile rivals; they are also the types of voters that anti-system parties will need to convert if they are to continue their rise in the next few federal elections. These respondents were all asked, post-treatment, the following question: *“In an earlier YouGov survey, you said that you tend to feel close to the [X] party. How close would you say that you feel to this party?”*. The responses to this question were then coded: 0 (“I no longer feel close to this party”), 1 (“Not that close”), 2 (“Somewhat close”), or 3 (“Very close”). Accordingly, negative coefficients in Table 6.5 indicate that the treatment status eroded respondents levels of partisan attachment to that party.

Table 6.5 suggests substantial heterogeneity in treatment effects by party. Centre-left partisans – those who identified with the SPD and the Greens – are systematically more likely to hold stronger partisan attachments when exposed to the polarisation treatment, and this effect is greatest for the least politically-sophisticated. The same is not true for those on the right – supporters of the FDP and the CDU-CSU – who are, if anything, more likely to state a higher level of attachment to these parties when exposed to the convergence group treatment. The effects are only statistically significant for SPD supporters; however, in this one instance, they are quite large. My model would predict that a previous SPD partisan

⁷⁸ I am very grateful to YouGov for sharing this data with me.

Table 6.5: The Impact of Experimental Treatment on Partisanship in an Original German Survey (2019)

Ordinary Least Square Regressions	Strength of Partisanship (0 - 3 Scale)			
	Model A SPD Partisans	Model B CDU-CSU Partisans	Model C FDP Partisans	Model D Green Partisans
Treatment Group				
Basic Treatment	- 1.33 (0.61) *	- 0.28 (0.47)	0.76 (1.71)	0.53 (0.93)
Coalition Convergence Treatment	- 0.53 (0.55)	- 0.09 (0.49)	0.50 (1.99)	- 0.14 (0.75)
Policy Convergence Treatment	- 1.21 (0.59) *	0.45 (0.55)	1.90 (1.86)	- 1.11 (0.75)
Policy and Coalition Convergence Treatment	- 0.53 (0.72)	- 0.06 (0.51)	0.57 (1.71)	- 0.06 (0.76)
(Ref: Polarisation Treatment)				
Political Interest	0.08 (0.13)	0.18 (0.11)	0.25 (0.44)	0.09 (0.24)
Treatment Group * Political Interest				
Basic Treatment	0.37 (0.19) *	0.08 (0.14)	- 0.16 (0.48)	- 0.24 (0.28)
Coalition Convergence Treatment	0.10 (0.17)	0.02 (0.14)	- 0.01 (0.60)	- 0.00 (0.22)
Policy Convergence Treatment	0.36 (0.18) *	- 0.14 (0.18)	- 0.43 (0.51)	0.19 (0.21)
Policy and Coalition Convergence Treatment	0.12 (0.22)	0.04 (0.16)	- 0.05 (0.49)	0.04 (0.22)
Constant	1.60 (0.40)	1.28 (0.36)	- 0.05 (1.60)	1.81 (0.79)
N – Respondents	181	229	56	118
R-Squared	0.14	0.08	0.08	0.12

† p-value < 0.10; * p-value < 0.05; ** p-value < 0.01

Note: The dependent variable is strength of identification to the party the respondent previously said that they felt close to. This is coded as an interval variable with the following values: 0 (“I no longer feel close to this party”), 1 (“Not that close”), 2 (“Somewhat close”), 3 (“Very close”). Respondents who did not previously identify with any of the four mainstream parties were omitted from the analysis.

Source: Original YouGov Survey in Germany, 2nd – 5th July 2019

with a low level of political interest (1 out of 5) exposed to the polarisation treatment would score 1.7 (out of 3) in terms of strength of partisan attachment, compared to 0.8 for a similar person given the convergence treatment. Partisan affiliations appear to be reduced when people perceive mainstream convergence, but there appears to be an interesting asymmetry to this story: parties on the left are punished more. Convergence and polarisation in position also seems to matter more than relational convergence: reminding people about parties' increasingly cross-ideological coalition making has no effect on any of the supporters.

Therefore, while there is no direct effect of treatment on vote choice, perhaps we can see the emergence of a potential indirect effect whereby anti-system parties in Germany may eventually be able to co-opt disaffected ex-social democrats after the complete erosion of their previous loyalties. This would certainly fit in with studies from other European countries, that have spoken of a gradual 'proletarianisation' of radical right parties from the 1990s on (see Rydgren (2013) for an overview). This story also bears some resemblance to argument of Evans and Mellon (2015) in their discussion of working-class UKIP supporters. First these voters fell out of love with the increasing middle-class Labour Party, but they did not switch directly to the radical right. Many went through periods of abstention (or even Conservative-voting) first, before eventually being co-opted by new the Eurosceptic, anti-immigration appeals that the new party was offering. Though the results here do undermine confidence in a swift march of voters away from the centre in the face of convergence, a slightly different proposition – that attachment to mainstream parties can be sapped if these parties dilute their long-standing ideological brands, which could ultimately benefit populists in the long-run – may have some merit, if only for a particular subset of mainstream party supporters.

Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of recent developments in German party politics. I argued that, in light of convergence between the centre-left SPD and centre-right CDU parties, as well as a stable but unimpressive national economy, anti-system parties should have a historic opportunity to profit from dissatisfaction with the political establishment. I presented an original survey which showed that belief in mainstream party convergence is associated with anti-system support. However, building on the research that I presented in the previous chapter, I noted that there were potential endogeneity concerns that prevent us from interpreting these associations in causal terms. For this reason, I implemented a survey experiment that randomly assigned respondents information suggesting that the mainstream parties in their country were more or less similar in terms of both policy and who they make coalitions with. While the treatment was ‘successful’ (it moved respondents’ perceptions of mainstream similarities in the anticipated direction), it appeared to have no effect on boosting support for anti-system parties. That said, the treatment did appear to reduce the level of attachment to mainstream parties among left-wing partisans.

The null findings for anti-system voting could, of course, be explained by reference to the economic conditions in Germany in 2019. My previous chapters have shown, fairly consistently, that both economic downturn and mainstream party depolarisation are necessary factors for widespread support for radical parties, and in contemporary Germany the headline-grabbing economic indicators – GDP growth and unemployment – are fairly positive when compared to neighbouring countries or previous time periods (Figure 6.2). It is plausible that my treatments may have had a stronger effect were I able to implement my experiment in (say) the early 2000s, when Germany was the “*sick man of Europe*”

(Dustmann et al. 2014) and the incentive to punish mainstream convergence would have been more acute.

Similarly, the German political context of 2019 was also a difficult environment to place this experiment in. As I demonstrated in Figure 6.1, by this time point Germany had experienced six continuous years of ‘grand coalition’ governments between the main centre-left and centre-right parties. Previous research has shown that coalitions induce perceptions of ideological convergence amongst the allying parties (Fortunato and Stevenson 2013), and my own aggregate-level cross-national regressions in Chapter Three indicated that such governments also have an independent effect on support for anti-system parties. Thus much of the impact of convergence was probably already ‘baked in’ to such a context. Mainstream party voters who objected to convergence had most likely already defected to other parties already. This notion is further strengthened by the results of the 2019 European Parliament election, which occurred shortly before the experiment was fielded. The SPD garnered a paltry 16% of the national vote, with their CDU-CSU coalition partners also recording a record-low vote tally of just 29% (BBC 2019). The rump of supporters for the two historic major German parties who remained may simply have been the most tolerant of or disinterested in the convergence ‘problem’. Furthermore, though I endeavoured to find the most convincing evidence of ‘repolarisation’ for my treatment vignettes, it is undeniable that these new areas of policy disagreement were not as marked or widely publicised as those that characterised the 2015-2017 de-convergence of British politics that I discussed in the previous chapter. It may, therefore, prove wise to repeat this experiment at a future date following the conclusion of the grand coalition and in a less propitious economic context (as the current Covid-19 crisis may ultimately provide for) in order to fully rule out a direct link between exposure to convergent policy statements and support for political radicals.

That said, even omitting these caveats, while my experimental analysis failed to support the notion that the link between mainstream depolarisation and the rise of anti-system parties is causal, it did help underline three points. Firstly, real information about party positions will lead to movement in people's placements of these parties in positional terms, even controlling for partisanship. Secondly, there is an association between viewing information that makes your party seem less 'unique' and more like its traditional rivals, and lowering your level of attachment to that party (though this is only statistically significant for SDP supporters). Over time, this may yet create opportunities for anti-system parties to co-opt dissatisfied left-wing voters for their own causes. Thirdly, it appears that convergence in policy terms matters more to partisans than making coalitions with one's political rivals⁷⁹.

The size of the effects that I have uncovered in this chapter are, of course, likely to be at the 'upper bounds' of what an information campaign by mainstream or anti-system parties could achieve during an election. Firstly, I have presented policy in a distilled and uncontested form, whereas in an actual competitive election accusations of convergence can be met with vigorous denials and counter-accusations. Secondly, low information voters (upon which the treatment had the greatest effect) would also be less likely to encounter or comprehend this information unless forced to read it in the simplified manner in which the survey presented it to them (Banerjee et al. 2014: 404–405; Klačnjak and Tucker 2013: 539). That said, even with this caveat, it is encouraging to have evidence that brand dilution can actually change perceptions of mainstream parties and that, for left-wing partisans, this can lead to a degree of reduction in partisan sentiment.

⁷⁹ Though there is the slight caveat here that the information relating to coalition-making is probably more visible and may, therefore, have been better known prior to the experiment (and thus factored into perceptions) than that of specific policy stances.

The finding that it is only the SDP who lose supporters when undertaking centrist policy is an interesting one, though perhaps not unexpected given that most of the literature on party convergence has focused on the particular problems faced by the centre-left when they shift positions (Berman and Snegovaya 2019; Blyth, Hopkin, and Pelizzo 2010; Evans and Tilley 2017; Karreth, Polk, and Allen 2013; Keating and McCrone 2013; Thompson 2000). Furthermore the recent rise of various anti-system parties does appear to be correlated with a steep recent downturn in the fortunes of Europe's old social democratic and socialist parties (Hanretty 2015; Hobolt and de Vries 2015). Why might the social democrats be more vulnerable than their mainstream centre-right opponents? I have two, somewhat speculative, hypotheses for future research.

Firstly, the nature of socialism as an ideology relative to conservatism. Arguably support for left-wing parties has historically been more ideological and hence more prone to notions of 'betrayal' which triggers defection. Socialist and social democratic parties were founded with the explicit goal of representing the working class and alleviating the negative effects of capitalism (Bartolini 1983, 2000; Bartolini and Mair 1990; Boix 2011; Sassoon 1996); that is, they based their appeal in *positive* terms as being for change. This usually meant a core focus on economic redistribution in particular (Budge and Farlie 1983: 304-5). In contrast, rather than focusing on any one key policy shibboleth, centre-right parties tended to be catch-all parties, prepared to highlight any number of different issues that could most plausibly deflect attention away from the redistributive appeals of their rivals (Budge and Farlie 1983). Rather than being defined by the quest for change, the centre-right was largely identifiable as a *negative* alliance against the changes proposed by the left (Gidron and Ziblatt 2019: 29). This difference from left-wing politics is also seen in traditional articulations of conservative philosophy, which has tended to be more pragmatic and

dispositional, with fewer images of an end goal or perfect society that government intervention is meant to initiate (Oakeshott 1956). There may simply be more room to compromise and policy-shifts in the minds of conservative party supporters, “*reform that you may preserve*” being an apt aphorism for the sentiment (Macaulay 1831).

The second reason is more sociological. It simply might be that an increasing number of mostly populist political parties have begun making appeals to working-class voters (the social constituency historically associated with social democracy) disgruntled with the slick professionalisation and moderation of the contemporary centre-left (March 2011; Rydgren 2013). The new social democratic coalition, straddling as it does both more moderate middle-class professionals and traditional deprived manual workers (Gingrich and Häusermann 2015), may simply have a harder time reconciling themselves to *any* changes in the party’s positions that, nevertheless, may end up being forced on the party by external shocks of rising levels of migration and economic globalisation.

In any case, the finding that certain voters will reduce their partisan sentiment once faced with evidence of mainstream party brand dilution corroborates some aspects of my hypothesis, and helps extend the work of Lupu (2013) from developing democracies – where brands may be less certain anyway due to the more recent establishment of competitive party politics – to the largest established democracy in Europe. It corroborates observational analysis that has indicated a link between perceptions of a party’s unique identity and the strength of partisanship (Berglund et al. 2005; Hetherington 2001; Webb 1996). In my final chapter, I tie in these findings to the results from the rest of this thesis, and summarise what

they mean for the tenability of my 'crisis and convergence' model of anti-system party success.

Conclusion – Explaining Anti-System Support: Lessons from this Thesis

Abstract

In this, the final chapter of my thesis, I take stock of my overall findings and contextualise them in the broader tradition of political science research on support for radical parties, the decline of mainstream partisanship, and the role of the economy and polarisation in shaping political behaviour. I begin with a short summary detailing the methodologies and results of each of the previous six chapters. Following this, I explicitly lay out what I consider to be my main contributions to the discipline and our understanding of the aforementioned topics. I then describe the ways in which I think that this research agenda could best be extended, focusing on the need for models of polarisation that recognise two (potentially orthogonal) dimensions of ideological contestation, and the importance of appreciating the role of social group representation (as distinct from ideological representation) in shaping voters' understandings of the 'distance' between parties. Using data from several waves of the British Election Study, I demonstrate the importance of the latter by showing how perceptions of the gulf in Labour-Conservative social class representation are a strong and independent predictor of belief in political polarisation, even after controlling for notions about the parties' stances on the issues that typically divide the working- and middle-classes. Finally, I argue for the need to develop a framework for understanding the likely future trajectories of party systems in advanced democracies that are forced to deal with an anti-system party breakthrough. I end with a discussion of the normative implications of my research, and raise the possibility that polarisation, so often considered responsible for many of the ills in contemporary politics, may need to be rehabilitated as a necessary, and indeed stabilising, feature of party systems in advanced democracies.

Thesis Summary

There exists an extensive literature on the causes and consequences of the widespread breakdown of party systems in Latin America from the late 1980s to early 2000s (Lupu 2016; Morgan 2011; Roberts 2013; Seawright 2012; Stokes 2001). Broadly speaking, this

research finds that, following the debt crisis of the 1980s, a combination of increased economic hardship and dissatisfaction with the policy ‘bait-and-switch’ by, in particular, nominally left-leaning parties that implemented free market reforms once gaining office, was a major contributing factor. There are clear parallels between these experiences – economic problems, external interventions by creditors, and the challenge facing mainstream parties to be both responsive to their base as well as responsible on the economy (Mair 2013) – and the recent problems facing more advanced democracies in the aftermath of the 2008-09 financial crisis (Roberts 2017). For this reason, I have tried to apply some of the lessons from these earlier studies in order to understand the more recent turmoil that has upending party politics in Europe, along with several other advanced democracies in the last couple of decades. I approached this task in several steps.

In my first theoretical chapter, I articulated and defended Zulianello’s (2018) typological revision of Sartori’s (1976) concept of the anti-system party. That is, a party which does not serve in government or make alliances with governing parties, and fundamentally challenges the legitimacy of the dominant norms, values, practices, actors, or boundaries of their political community. Parties like the Communist Party of Greece, the Alternative for Germany, or the Five Star Movement of Italy. The combination of relational and positional distance from mainstream parties (which have neither of these features) makes these parties easily identifiable as the most radical actors in their respective party systems. I developed an original method for operationalising Zulianello’s conceptual typology, and used it to monitor and chart the variation in anti-system party support in a great many advanced parliamentary democracies between 1950 and 2016. My data showed that these parties are currently collectively stronger than at almost any other point in the post-war era; however, there remains significant cross-national variation in these patterns.

I followed this chapter with another theoretical discussion, this time about exactly why we might expect these types of parties to be more successful at challenging mainstream parties' electoral dominance in certain times and places. I argued that, contrary to previous explanations which emphasise either economic hardship (Arzheimer 2009; Brückner and Grüner 2010; Hobolt and Tilley 2016; March and Rommerskirchen 2015) or mainstream party depolarisation (Abedi 2004; Hino 2012; Pelizzo 2007; Spies 2013; Spies and Franzmann 2011; Spoon and Klüver 2019), both factors are needed to explain support for anti-system parties. In an economic downturn, per the classic literature on economic voting (Anderson 2000; Dassonneville and Lewis-Beck 2019; Duch 2007; Duch and Stevenson 2008; Key 1966; Kramer 1971; Powell and Whitten 1993; Whitten and Palmer 1999), one would normally just expect rotation from an incumbent mainstream party to one waiting in opposition. With an ideological convergence among mainstream parties, one might expect parties on the edges of the political spectrum to gain more votes now that space has been vacated. However, we would usually not necessarily expect these parties to gain too much support, as the ideological centre should usually be the optimal space for parties, given that most voters locate themselves at that point (Downs 1957).

These factors – the economy and mainstream party positioning – need to be appreciated in interactive terms. The economy can provide an incentive to switch, but this should only benefit mainstream opposition parties if they appear to be offering solutions which are credibly different from those that caused, worsened, or failed to alleviate the current problems facing voters. When ideological convergence has taken place, voters may fail to perceive meaningful differences between the choices that mainstream parties are presenting, which will give anti-system parties a historic opportunity to capitalise. Conversely, mainstream party similarity might, in some instances, be an offense to voters in and of itself

if they think about this development in conspiratorial terms as the work of an establishment party cartel (Katz and Mair 1995; Mair 2013; Mair and Katz 2009). This is less likely, however, when the economy is booming and mainstream party convergence can be credibly thought of as a bipartisan consensus on a winning formula for raising living standards. This would explain why the centripetal movements of certain centre-left parties during the 1990s – notably Blair’s New Labour – were not immediately punished by mass defection to anti-system alternatives. At the time, these new positions could still be justified as “delivering the goods” on a particularly important policy front. This was just not likely to be believed in (say) Greece or Spain when their own centre-left parties converged with the political right upon austerity in the aftermath of financial and Eurozone crises of the late 2000s.

Crucially, anti-system parties should be best placed to profit from conditions of ‘crisis and convergence’. Mainstream depolarisation and economic hardship undermine both the input- and output-based legitimacy of mainstream party systems and institutions (Hobolt 2012; Scharpf 1997), leading to an opening for those who can credibly come to be untarnished by the failings of elite consensus. Anti-system parties’ two features – a lack of experience in government and a radical criticism of the existing political community’s boundaries, norms, institutions, and actors – give them “*clean hands*” and the “*aura of novelty*” (Barr 2009: 44; Hobolt and Tilley 2016: 974), allowing them to effectively exploit this dissatisfaction.

After sketching out this theory, I aimed to test it in my first two empirical chapters by using cross-sectional data covering a wide range of time periods, countries, and party systems. Using an original aggregate-level dataset on the socioeconomic and political context of over 350 general elections in 22 advanced democracies in the post-Second World War era, I

demonstrated a robust and statistically and substantively significant interaction between GDP per capita growth and mainstream party convergence (according to the ideological content of their manifestos) and the proportion of the vote going to anti-system parties. I followed this with an analysis of individual-level survey data from successive waves of the CSES between 1996 to 2016 in the same group of advanced democracies. Using a series of multilevel models, I demonstrated that personally perceiving mainstream parties to be more similar in ideological terms is associated with anti-system voting, but this association is a lot stronger in contexts defined by a weaker economy (again measured by GDP per capita growth).

Previous research had shown that perceptions of where parties stand in ideological terms tend to be skewed by one's orientation towards those parties: individuals tend to drag parties that they feel close to nearer towards their own position, and push those that they dislike further away (Busch 2016; Granberg and Brown 1992). It is, therefore, important to make sure that the 'effect' of believing that mainstream parties are relatively ideologically distinct is not, in fact, an offshoot of voters' underlying partisan identity, which could have been generated and strengthened by any number of other factors independent of perceptions of polarisation.

My final two empirical chapters addressed the potentially reciprocal relationship between partisan sentiment and perceptions of party position. In the first instance, using data from the British Election Study Internet Panel [BESIP], I studied the behaviour of British voters between 2015 and 2017, a period encompassing first a relatively ideologically depolarised political environment, and then a more adversarial one characterised by renewed divisions.

I used two different measurements of perceived polarisation to predict support for three different anti-system parties during this period, whilst using lagged variables to control for respondents' past political loyalties and perceptions of the parties. In all six of these models, becoming more confident about the ideological distinctions between Labour and the Conservatives was associated with shifting support away from an anti-system party. Furthermore, a series of cross-lagged structural equation models allowed me to be more confident that this association was causal. I showed that perceiving polarisation at election 1 makes one more likely to be a partisan at election 2, while being a partisan at election 1 has no direct effect on one's likelihood of perceiving polarisation at election 2. There was no evidence for reverse causality in this case.

My final empirical chapter aimed to solidify my confidence in the exogeneity of polarisation perceptions to partisan preferences. Using a survey experiment delivered online to a representative sample of adult German citizens, I randomly assigned respondents information to make mainstream parties in their country appear more or less distinct in both positional (the policies they make) and relational (the groups they ally with) terms. While this treatment was 'successful' – respondents assigned to information meant to simulate mainstream party polarisation did, in fact, subsequently emphasise the differences between the parties to a greater extent than all others – there was effectively no impact of treatment on vote choice. That said, it is worth bearing in mind the mid-2019 context that the experiment was fielded in, as it took place against a backdrop of relative economic stability and a long-term grand coalition between the centre-left and centre-right. This could have undermined the power of my 'convergence treatment', given that a) the incentive to punish political depolarisation may not have been as sharp as it might otherwise be (per my central 'crisis and convergence' theory), and b) the medium-term alliance of the SPD and the CDU-

CSU in government may have effectively ‘baked in’ much of the impact of convergence already, even before exposure to my treatment. Even with these caveats, however, I did find that exposure to the information suggesting convergence eroded respondents’ strength of identification with mainstream German parties, although this relationship was only statistically significant for followers of the Social Democratic Party. I concluded with some potential explanations for why parties of the political left may be more vulnerable to losing their supporters after engaging in brand diluting activities.

Thesis Contributions

Previous studies of the success rates of radical parties have tended to separately analyse the role of demand- and supply-side factors. I have added to this literature by demonstrating that, in advanced democracies, it is the combination of both that radicalises the economic vote and increases the incentives to punish mainstream parties for convergence. Without appreciating these contingencies, we cannot properly distinguish such phenomena from ‘regular’ economic voting. My findings corroborate the recent assessment of Golder (2016), that any future contribution to our knowledge in this field will come through an unravelling of causal mechanisms and the investigation into the synergy of demand and supply.

Overall, this study has uncovered quite a bit of support for the hypothesis that a combination of economic downturn and mainstream party depolarisation can significantly boost the competitiveness of anti-system parties. I would, therefore, contend that there is enough evidence to support future testing of my ‘crisis and convergence’ theory of anti-system party voting. Beyond this, however, I believe that the thesis makes several contributions to the literature on support for radical parties, the source of partisan alignments, and economic voting behaviour, in particular.

Firstly, in Chapters Four, Five, and (in part) Six, I demonstrated evidence of an individual-level relationship between perceptions of convergence and radical party voting, while specifying extensive statistical controls. While studies that link voter behaviour to the extent of mainstream polarisation as recorded in expert surveys or using manifesto data have proliferated in recent years (Abedi 2004; Arzheimer and Carter 2006; Kitschelt and McGann 1995; Spoon and Klüver 2019), the individual-level assumption underpinning these findings – that voters perceive changes in the extent of mainstream ideological competition and respond accordingly – has rarely been tested. To my knowledge, this has only even been demonstrated once before (Pelizzo 2007), and never in anything like the number of cases that I have demonstrated, or with models that move beyond bivariate associations in cross-sectional data. This is, in itself, a notable contribution.

Secondly, my findings speak to the debate about the origin of the ongoing erosion of partisan ties between voters and parties (Dalton 2013; Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; Dassonneville, Hooghe, and Vanhoutte 2012; Mair 2013: 35), and the subsequent increase in electoral volatility (Bischoff 2013; Dassonneville 2015; Drummond 2006; Fieldhouse et al. 2000: 9-14; Mair 2013: 33).

Currently, this literature is divided between two opposing camps. The first group see dealignment as a somewhat inevitable development stemming from certain long-term ‘bottom-up’ socioeconomic changes. For example, increasingly individualised societies eroding the old in-group loyalties and identities that parties were built on top-of (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Dogan 2001). Or, alternatively, the growing independence and political self-sufficiency of increasingly highly-educated western electorates, who no longer

need parties to mobilise them politically or provide them with information needed to help them understand debates over the merits of particular policies (Dalton 1984, 2013; Dalton, McAllister, and Wattenberg 2000). In contrast, the second group see these developments as more recent, and mainly driven by ‘top-down’ forces. In particular, it is claimed that political elites, consciously or not, have increasingly moved away from the old sociological and ideological niches that originally binded different groups of voters towards them, in search of a, potentially illusive, decisive median voter who lacks these strong commitments (Elff 2007; Evans 1999; Evans and Tilley 2017; Thomassen 2005). Where parties no longer speak so strongly for certain groups, so these groups waver in their commitment to the parties.

My findings in Chapters Five and Six provide evidence more in line with the ideas of the latter camp. Perceptions of mainstream convergence can erode partisanship, and are not merely themselves reflective of the waning strength of partisanship. Furthermore, far from being in an irreversible secular decline following post-industrial societal shifts, the evidence from my British panel data suggests that segments of the contemporary electorate have actually renewed their emotional attachments to mainstream parties in response to Labour and the Conservatives once again taking different stances on issues that divide the public along left-right (or, in the case of Brexit, libertarian-authoritarian) ideological lines. To add further nuance to this discussion, however, the evidence from my survey experiment in Germany suggests that partisan dealignment may well be more of a threat to centre-left parties. The centre-right’s electorate, as I discussed at the end of Chapter Four, may simply be less invested in one specific vision of what a good society should look like (as opposed to avoiding the left’s version of this utopia). Or they are, at least, less divided on what the core features of this social and economic settlement would be, as opposed to the often-

fractious new left-wing coalition of the manual working class and university graduates (Gingrich 2017).

Thirdly, the results from this thesis also reveal some of the limitations with conventional models of economic voting behaviour, which are often based on a dichotomy between the governing incumbents and the opposition (Anderson 2000; Dassonneville and Lewis-Beck 2019; Duch 2007; Duch and Stevenson 2008; Key 1966; Kramer 1971; Powell and Whitten 1993; Whitten and Palmer 1999). My research shows that we should think about the ‘opposition’ in less monolithic terms, and try to consider the exact processes which lead to ‘normal’ economic voting – i.e. simply rotating to an alternative mainstream party in opposition – and more ‘radical’ economic voting – i.e. moving to an anti-system party or exiting the electorate altogether (see also Margalit 2019: 284–288). For this reason, it may be more appropriate to analyse economic voting using multinomial regression models, rather than the more conventional binary logistic approach. Furthermore, economic voting should incorporate the extent of polarisation in amongst the other mediators and modifiers – such as the electoral system, size of the governing coalition, or presence of institutions that share responsibility for governing with the executive (Hobolt, Tilley, and Banducci 2013; Powell and Whitten 1993; Whitten and Palmer 1999) – that the literature has already shown makes a difference. The extent of political choice clearly matters when we go beyond looking at whether or not voters seek to ‘sanction’ the incumbent, and instead discuss who they look to ‘select’ in replacement.

Suggestions for Future Research

There are three major ways that this thesis could be extended.

The first is extending our notions of party polarisation from a unidimensional to multidimensional setting. As I have, at times, noted in this thesis, there is a growing body of literature which contends that the mass public's views on political issues are increasingly poorly-captured by a single, overarching left-right scale (see Carmines and J.D'Amico (2015) and Ford and Jennings (2020) for recent reviews of this literature). It has been argued that voters are increasingly 'cross-pressured' by their economic and cultural preferences, which do not display the same level of constraint (i.e. 'left' positions on economics matching up with 'left' positions on moral issues or immigration) typically found in the platforms of mainstream parties (Houtman, Achterberg, and Derks 2008; Lefkofridi, Wagner, and Willmann 2014; Thomassen 2012). Instead, it is usually argued that there are at least two, fairly orthogonal, dimensions of ideology amongst the modern electorate. An economic one, concerning preferences on redistribution and state intervention in the economy, and a sociocultural one, concerning the appropriateness of adherence to conventional moral standards, the importance of maintaining law and order, and the extent to which national identities are threatened by immigration and integration into international organisations (Bornschieer 2010; van der Brug and van Spanje 2009; Flanagan and Lee 2003; Kriesi et al. 2006; Malka, Lelkes, and Soto 2019; Oesch and Rennwald 2018).

I am not alone in limiting myself to a single left-right spectrum for reasons of theoretical parsimony and pragmatism. In their recent review of the subject, Iversen and Goplerud (2018) note that multidimensional models are often ignored by theorists studying voter preferences due to the complex mathematics that they necessitate. Furthermore, most cross-national surveys, including the CSES, rarely allow citizens to place themselves on more than one ideological scale. That said, a fuller picture would undoubtedly be provided if we were to discuss convergence on two dimensions. For example, it is plausible that the effect of an

economic ‘crisis’ on anti-system voting is magnified when mainstream parties are upholding a consensus on taxation and state interventionism, and the effects of a social ‘crisis’ (for example, the migrant and refugee crises that faced Europe in the mid-2010s) are enlarged when mainstream parties are instead offering a consensus on questions of identity, morality, and national security. This will probably be more applicable to those looking to understand support for specific party families (for example, the radical right), than anti-system parties in general, however.

My second suggestion is as follows. Throughout this thesis I have conceptualised polarisation as matter of party behaviour; that is, either in terms of the ideological positions one adopts, or in terms of the other parties that one allies with. However, another way in which voters might conceptualise party differences is in terms of social group representation.

Representation is, of course, partly about the policies one articulates and implements, but it is not only about this (Pitkin 1967). For example, it might include cheaper heuristics like the appearance and background of a party leader, or the sorts of social groups that the party chooses to include in photoshoots and campaign literature. These sort of ‘group appeals’ may provide the public with cues that allow them to use their intuitive feelings towards particular social groups to guide otherwise complicated decisions about how a particular party platform might affect the fortunes of people like themselves (Converse 1964: 38–44; Heath 2016: 1056–1059; Thau 2019: 64). They also might simply be more visible to members of the public who do not regularly follow discussions of party policy. One could also plausibly see these factors as interacting with the economy in the same manner that I have shown occurs with manifesto positions. In a crisis, when everyone’s backs are against

the wall and politics appears more zero-sum, it may become more important to have someone in government who would more naturally have your own group's interests in mind when considering a way out.

The importance of group identity and group interests, which was heavily emphasised in some of the early work on the determinants of political partisanship (Berelson, Lazard, and McPhee 1954; Butler and Stokes 1969; Campbell et al. 1960; Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1948), is making something of a comeback in recent years, after long periods of political scientists favouring rational and individualistic utility-maximising models of political preferences (see Achen and Bartels 2017 for an overview). For example, several studies have shown that the social background of politicians is important for the substantial representation and mobilisation of voters within those same groups (Evans and Tilley 2017; Heath 2013, 2016; O'Grady 2019). Others still have shown that identity congruence can actually be just as, if not more important, than issue congruence for determining the strength of alignment between voters and parties (Achen and Bartels 2017: 313). This is perhaps unsurprising, given that abstract conceptions of left and right are often too complex for many (Bauer et al. 2017), and few voters actively read the manifestos which might enable them to work out a party's ideological stance anyway (BMG Research 2017). In place of an overarching ideological frame of reference, many voters have historically just had mental images of the various parties as standing 'for' or 'against' certain concepts like 'modernity', 'the working class', or 'tradition' (Butler and Stokes 1974: 336–337).

This ties back into Lupu's (2016) theory of party brands and the social identity theory of comparative fit (Turner 1999). Individuals self-categorise into identity groups (such as

parties) not only when they think that they resemble that group's current membership, but also when they think that their group differs from others. If one's group increasingly resembles another, attachments to the group should weaken. In contrast, the more unique that group's identity, the more strongly individuals will hold on to it, given that they will be closer to its prototypical member, and further away from the prototypical member of rival groups. In this thesis, I have interpreted group identity as a function of ideology or issue position, but social group representation could be just as important. To be sure, social representation can be based on assumptions of issue congruence, but it can also have a more expressive, non-rational element. For example, Heath (2013: 190-1) argues that "*the simple presence of people from one's own social group in a position of political power might make voters feel closer to the party in question, and better represented by it*".

Could the reluctance of a mainstream party to exclusively cater to its original social base open a door for anti-system challengers in the same way that a shift in policy position has been shown to? The late 1960s representation gap in American politics, following the Democrats embrace of the Civil and Voting Rights Acts agenda, is one precedent. This shift led to an opening for George Wallace to win several states in the 1968 presidential election on a platform of defending the honour of white southerners (Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002: 140-163). The increased willingness of radical right parties to present themselves as the true defenders of the 'left behind' white, working-class following the liberal (one might say 'middle class') economic and social consensus of the major centre-left and centre-right parties in certain contemporary Europe could be another (Ford and Goodwin 2014, 2016; Gidron and Hall 2017; Rydgren 2013). Future research should attempt to see if manipulation

of the social imagery of mainstream parties – to make them appear more similar – can push voters away, and into the arms of more radical alternatives⁸⁰.

As a small contribution to this research agenda, I wanted to see if voters' perceptions of the sort of social groups that different parties stand for really can vary over time, and really do influence the amount of polarisation that those voters perceive. These are important assumptions underpinning the theories that I have described above, but what evidence can we find for them?

To explore this issue, I return to data from the British Election Study [BES], and the interviews that were held with representative samples of the national electorate between 1987 and 2017. As part of these interviews, voters were asked “*some people say that all political parties look after certain groups and are not so concerned about others. How closely do you think the [X] Party looks after the interests of... (a) middle class people ...and (b) working class people?*”. Respondents could answer: “very closely”, “fairly closely”, “not very closely”, “not at all closely”, or “don’t know”. Two of the parties that they were asked about were the Conservatives and Labour. I used ratings of the extent to which either party was concerned with the interests of the working and middle classes to create new variables which indicated the extent to which the parties are seen as being polarised in terms

⁸⁰ This was, in fact, my plan for the experimental survey described in Chapter Six. I had wished to randomise information about the SPD and the CDU-CSU to make them seem more or less working-class and bourgeoisie, respectively. However, somewhat tellingly, the sheer overwhelming homogeneity of the backgrounds of contemporary German legislators, with most having experienced university education regardless of party (Bundestag 2015), and 18% of the most recent cohort even having PhDs (Bierbach 2017), largely denied me accurate information that could be meaningful framed as giving the two parties the sort of distinct social profile they once had (Pappi 1984).

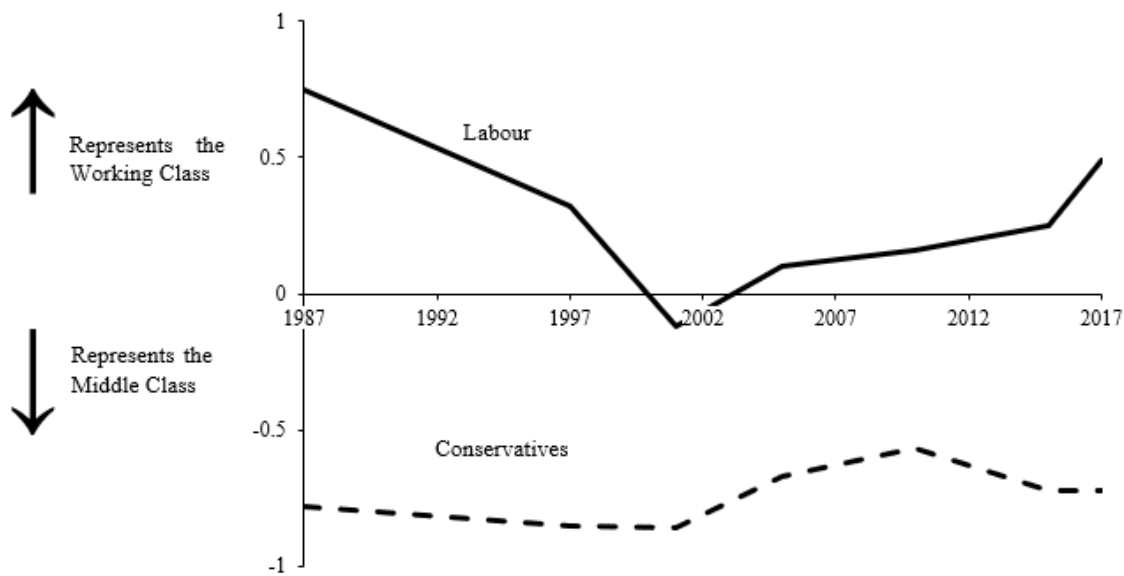
of their social group representation. In theory, this should matter to voters. Class-based issues have been historically important in understanding British political contestation, and the Conservative and Labour parties used to have strong ties to the bourgeoisie and proletariat, respectively (Butler and Stokes 1969; Evans and Tilley 2017).

This index was constructed in the following way, following the example of Evans and Tilley (2017: 131-132). After rating how closely the Labour Party “looks after the interests” of the working and then the middle class (using scales of 1-4, with higher numbers equalling more concern), the score for representation of the middle class was then deducted from the rating of how well Labour looked after the working class. This gave each respondent a rating of -2 to +2 (scores of -3 and -2 and +2 and +3 were combined, as there are relatively few observations at the extremes), where lower numbers equal relatively greater concern for the interests of the middle class, and higher numbers for the interests of the working class. The same class representation scale was then constructed from the respondent’s placements of the Conservatives.

Have ideas about group representation have changed much at all over the years. Figure 7.1 plots the average group representation score assigned to Labour and the Conservatives between 1987 and 2017⁸¹. The data look very similar to the average placements of these two parties on the left-right scale that I displayed in Chapter Five (Figure 5.3). In the 1980s, Labour was seen as much more ‘working class’ than ‘middle class’, and the Tories the reverse. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, however, there was a significant convergence,

⁸¹ Please note that this question was not asked in the 1992 edition of the BES.

Figure 7.1: Perceptions of Social Group Representation by Different Parties in Britain, 1987 – 2017



Note: The figure here shows people's perceptions of whose interests Labour and the Conservatives best represent: the working class or the middle class. BES respondents scored each party out of 4 in terms of 'how closely' they 'look after the interests of' the working class and the middle class. A score of 4 would equal 'very closely'; a score of 1 'not closely at all'. The score given to the latter was then subtracted from that given to the former. This gives a scale that runs from -3 to 3 for each party. As very few respondents have scores of +3 or -3, I combined -2 and -3 and +2 and +3 responses. A positive score, therefore, means that people believe that a party looks after the working class better than the middle class; a negative score means that people think that a party looks after the middle class better than the working class. The figure plots the average score for each party at each election 1987-2017 (bar 1992).

Source: British Election Studies 1987 – 2017

and Labour became much less strongly associated with the working class. In fact, the party was even briefly seen as predominantly middle class in 2001. Interestingly, at the end of this time series, as with the data on perceptions of Labour-Conservative ideological positions, we see a sharp reversal. In 2017 voters considered Labour as more working-class than at any point since 1987.

This finding is somewhat puzzling. A highly persuasive school of thought argues that, over the last few decades, the traditional class gap in British elections has shrunk due to Labour's move to the middle class centre-ground, and the consequent alienation of their old working class support (Evans and Tilley 2012, 2017; Heath 2013, 2016; Weakliem and Heath 1999).

Figure 7.2: Perceptions of Social Group Representation by Different Parties in Britain according to the Working- and Middle-Classes, 1987 – 2017



Note: The figure here shows people's perceptions of whose interests Labour and the Conservatives best represent: the working class or the middle class. It is a replication of Figure 7.1 (same coding procedure); however, here I have disaggregated the data according to the occupational class of the respondent. I distinguish between a clearly 'working class' segment of respondents (skilled and unskilled manual workers) and a 'middle class' segment (professional and managerial employees). The self-employed, and those in intermediary social classes (e.g. routine white-collar or service work) are excluded. Once again, a positive score indicates the respondent believes that the party looks after the interests of the working class somewhat better than those of the middle class; a negative score the opposite. The average response of occupationally working-class respondents is coloured in black; the responses of the occupationally middle class coloured in grey. The figure plots the average score for each party at each election 1987-2017 (bar 1992).

Source: British Election Studies 1987 – 2017

Logically, then, this change in perception should have seen class voting recover to its previous heights. In fact, the 2017 election produced one of the weakest class gap on record, with no sign of a major recovery for Labour among the working class (Curtis 2017).

Understanding this puzzle is easier, however, if one takes a glance at Figure 7.2, which disaggregates the above data by the social class of respondents. Here I distinguish between the average party placement of the working-class segment of respondents (skilled and unskilled manual workers) and that made by the middle-class (professional and managerial

employees)⁸². It appears that the belief that Labour had moved back to its working-class roots was almost entirely limited to the middle-class. The working-class themselves remained far more sceptical. Perhaps explaining why they did not rush back in overwhelming numbers. Interestingly, while the middle-class have always perceived the two parties as more socially polarised than the working-class, this was particularly true in 2017. Unlike the middle-classes, the working-class actually believed that the Conservatives had moved the most, and towards themselves rather than in the opposite direction. One could speculate that this was a consequence of Labour's campaign focusing more on increasing spending (particularly on subsidies for university education and a rise in NHS funding) than using the tax system to equalise incomes per se (Dorey 2017; Prosser 2018), which might appeal just as much, if not more so, to middle-class voters than less privileged social groups. How sub-populations interpret party polarisation, and whether some aspects of party poisoning matter more for certain groups than others, would itself be another important area for future research.

In any case, the data clearly show that the electorate's perceptions of the social groups that parties stand for do change over time, and do so in relative tandem with the sort of changes in the political supply-side that we might expect to influence them. For instance, Labour are generally seen as more working class when they have had more left-wing manifestos (cf. Figure 5.1 in Chapter Five). That said, do voters actually factor in these considerations in to their perceptions of party polarisation? Or are they actually entirely captured by positions about the parties on political issues that are often linked to distinct classes?

⁸² For theoretical simplicity, I exclude the self-employed and those in intermediary social classes (e.g. routine white-collar or service work).

To find out, I conducted several logistic regressions (one for each edition of the BES between 1987 and 2017) on the likelihood that a respondent believes that “*considering everything that Labour and Conservatives stand for ... there is a great difference between them*” (1), as opposed to believing that there is “*only some*” or “*not much*” difference between them (0). This was the measure of perceived polarisation that most strongly predicted anti-system voting (negatively) and strength of partisanship (positively) in Chapter Five. My main independent variable of interest is the ‘perceived class representation gap’, which is the difference between each respondents’ rating of Labour and the Conservatives on the aforementioned class representation scales. A maximum score of 4 would, for example, mean that the respondent believes that one party is much more focused on representing the middle class (scoring -2) while the other one is much more focused on the working class (scoring +2). A score of zero indicates that both parties are primarily focused on the same class, or that neither have strong class-based differences in terms of whose interests they represent.

While these two variables are exactly the same in wording and construction in every edition of the BES, some of the other independent variables in the models are inevitably slightly different in particular years. Along with the aforementioned ‘representation gap’ variable, I include two measures of how different voters believe that Labour and the Conservatives are on specific political issues. The first is the ‘tax-spend preference gap’ (should we cut taxes or increase government spending on services?); the second is the ‘libertarian-authoritarian preference gap’. As well as being independent predictors of perceived mainstream party polarisation, we might expect these variables to mediate the effect of perceived social group representation, given longstanding evidence that middle-class Britons tend to prefer less taxation and more social liberalism, while the working-class are

typically fond of both more state spending and social conservatism (Evans and Tilley 2017). The exact content of the ‘libertarian-authoritarian’ values measure changes over time. In some editions it refers to the trade-off between cutting crime and protecting liberties, at other times the trade-off is maintaining a women’s role in the home versus giving women an equal say in government in business. In the most recent two editions, it concerns whether the UK should unite with the EU fully or protect its independence. Respondents were asked to place various parties anywhere at or between these extremes on 11-point scales. The absolute gap between where respondents place Labour and the Conservatives on these spectrums was then used as the respondent’s perceived gulf between the parties on a particular issue. If the impact of the perceived class representation gap on overall perceived polarisation is entirely mediated by perceptions of the positions that parties take on issues which tend to polarise the British electorate along class lines, the former variable should not be a significant predictor after accounting for the latter.

The next two variables are all ‘valence ratings’, which I include to capture the effect of non-ideological or sociological considerations that might affect whether a respondent believes that a particular party “stands for” different outcomes than another. ‘Capacity for strong government’ is a binary variable, indicating whether a respondent believes that only one of Labour or the Conservatives is “*capable of being a strong government*” or that both (or neither) are. The party leader approval gap (named after the relevant Labour and Conservative leaders in that particular year) is the absolute difference between how favourable the respondent feels towards that figure on a scale of 1 (strongly dislike) to 11 (strongly like). The only exception is 1987 where the variable is necessarily binary, simply recording whether the respondent finds only Thatcher or Kinnock as ‘likeable’ (vs finding both or neither likeable).

The rest of the main predictor variables are all about the particular ideology, identity, and partisan leanings of the respondent. It is important to include such variables because existing research has shown that respondents are more likely to perceive party polarisation when they themselves feel close to a particular party, and hold strong opinions on matters of political contestation (Busch 2016; Granberg and Brown 1992). The ‘radicalism’ variables are the absolute differences between where the respondent places themselves at on each of the aforementioned 11-point policy scales (tax-spend and libertarian-authoritarian) and 5, the central point on a 0 to 10 spectrum. Higher values, therefore, indicate how radical (or ‘non-centrist’) a respondent is on a particular issue. I also controlled for how far away the respondent believes that Labour or the Conservatives (whichever is closer) are to their own ideal point on these policy scales. The larger this value is, the further any mainstream party is from that voter’s own position⁸³. ‘WC/MC identity’ is a binary variable recording whether a respondent “*ever thinks of themselves as belonging to a particular class*”, whether working or middle. This is an important control because we would not necessarily expect perceived social group representation to matter for respondents’ perceptions of party polarisation unless they themselves are in the habit of viewing politics through the prism of class interests. Finally, ‘Lab-Con Partisan’ is another dummy variable designed to capture underlying partisan leanings. It is coded as 1 if a respondent answers ‘yes’ and either Labour or the Conservatives when asked if “*generally speaking, do you think of yourself as Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat or what?*”.

Finally, every model contains a multitude of control variables which, due to limitations of space, are not presented in the figures. Demographic controls include the respondent’s age

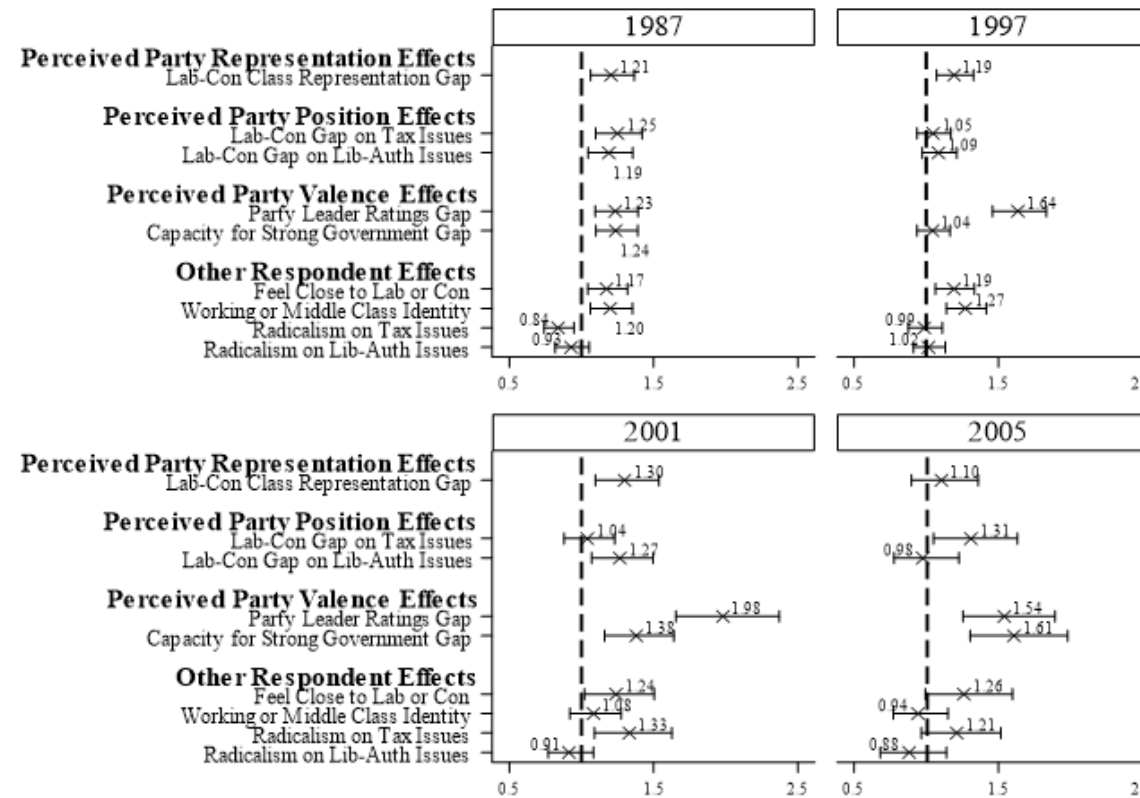
⁸³ As these variables are not significant in the majority of the models, I do not include their coefficients in the figure below.

(in years), gender, the age at which they left education (pre-16, 16-18, or post-19), their occupational social class (professional and managerial; routine non-manual and service; self-employed; skilled working class and foreman; or semi- and unskilled working class), whether they currently belonged to a trade union or not, their religion (Church of England/Scotland; Catholic; other Christian; non-Christian religion; none); and their housing tenure (owner-occupier; social renter; private renter).

More information on the construction procedure for all of these variables (including the original BES codes and question wordings), in addition to descriptive statistics for each by BES wave, can be found in Table G.1 in Appendix G. Here I present the results as odds ratios, which indicate the change in the likelihood of a respondent believing that there is a great difference between Labour and the Conservatives for a one-standard deviation increase in each variable. The raw coefficients themselves are presented in Table K.1 – K.7 of Appendix K.

Social group representation, independent of ideological position, appears to have a big effect on how polarised voters view the major parties in Britain as being. In 5/7 election years, believing that the parties differ in terms of the social groups they most effectively represent increases the odds that one sees Labour and the Conservatives as polarised. This ‘effect’ ranges from a 9% increase in the odds in 2015, to 39% increase in the odds in 2001. Interestingly, in several models, these effects are actually larger than those of perceived differences ‘on the issues’ that are frequently cited as driving class-related divisions in British politics (the perceived Labour-Conservative gaps on tax or social issues). Elsewhere, respondents are more likely to perceive a great difference between what the parties stand for

Figure 7.3: Changes in the Odds of Believing that there is “Great Difference” in what Labour and the Conservatives Stand For

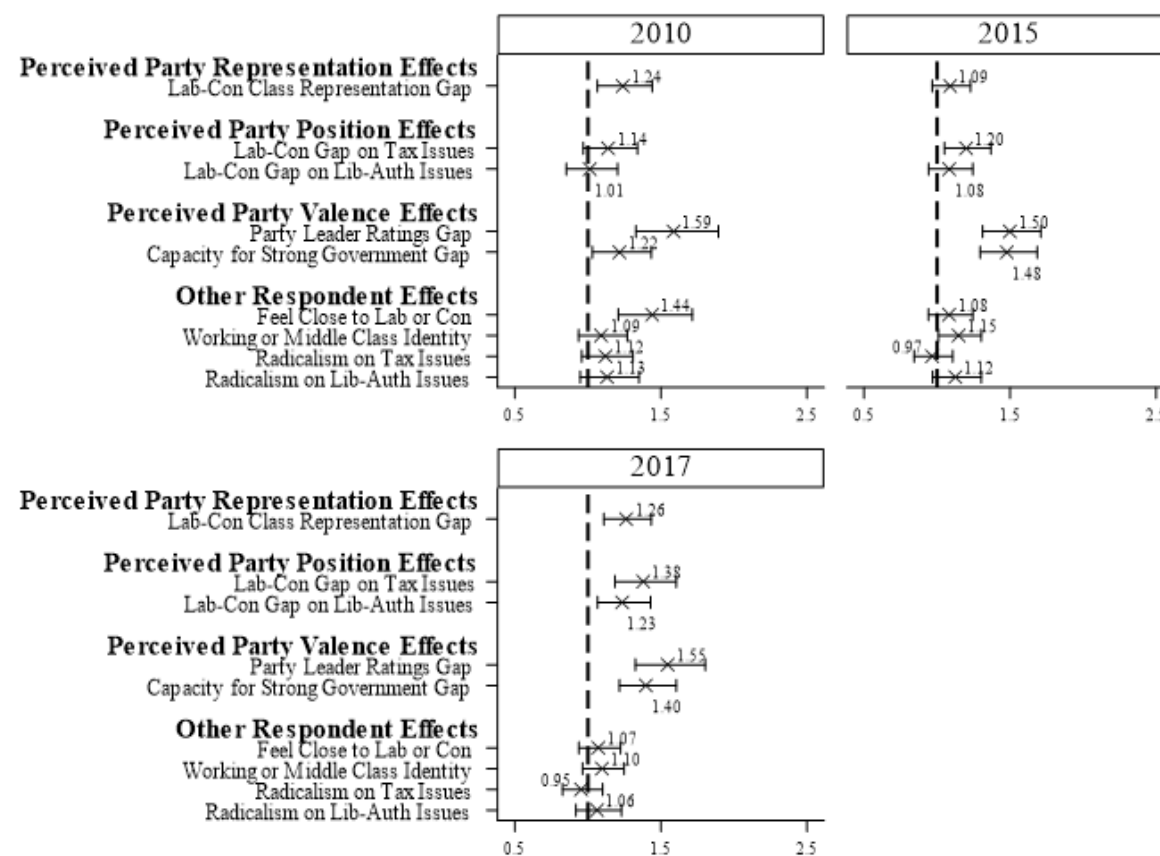


Note: The data in Figure 7.3 are derived from seven individual logistic regression analyses (one for each election year / British Election Study) which modelled the likelihood of belief that, “considering everything that Labour and Conservatives stand for ... there is a great difference between them” (1) vs the belief that there is “only some” or “not much” difference between them (0). The original regression tables, presented in terms of changes in the logged odds for a one-unit change in each independent variable, can be found in Table K.1-K.7 (Model F for each) of Appendix K. Here, however, the coefficients have been standardised so that each indicates the impact of a one-standard deviation increase in that variable on the odds of belief in Labour-Conservative polarisation. I also present 95% confidence intervals for each estimate. The original wording of each BES variable used to construct the variables in this model can be found in Table G.2 of Appendix G. Note that ‘Lib-Auth issues’ refer to the ‘reduce crime vs protect civil liberties vs protect rights of the accused’ scale for the 1987, 2001, 2005, and 2010 studies; ‘women’s role is in the home vs a women should have equal say in business and government’ role in the 1997 edition and ‘protect the UK’s independence vs unite fully with the EU’ scale for 2015 and 2017. Data were weighted to be representative of the national electorate in any given year.

Control Variables: Demographic controls include respondent *age*, *gender*, age leaving *education*, *occupational class*, *trade union membership*, *religion*, and *housing tenure*. *Tax/Lib-Auth distance controls* are two variables recording the absolute distance between the respondent’s own position on the 11-point tax v spend and relevant Lib-Auth scale for that study, and where they perceive Labour or the Conservatives to be on the same scale (whichever is nearest).

Source: British Election Studies 1987-2017

Figure 7.3 Cont'd: Changes in the Odds of Believing that there is “Great Difference” in what Labour and the Conservatives Stand For



Note: Figure 7.3, continued.

Source: British Election Studies 1987 – 2017

if they see one party as being more capable than the other, or prefer one of the party leaders over the other (though this factor could well be endogenous to perceptions of which class or ideological tendency the leaders come from). The other variables are less consistent, but there is some evidence to suggest that those who feel close to either Labour or Conservatives are more likely to emphasise their differences (as we would expect).

Therefore, as well as investigating the impact of mainstream depolarisation further (and the ways in which this interacts with the health of the economy), we should also pay attention to what factors cause these perceptions in the first place. As I have shown here, it may be that the polarisation of social group representation counts just as much, if not more than polarisation in ideological position. Here I have defined social group representation as the divide between representing the working- and middle-classes (as befits the British political context), but in other countries, such as Germany, the extent to which one party is believed to focus on speaking for devout Catholics and the other to religious minorities or to feminists and homosexuals may more relevant (Pappi 1984). Social group based appeals are potentially not captured by party positions on ‘the issues’, and deserve greater consideration in future discussion of party polarisation (Thau 2019).

A final, albeit necessarily more speculative, suggestion for future research is that effort should be made to build an analytical framework capable of explaining and predicting the implications of an anti-system breakthrough for the future development of party systems in advanced democracies. Given that it is only fairly recently that anti-system parties have been electorally strong enough to seriously challenge the dominance of the historic parties of government, it has been much rarer to study the consequences of radical party success in

Europe than its causes (see Kaltwasser and Taggart 2016 for a notable exception). However, it may be possible to draw some conclusions from a few notable recent examples of ‘populists in government’ in Austria and Greece (or, conversely, their longstanding exclusion from government in Belgium) as well as, once again, the political history of Latin America, where the cycle of crisis, convergence and reaction is further advanced. To borrow the terms used by Sobolewska and Ford (2020: 311-321) to describe the potential future of the British party system following the country’s exit from the European Union, I believe that the political trajectory of a mature democracy following mainstream party convergence, economic crisis, and an anti-system breakthrough could take one of three broad forms: fragmentation, replacement, or restoration.

‘*Fragmentation*’ would mean that the party system undergoes a permanent expansion and that the anti-system party becomes an established and significant presence on the electoral map for several electoral cycles or more⁸⁴. However, whether this amounts to a meaningful change in the patterns of government formation and alteration (as true party system change is traditionally understood as entailing, e.g. Mair 2006; Sartori 1976) is highly dependent upon how both mainstream parties and anti-system politicians themselves choose to act. We can distinguish between two types of strategies that either actor may choose to pursue, each with different consequences: a strategy of distance and a strategy of integration.

⁸⁴ Determining what proportion of votes a new party would need to regularly claim to be classified as ‘established’ is, of course, highly arbitrary and ultimately dependent upon how the electoral system transforms popular support into legislative representation. That said, a stable support base of around 10% of the electorate (or, at least, the electorate in the seats contested by a regionally-bounded anti-system party) would seem a plausible rule-of-thumb.

A strategy of distance most often means that the mainstream parties declare a ‘cordon sanitaire’, and refuse to cooperate or share platforms with a stigmatised anti-system rival (though it is also plausible to imagine an anti-system party itself refusing any olive branch offered to it by a ‘tainted’ mainstream cabal). It is debatable how achievable the ‘cordon sanitaire’ strategy is in the long-run. Pauwels (2011) initially credited the approach as helping to contribute to the electoral stagnation of the far-right Flemish Interest party in Belgium. The argument is that upholding a strong social stigma against displays of support for an anti-system party and downplaying the possibility of one ever gaining access to the levers of policy influence can encourage more ‘soft-line’ or instrumentally-oriented voters to abandon this party in favour of a more mainstream alternative. That said, the recent electoral resurgence of Flemish Interest, which became the second largest party in the country following the 2019 Federal Elections despite the persistence of the cordon sanitaire (Blenkinsop 2019), has undermined the empirical validity of this thesis. Furthermore, the policy may simply be unworkable in the long-run if the anti-system presence becomes too sizeable and simply forces the formation of inefficient, sclerotic and unpopular governing alliances of major parties of the centre-left and -right (Mudde 2019: 177–179). The simultaneous unwillingness of the SPD and CDU-CSU to work with the Left Party of the AfD, respectively, but inability to form numerically-sufficient coalitions with other smaller parties on ‘their’ side of the left-right divide, appears to have been a primary factor in the instalment of a series of so-called ‘grand coalitions’ in Germany, for instance. These strategies may ultimately be self-defeating if, as seems to be the case in Germany (Gross and Stalinski 2017), the coming together of the larger mainstream parties simply underlines the message of anti-system opposition that establishment actors are ‘all the same’.

The alternative to ostracization would be the integration of anti-system parties within the pre-existing patterns of government rotation. This would most likely entail the negotiated entry of far right parties into a centre-right led cabinet, or the far left or Greens into a government dominated by an established social democratic party, for instance. Of course, in formal terms, under my classificatory schema (Figure 1.1) an anti-system party that supported a mainstream party-led government would simply cease to be an anti-system party at all. It would, at the very least, have grave difficulty continuing to exploit the “*clean hands*” and the “*aura of novelty*” (Barr 2009: 44; Hobolt and Tilley 2016: 974) that may have contributed to its initial popularity. That said, the consequences for public policy, the types of coalition governments formed, and the long-term electoral strategy and profile of the anti-system party itself, can vary dramatically. In some cases, as with the Italian Communist Party and Dutch Freedom Party’s dalliances with mainstream parties in the late 1970s and early 2000s, respectively, the ‘integration’ can be very short-lived and the anti-system party can swiftly undergo ‘radical disembedding’ in which it returns to instigating populist-style attacks on its former partner, emphasising radical manifesto promises, and refusing to repeat the experience in future (Zulianello 2018: 665-666). In other cases, as with the Norwegian Progress Party or German Green Party since the 1990s, the rapprochement with the moderate centre can be more long-lasting and the former radical can take up a permanent position within the roster of loyal potential partners than an established party might form governments with (Bjerkem 2016; Poguntke 2002).

Focusing specifically on the decision of the radical left to participate in mainstream governing coalitions, Bale and Dunphy (2011) argue that these parties recognise the implied trade-off between a say over policy, the prestige of gaining office, and the threat to votes (in the form of a reputation-shredding ‘incumbency penalty’ at the next election) that such a

choice entails. In terms of moving the party towards seeking or accepting a centre-left party's offer of an alliance, they emphasise the importance of previous coalitions at the subnational level, the positive views of influential allied trade union leaders, cordial personal relationships between the leaders of the two parties, and the positive experience of 'sister parties' in other countries with close geographic and linguistic links in extracting policy concessions from the larger party. That said, as the contrasting trajectories of the Dutch Freedom and the Norwegian Progress parties (both formerly radical right anti-system parties who chose to become, respectively, more and less aligned with centre parties following initial confidence and supply agreements) demonstrates, it is one thing to make a temporary and ultimately half-hearted attempt to place yourself within the system of government, quite another to fully commit to normalising your policy, rhetoric, and self-placement vis-à-vis mainstream parties for the long-term. Future research should clarify the factors which might encourage all types of anti-system party to 'come in from the cold' wholesale and make their peace with established institutions, procedures, and parties.

Conversely, '*replacement*' would mean that an anti-system party becomes so dominant that it more-or-less permanently displaces one or more of the older mainstream parties as a perennial candidate for leadership of government or, at the very least, pre-eminence among the plethora of political actors making up that country's 'left' or 'right-wing' bloc. There are two main possibilities for how 'replacement' actually plays out. The anti-system party can displace the old moderate party, but effectively dilute its own radicalness in the process (meaning that the ultimate change to the party system and the institutions and norms of the polity itself are relatively minimal). Or, alternatively, the anti-system party can gain dominance over the old parties and, exploiting its new mandate and legislative strength, the

party can now reshape the country's institutions and policy settlement in its own image. We might term these cases 'replacement and acquiescence' and 'replacement and moderation'.

An example of the former is certainly seen in the development of Greek party politics during the previous decade. Here, following the financial crisis, and the convergence of the centre-left PASOK with its longstanding centre-right rival New Democracy, the far left SYRIZA party was catapulted into power. However, once in power, SYRIZA ultimately governed in a far more pragmatic manner than expected. For example, despite calling a referendum on the issue and campaigning for the successful 'no' vote, the party reneged on its past intransigence and signed a bailout programme with several other EU states that mandated the country to cut back its public sector (among other concessions) in return for remaining in the Eurozone and receiving further financial support (Milios 2016). The decision to support the bailout package led to a defection from SYRIZA hardliners, meaning that the party's more moderate leader, Alexis Tsipras, ironically, would have to rely on the parliamentary support of PASOK and New Democracy to get the legislation through parliament (Kouvelakis 2015; Milios 2016; Yardley 2015). However, despite this policy moderation and the loss of power to New Democracy in the 2019 general election, SYRIZA seemed to have stabilised their position as the second largest party in the country and (with no sign of any meaningful recovery from PASOK), as of 2020, Greek politics appears to have returned to its pre-financial crisis two-party format, albeit with a different party representing the centre-left pole than before (Politico 2020)⁸⁵.

⁸⁵ It might be argued that 'replacement' is less likely in countries with a majoritarian electoral system, where fear of a 'wasted vote' could give an artificial boost to the longevity of established parties. That said, a variant on this path can be seen in the transformation of Canadian politics in the 1990s and early 2000s. Here the established Progressive Conservative party had its popularity usurped by the insurgent populist 'Reform Party'

Full-on ‘replacement and transformation’ has not really been seen in Europe since the social democratic parties originally began to eclipse more moderate liberal parties in the early twentieth century (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Sassoon 1996); however, the Latin American political experience does offer a cautionary tale of what might be possible. Here figures such as Hugo Chávez, Evo Morales, and Rafael Correa not only eclipsed longstanding parties of the left and right electorally, but also managed to leverage their significant levels of support to engage in wide-ranging constitutional reform to solidify their dominance in their political systems and prevent the opposition from being able to challenge, check, and reverse their policy initiatives, with negative consequences with democratic norms and institutions (Blokkeer 2018; de la Torre 2017; Levitsky and Loxton 2013; Mudde and Kaltwasser 2012; Roberts 2012; Ruth 2018)⁸⁶.

It is tempting to argue that such developments would simply be less likely to occur in the more longstanding parliamentary democracies of western Europe, Australia, New Zealand,

and its successor, the Canadian Alliance (Laycock 1994; Laycock and Weldon 2017). However, due to the vagaries of single-member district plurality electoral systems, having two active centre-right parties simply split the right-wing vote, and enabled a sustained period of Liberal Party dominance. Eventually, the two parties merged to form the new Conservative Party (which was largely shorn of Reform’s populist proclivities for direct democracy and institutional change) to ‘unite the right’ (Bélanger and Godbout 2010; Devaney 2013). Therefore, the distinct incentives given to the electorate and political elites by different institutional configurations must be appreciated when considering the likelihood of long-term changes to the party system of a given country.

⁸⁶ Recent political developments in Hungary and Poland, where constitutional reforms have undermined the power of the judiciary, civil society groups, and free media, provide other examples of the deleterious effects that populist anti-system parties can have on democratic institutions in less established democracies (Bogaards 2018). These events should remind us that institutional structures are not exogenous to the strength of anti-system actors, particularly given that the undeserved power of unelected officials often forms a key grievance in the populist worldview that so many of these parties trade off (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017).

and Canada. Faith that “*it couldn’t happen here*” usually rests on four premises. Firstly, democratic norms and values are more widely institutionalised in such countries in comparison to younger democracies in Latin America (Almond and Verba 1963; Doyle 2011). Second, the residual affective ties of partisanship might be expected to limit the size of the electorate potentially amenable to anti-system appeals (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Thirdly, the threshold for populist, anti-system candidates is much higher in parliamentary systems which lack the degree of personalisation and centralisation provided by a nationwide, direct election of executive (Linz 1990; Ruth 2018). Fourthly, countries in the Anglosphere and western Europe are subject to greater levels of ‘linkage and leverage’ with other actors that wish to promote democratic norms globally (namely the European Union and the United States). These actors might be expected to sanction and intervene in any country engaging in democratic backsliding, thus raising the cost of any transition into electoral authoritarianism for a would-be anti-system constitutional ‘reformer’ (Levitsky and Way 2002)⁸⁷.

That said, there are, perhaps, some reasons to think such confidence misplaced. Firstly, recent polling reveals that basic trust in government is actually comparable or lower in several west European countries – notably Greece, Italy, and Spain – than it is in younger countries such as Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico (OECD 2020b). Secondly, as has been mentioned repeatedly in this thesis, the strength of longstanding partisan ties in post-industrial democracies is waning (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; Dassonneville, Hooghe, and Vanhoutte 2012; Fieldhouse et al. 2020: 51–55; Mair 2013: 35), and electoral behaviour in

⁸⁷ Indeed, the financial pressure that other European leaders were able to bring to bear on the Greek government appears to have been crucial in the eventual moderation of SYRIZA, as mentioned in the previous example.

general is becoming a lot more volatile (Bischoff 2013; Dassonneville 2015; Drummond 2006; Fieldhouse et al. 2000: 9-14; Mair 2013: 33). In such an environment, rapid swings of public support to new ‘untested’ political novices are no longer as difficult to imagine as they once were. Finally, the willingness and ability of more powerful democratic states and organisations to intervene to protect open democratic competition are more open to question in 2020 than they were in previous decades. The government of the United States, which has of course been going through its own ‘populist moment’ in recent years (de la Torre 2017; Norris and Inglehart 2019), has proposed cutting financial assistance to organisations which have historically promoted the spread of democratic values and institutions abroad (Wolffe 2020); the European Union has so-far largely proved ineffective in the face of the curbing of judicial independence and civil society autonomy in member states such as Hungary and Poland (Fleming, Peel, and Hopkins 2020). Therefore, future prognoses on the implications of anti-system surges for Europe’s present liberal democratic institutionalist settlement should be made cautiously, and future research should be conducted to see just how deeply embedded these norms and procedures remain among the anti-system party electorate, and wider society more broadly.

Finally, ‘*restoration*’ would mean that the anti-system breakthrough is short-lived and that the old-guard of mainstream parties regain their popularity within one or two electoral cycles. Per my crisis and convergence theory, this is most likely to happen when economic growth improves or the old-guard of centre-left and centre-right parties repolarise. That is, ‘the system’ is more likely to be sustained either when you can credibly convince the electorate it can work for them, or when you can credibly give them greater ability to make moderate adjustments to the functioning of the system. However, there is a third path to ‘restoration’, which might be termed a ‘qualified reform’ of ‘the system’ itself, to meet the

demands of the anti-system electorate halfway. This would mean taking a major grievance towards the existing institutions of a country that anti-system parties have seized upon, and providing a measure of reform to undercut the broader popularity of radical politicians. The obvious example of this is the UK Conservative Party's adoption of 'Brexit' following the 2016 referendum on EU membership, which more or less fatally wounded the appeal of the previously insurgent United Kingdom Independence Party [UKIP] (Dennison 2018; Fieldhouse et al. 2020; Sobolewska and Ford 2020)⁸⁸.

That said, it is difficult to know how easy it is to generalise from the British example. Firstly, the single-member district plurality electoral system used in that country may have provided an additional incentive for UKIP supporters to 'jump ship' as soon as the Conservatives altered their policy offer, given that the fear of splitting the Eurosceptic vote (and letting in the less committed Labour Party) by continuing to vote for a smaller party is a much more salient concern than under proportional systems. Secondly, UKIP were somewhat unusual among the other right-wing populist parties that gained popularity in Europe during the early 21st century in that they were intimately tied up (even down to their name) with a single constitutional issue. It is more difficult to imagine a similar single-policy 'olive branch' that could be offered by mainstream conservative parties in the Netherlands and Austria to supporters of the Freedom parties of those countries. Thirdly, even if one can imagine an important policy concession that could be granted, the electorate is not always as grateful as one might have hoped. Disciples of British politics will also remember that the Labour government's instigation of devolution in the late 1990s was supposed to "*kill Scottish nationalism stone dead*", but in reality it merely offered a new platform for the SNP to

⁸⁸ Although, as detailed in Chapter Five, the simultaneous repolarisation of Labour and the Conservatives along classic economic left-right lines also played a huge role here.

articulate its policies and promote itself to a wider audience than ever before (Macnab 2019). Therefore, while it would be interesting to see future research that tries to identify single political offers that could tame broader anti-system sentiment, it is worth remembering that parties and voters do not always react to changing political settlements in the way that one expects.

A confident prediction of the future course and consequences of anti-system support and sentiment in western Europe and the Anglosphere – whether we will see fragmentation, replacement, or restoration – would surely require an astrologist rather than a political scientist. That said, the previous discussion has outlined some factors that should prove relatively important for determining the ‘next stage’ in developments – namely, the office, policy, and vote seeking motivations of the parties themselves, the electoral system currently in operation, the continued state of the economy, the embeddedness of liberal democratic values in the wider population, and the willingness of external actors to intervene whenever those values and institutions are called into question. Future projects should attempt to rank the relative importance of these factors for determining the effects that an anti-system breakthrough can have on the policies and party systems of mature democracies.

Normative Implications of the Thesis

Finally, considering the ‘real world’ or ‘normative’ implications of my findings, perhaps we should reconsider the relationship between political polarisation and the health of a democracy⁸⁹. Polarisation is generally problematised in the literature on democratic

⁸⁹ My evidence also casts doubt on the conventional wisdom that the key to electoral success always lies in the political centre (cf. Downs 1957 and Ezrow 2005). Multiple parties attempting this could spark an electoral

consolidation and functioning. In the United States, where unlike many other Western democracies the major parties are widely held to have become *more* distinct in the past few decades (Lee 2015: 263–67), polarisation is blamed for declines in political civility (Jamieson and Falk 2000), legislative productivity (Binder 2003; Jones 2001; McCoy, Rahman, and Somer 2018; McCoy and Somer 2019), and trust in government (King 1997; Uslaner 2015). In developing democracies, the effects can be even more severe. Sartori (1976: 173–92) links excessive ideological divides to the destabilisation and collapse of the Weimar and French Fourth Republics, as well as Chilean democracy in the 1970s. McCoy, Rahman, and Somer (2018) make similar claims about the sharp division of society into mutually distrustful ‘us v them’ camps leading to an increased willingness to sanction the erosion of liberal norms in contemporary Hungary and Poland. In contrast, the benefit of compromise, consensus, and bargaining has been linked to a variety of other positive political outcomes more broadly (Lijphart 2012).

However, this thesis suggests that a certain healthy distance between mainstream parties may be necessary to stave off an anti-system challenge. Establishment party convergence, after a point, may actually be penalised by an alienated electorate (particularly if it corresponds with poor economic conditions). Meaningful differences between major parties are linked to the quality of political representation (Dalton 2008), and their dilution could lead to an effective ‘hollowing out’ of democracy (Mair 2013). In this sense the anti-system backlash

backlash, particularly during an economic downturn. Interestingly the two most famous proponents of ‘triangulation’ and the ‘third way’ – Bill Clinton’s ‘New Democrats’ and Tony Blair’s ‘New Labour’ – operated against the backdrop of an exceptional mid-1990s economic boom which generated very different political opportunities to those facing parties today. However, without analysing individual mainstream party vote shares (and cases of asymmetric centrism in which one party moves to the centre, but another remains on a flank), this paper cannot provide a definitive answer to this question.

may be, as has been said about the rise of western populism in general, an “*illiberal democratic response to undemocratic liberalism*” (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2018). Perhaps radical support functions like a thermostat (Wlezien 1995), providing a reminder to political elites voters value a variety of political choice⁹⁰.

To be sure, government has the responsibility to maintain a good standard of services for its people – what Scharpf (1997) refers to as ‘output democracy’ – but the procedures that allow meaningful contestation and representation of the various wishes and hopes of the citizens themselves, so-called ‘input democracy’, are also important. This was recognised by the pioneers of the discipline of political science. The famed ‘responsible party model’ proposed by the American Political Science Association (1950: 14) argued that if the two parties do not develop alternative programs that can be executed, “*the voter's frustration and the mounting ambiguities of national policy might set in motion more extreme tendencies to the political left and the political right*”. Elections must be meaningful and offer clear policy alternatives, particularly, as this thesis has shown, during times of great economic hardship when desire for a ‘fresh start’ or change of course can be expected to rise amongst the electorate. While there are some recent articles that have discussed the positive implications of more rigid ideological competition – for instance, because it energises the electorate and stimulates competition and turnout (Abramowitz and Saunders 2008; Hetherington 2001; Roth 2018; Wessels and Schmitt 2008) – these tend to be significantly outnumbered by those bemoaning its more baneful effects.

⁹⁰ Roth (2018: 158) described the “*ability to choose*” as a “*gratifying experience*” in and of itself, though noted that this part of the electorate’s psyche was thus far understudied.

How can these two perspectives be reconciled? Future work should perhaps consider the possibility of a non-linear relationship between polarisation and democratic functioning, and the existence of a ‘sweet point’ at which voters’ hopes and frustrations can be channelled through the political mainstream without recourse to defection to anti-system candidates. For example, maybe a ‘bounded polarisation’ between parties that have accepted the constitutional rules of the game and do not seek to denigrate the moral character of their opponents could be a positive. For example, Mainwaring's (2016: 698) vision of “*sharp programmatic differences combined with steadfast normative commitments to democracy*” (and, presumably, a common understanding of the institutions democracy entails). These boundaries could stop vigorous political contestation devolving into what American scholars have increasingly called ‘negative’, ‘affective’ or ‘pernicious’ partisanship, whereby growing numbers of citizens increasingly dislike, refuse to socialise with, and fail to work productively with supporters of a rival party (Abramowitz and Webster 2016, 2018; Iyengar et al. 2019; McCoy and Somer 2019).

Alternatively, it could be that there are moderating variables that determine whether or not polarisation enhances democracy or corrodes it. For example, it could be that polarisation is so harmful for the functioning of American politics – with its frequent gridlock and shutdowns – because of the large number of institutional veto players in that system (Tsebelis 2002). Perhaps the danger is less severe in parliamentary democracies, where more polarisation may actually prove helpful in encouraging scrutiny of the incumbents, without risking the worst forms of institutional paralysis that the world’s wealthiest presidential democracy has faced recurrently in the past few decades. Additionally, Sartori (1976: 162-3) and Sani and Sartori (1983) have also made the claim that polarisation is more harmful when it is combined with legislative fragmentation, as it reduces the likelihood that a

relatively cohesive governing majority can be established. That said, the implications of the results that I have presented here suggest that this might not be so much of an issue as polarisation may actually cause a contraction of the drift to multipartism (as in the UK between 2015 and 2017). Future research should attempt to spell out exactly what the interplay is between party polarisation and these potential moderators.

The contribution of this thesis – that widespread radical party success requires a combination of both economic hardship and mainstream party depolarisation – is an important one. I hope that my contribution to the anti-system party literature helps to stimulate further scrutiny of my hypotheses, as well as a discussion of the aforementioned normative considerations that could be drawn from them.

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Supplementary Material

Appendix A: Categorisation of Parties by Country

Below is a list of the parties included in the analysis for this dissertation. Parties are listed by country, and their names are given in English⁹¹. As discussed in Chapter One, parties were classified according to their compatibility with the following criteria at the time of a given election:

Mainstream Parties

- Systemic Integration: The party has served in government or made alliances with other mainstream parties (i.e. confidence-and-supply arrangements or electoral pacts).
- +
- Mainstream Ideology: The party adopts conventional policy- and anti-incumbent-based rhetoric and campaigns. It accepts the basic institutions, rules, norms, boundaries, and values of its political community. It does not fundamentally call into question the legitimacy of other political actors who do likewise.

Complementary Parties

- Absence of Systemic Integration. The party has not served in government or made alliances with other mainstream parties. Or it has clearly distanced itself from part experiments with integration through ‘radical disembedding’ (see below).
- +
- Mainstream Ideology

System-Critical Parties

- Systemic Integration
- +
- Radical Ideology: The party fundamentally disputes the basic institutions, rules, norms, boundaries, and values of their political community; or else calls into question the legitimacy of the mainstream parties that do.

Anti-System Parties

- Absence of Systemic Integration
- +

⁹¹ An election-by-election party classification has been omitted to conserve space; however, this is available from the author on request.

- Radical Ideology

There are certain instances of a previously integrated party reneging on their past cooperation and deliberately undertaken a return to the margin of the party system. Zulianello describes this process as ‘**radical disembedding**’ (Zulianello 2018: 665-666). The actions of the Freedom Party of Austria, following the departure of the (by then) comparatively more conciliatory Jörg Haider and other ‘moderates’ in 2005 are held to be exemplary (pp.13-14). I therefore understand disembedding to constitute rejecting further alliances with mainstream political parties and reinstating populist-style attacks against previous coalition partners.

To assist classification, I consulted texts giving information about the nature and behaviour of particular minor parties and party families. In addition to the reviews of specific elections provided by the journal *Electoral Studies*, these sources included Abedi (2004); Arzheimer (2009); Arzheimer and Carter (2006); Betz (1994); Bull and Heywood (1994); Carter (2005); Fagerholm (2017); Gomez, Morales, and Ramiro (2016); Harmel and Robertson (1985); Hino (2012); Hudson (2012); Ignazi (2003); Kitschelt and McGann (1995); Kitschelt (1988); March (2011); Mudde (2007, 2016); Müller-Rommel and Poguntke (2002); Norris (2005); O’Neill (1996); Powell (1986); Richardson and Rootes (1995); Rooduijn and Akkerman (2017); Sassoon (1996); Schedler (1996); Sorens (2005); Taggart (1996); Winter and Tursan (1998). Country/region-specific chapters from *The Oxford Handbook of Populism* (Kaltwasser et al. 2017) were also consulted for information about the party systems of non-European countries, which are largely omitted from the previous studies.

Table 1: Party Classification by Country

Country	Mainstream Parties	Complementary Parties	System-Critical Parties	Anti-System Parties
Australia (1951 – 2016)	Australian Labor Party	Animal Justice Party	NA	Australia First
	Green Party of Australia (2013- <i>Present</i>)	Australia Party		Citizens' Electoral Council
	Liberal-Country Coalition	Australian Christians		Communist Party of Australia
		Australian Democrats		Confederate Action Party
		Australians Against Further Immigration		Democratic Socialist Party
		Call to Australia		Green Party of Australia (1990 – 2007)
		Christian Democratic Party		Katter's Australia Party
		Democratic Labor Party		Liberal Democratic Party
		Family First		Natural Law Party
		Green Party of Australia (2010)		One Nation Party
		Independents		Progress Party
		Liberal Movement		Rise Up Australia!
		Liberal Reform Party		Socialist Alliance
		Palmer United		Socialist Workers Party
		Sex Party		
		Unity Party		
		Xenophon Team		

Country	Mainstream Parties	Complementary Parties	System-Critical Parties	Anti-System Parties
Austria (1953 – 2013)	Austrian People's Party Freedom Party of Austria (1971 - 1983) Liberal Forum (2008) Socialist Party of Austria / Social Democratic Party of Austria	Alternative Greens (2002 - <i>Present</i>) Christian Party of Austria Citizens' Forum Austria Eurofederalists Independents Liberal Forum (1994 – 2006) NEOS – New Liberals United Greens	Alliance for the Future of Austria Freedom Party of Austria (1959 – 1970; 1986; 2002)	Alternative List Austria / Alternative Greens (1983 – 1999) Citizens Actions Group Communist Party of Austria Democratic Progressive Party Dr Martin's List Electoral Party of Independents / Freedom Party of Austria (1956; 1990 – 1999; 2006 - <i>Present</i>) National Democratic Party Pirate Party of Austria Save Austria Citizens' Initiative Team Stronach

Country	Mainstream Parties	Complementary Parties	System-Critical Parties	Anti-System Parties
Belgium – Flanders (1950 – 2014)	Belgian Socialist Party / Socialist Party / Socialist Party Differently Christian Social Party / Flemish Christian People's Party Democratic Front of the Francophones / Francophone Democratic Federalists <i>(1978 - Present)</i> AGALEV / Groen <i>(2003 – Present)</i> Liberal Party / Party for Freedom and Progress / Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats People's Union <i>(1978 – 2001)</i> Red Lions Walloon Rally <i>(1978 – 1985)</i>	Christian Social Rally of Liberty Democratic Front of the Francophones <i>(1965 – 1977)</i> AGALEV <i>(1995 – 1999)</i> Independents Liberal Appeal National Rally Vivant	New Flemish Alliance <i>(2007 – Present)</i>	All Power to the Workers / Union for the Respect of Workers Christian Flemish People's Union / People's Union <i>(1954 – 1977)</i> Communist Party of Belgium Dedecker List Ecology Party / AGALEV <i>(1977 – 1991)</i> Flemish Block New Flemish Alliance <i>(2003)</i> Pirate Party RESIST ROSSEM Walloon Front / Walloon Rally <i>(1965 – 1977; 1985 - Present)</i> Women's Movement Worker's Party of Belgium

Country	Mainstream Parties	Complementary Parties	System-Critical Parties	Anti-System Parties
Belgium – Wallonia (1950 – 2014)	Christian Social Party / Humanist Democratic Centre Democratic Front of the Francophones / Francophone Democratic Federalists (1978 - <i>Present</i>) Ecolo (2003 - <i>Present</i>) Liberal Party / Party for Freedom and Progress / Liberal Reformist Party / Reformist Movement Socialist Party of Wallonia Walloon Rally (1978 – 1985)	Democratic Front of the Francophones (1965 – 1977) Ecolo (1995 – 1999) German-Speakers Party Independents UDP Vivant	NA	Act All Power to the Workers / Union for the Respect of Workers Belgians, Rise Up! Communist Party of Belgium Ecology Party / Ecolo (1977 – 1991) Flemish Block Left Struggle National Front New Belgian Front People’s Party Rally Wallonia for France Walloon Front / Walloon Rally (1965 – 1977; 1985 - <i>Present</i>) Women’s Movement Worker’s Party of Belgium

Country	Mainstream Parties	Complementary Parties	System-Critical Parties	Anti-System Parties
Canada (1953 – 2015)	Conservative Party of Canada Liberal Party of Canada New Democratic Party (1974 – <i>Present</i>) Progressive Conservative Party of Canada	Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (1957-1958) Green Party of Canada (2004 - <i>Present</i>) Independents New Democratic Party (1962 – 1972)	NA	Bloc Québécois Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (1953) Green Party of Canada (1984 - 2000) Marxist-Leninist Party Natural Law Party Reform Party of Canada / Canadian Reform Alliance Social Credit Party of Canada

Country	Mainstream Parties	Complementary Parties	System-Critical Parties	Anti-System Parties
Denmark (1953 – 2015)	Centre Democrats (1987 – <i>Present</i>)	Centre Democrats (1973 – 1984)	Danish People's Party (2005 - <i>Present</i>)	The Alternative
	Christian People's Party (1987 - <i>Present</i>)	Christian People's Party (1971 – 1984)	NA	The Greens
	Conservative People's Party	Independents	Red-Green Alliance (2001 - <i>Present</i>)	Common Course
	Danish Social Liberal Party	Justice Party of Denmark (1953 – 1957)	Socialist People's Party (1968 – 1990)	Communist Party of Denmark
	Justice Party of Denmark (1960 - <i>Present</i>)	Liberal Centre		Communist Workers' Party
	Left, Liberal Party of Denmark	Minority Party		Danish People's Party (1998 – 2001)
	Social Democrats	New Alliance / Liberal Alliance		Danish Unity
	Socialist People's Party (1994 - <i>Present</i>)	Pensioner's Party		Democratic Renewal
		Schleswig Party		Left Socialists
		The Independents		Progress Party
				Red-Green Alliance (1990 – 1998)
				Socialist People's Party (1960 – 1966)
				Socialist Workers' Party

Country	Mainstream Parties	Complementary Parties	System-Critical Parties	Anti-System Parties
Finland (1951 – 2015)	Agrarian League / Centre Party of Finland Finnish Christian League / Christian Democrats <i>(1995 – Present)</i> Finnish People's Unity Party Green League <i>(1999 – Present)</i> Liberal People's Party National Coalition Party People's Party of Finland Social Democratic Party Social Democratic Union Swedish People's Party of Finland	Constitutional People's Party Finnish Christian League <i>(1966- 1991)</i> Independents Pensioner's Party Women's Party Young Finns	Finnish People's Democratic League <i>(1970 – 1987)</i> Finnish Rural Party <i>(1987 – 1995)</i> Left Alliance <i>(1999 - Present)</i>	Alliance for Free Finland Communist Party of Finland Democratic Alternative Finnish People's Democratic League <i>(1951 – 1966)</i> Finnish Independence Party Finnish Rural Party <i>(1962 – 1983)</i> Forces for Change in Finland / Change 2011 The Greens / Green League <i>(1983 – 1995)</i> Left Alliance <i>(1991 – 1995)</i> Pirate Party of Finland Reform Group True Finns

Country	Mainstream Parties	Complementary Parties	System-Critical Parties	Anti-System Parties
France (1951 – 2012)	Centrist Alliance French Section of the Workers' International / Federation of the Democratic and Socialist Left / Socialist Party Gaullist Candidates (1958) Independent Republicans National Centre of Independents and Peasants (1956 - <i>Present</i>) New Centre Popular Republican Movement Progress and Modern Democracy / Reforming Movement / Union for French Democracy / Democratic Movement Radical Party / Rally of the Republican Lefts Union for the New Republic / Union for the Defence of the Republic / Rally for the Republic / Union for a Popular Movement Movement of Left Radicals / Radical Party of the Left The Greens / Europe Ecology (1997 – <i>Present</i>)	Centre for France (2012) Hunting, Fishing, Nature, Traditions Independents National Centre of Independents and Peasants (1951) Regionalist Candidates	French Communist Party (1968 – 1981; 2002) Movement for France Unified Socialist Party (1967)	'Extreme Left' Candidates 'Extreme Right' Candidates French Communist Party (1951 – 1967; 1986 – 1997; 2007) Gaullist Candidates (1956) The Greens (1988 – 1993) Minor Ecologists National Front National Republican Movement Rally of the French People (1951) Revolutionary Communist League Unified Socialist Party (1962; 1968 - 1990) Union and French Fraternity (Poujadists) Workers' Struggle

Country	Mainstream Parties	Complementary Parties	System-Critical Parties	Anti-System Parties
Germany (1953 – 2013)	All-German Bloc / League of Expellees (1957)	All-German Bloc / League of Expellees (1953)	German Party	Alternative for Germany
	Alliance '90 / Green Party (2002 - Present)	All-German People's Party		Bavaria Party
	Christian Democratic Union	Alliance '90 /Green Party (1994 - 1998)		German Peace Union / Campaign for Democratic Progress
	Christian Social Union	Centre Party		Communist Party of Germany
	Free Democratic Party	Ecological Democratic Party		German Reich Party
	Social Democratic Party (1969 - Present)	The Greys – Grey Panthers		Green Party (1980 – 1990)
		Independents		Human, Environment, Animal Protection
		Pro-DM		National Democratic Party
		Social Democratic Party (1953 – 1965)		Party of Democratic Socialism / The Left
				The Pirate Party
				The Republicans

Country	Mainstream Parties	Complementary Parties	System-Critical Parties	Anti-System Parties
Greece (1985 - 2015)	Democratic Left (2012b – Present) New Democracy Panhellenic Socialist Movement	Democratic Alliance Democratic Left (2012a) Democratic Regional Union Democratic Renewal Independents Political Spring Recreate Greece The River Social Agreement for Greece Stop Trust Union of Centrists	Left and Progressive Coalition (1989b - 1990) Popular Orthodox Rally (2012a – Present)	Action-Liberal Alliance Alternative Ecologists Communist Party of Greece Communist Party of Greece (Interior) Front Line Front of the Greek Anticapitalist Left Greek Ecologists I Don't Pay Movement Independent Greeks Left Initiative of Communists Radicals National Political Union Pirate Party of Greece Popular Association – Golden Dawn Popular Orthodox Rally (2004 – 2009) Popular Unity Radical Left Front Revolutionary Communist Party Society Party SYRIZA / Left and Progressive Coalition (1989a; 1993 - Present) United Popular Front

Country	Mainstream Parties	Complementary Parties	System-Critical Parties	Anti-System Parties
Iceland (1953 - 2016)	Independence Party Progressive Party Social Democratic Party Union of Liberals and Leftists (1974 - 1978)	Alliance of Social Democrats Association for Justice and Equality Home Rule Association Households Party Humanist Party Icelandic Movement – Living Country Independents Liberal Party (1991 – 2003) National Awakening National Party National Preservation Party Reform Party Republican Party Right-Green People's Party South List Union of Liberals and Leftists (1971)	Left-Green Movement (2013 – Present) People's Unity Party – Socialist Party / People's Alliance	Bright Future Candidature Party Civic Movement Dawn Democracy Movement Left-Green Movement (2003 – 2009) Liberal Party (2007 - Present) National Front Natural Law Party New Force People's Front People's Party Pirate Party Revolutionary Communist League Women's List

Country	Mainstream Parties	Complementary Parties	System-Critical Parties	Anti-System Parties
Ireland (1951 - 2016)	Democratic Left (1997) Family of the Irish [FG] Green Party (2011 - Present) Labour Party Progressive Democrats (1992 - 2007) Soldiers of Destiny [FF]	Christian Solidarity Democratic Left (1992) Green Party (2007) Independents National Party National Progressive Democrats Progressive Democrats (1987 – 1989)	Children of the Land Children of the Republic (1951 – 1954)	Anti H-Block Children of the Republic (1957 - 1965) Democratic Socialist Ecology Party / Green Alliance / Green Party (1987 – 2002) Irish Republican Socialist Irish Unity [AE] New Vision People Before Profit Sinn Fein Socialist Labour Socialist Party United Left Alliance Workers and Unemployed Action Workers' Party – OSF

Country	Mainstream Parties	Complementary Parties	System-Critical Parties	Anti-System Parties
Italy (1953 - 2013)	Christian Democracy	Act to Stop the Decline	Brothers of Italy	Bonino List (2001)
	Christian Democratic Centre	Democratic Alliance	Communist Refoundation Party (2001)	Civil Revolution
	The Daisy	Democratic Party of the Left (1992)	Federation of the Greens (1994)	Communist Refoundation Party (1992 – 1996)
	Democratic Party/ The Olive Tree	European Democracy Independents	Italian Communist Party (1979)	Critical Left
	Democratic Party of the Left (1994 - 1998)	Italian Socialist Party (1958)	Left Ecology Freedom	Federation of the Greens (1987 – 1992)
	Federation of the Greens (1996 - 2006)	Italian Socialists (2008)	The Left- Rainbow	Five Star Movement
	Go Italy [FI]! (1996 - <i>Present</i>)	National Pensioners Party	National Alliance (1996 - <i>Present</i>)	Go Italy [FI]! (1994)
	Italian Democratic Socialist Party	Popular Unity	Northern League (2001 – 2013)	Italian Communist Party (1953 – 1976; 1983 - 1987)
	Italian Liberal Party		Pannella List (1996)	Italian Democratic Party of Monarchist Unity
	Italian People's Party		Party of Italian Communists	Italian Social Movement
	Italian Renewal		The Right	Italian Socialist Party (1953)
	Italian Republican Party		Rose in the Fist	Proletarian Unity
	Italian Socialist Party (1963 -1992)			Italy of Values (2001)
	Movement for Autonomy			National Alliance (1994)
	Pensioners' Party (2006)			National Monarchist Party
	Populars for Italy			New Force
	Segni Pact			Northern League (1992 – 1996)
	South Tyrolean People's Party			Proletarian Democracy
	The People of Freedom			Radical Party / Pannella List (1976 – 1994)
	Union of Christian and Centre Democrats			The Network
	Union of Democrats for Europe			Tricolour Flame

Country	Mainstream Parties	Complementary Parties	System-Critical Parties	Anti-System Parties
Luxembourg (1951 - 2013)	Christian Social People's Party Luxembourg Socialist Workers' Party Patriotic and Democratic Group / Democratic Group / Democratic Party	The Greens (1999 – <i>Present</i>) Green and Liberal Alliance Green List Initiative (1989- 1994) Independent Party of the Middle Class Independents Liberal Party Party for Enlisted Forces Social Democratic Party	NA	Action Committee Alternative Democratic Reform Party Alternative List / Green Alternative (1979 – 1989) Citizens' List Communist Party of Luxembourg Independent Socialist Party The Left National Movement New Left Party for Full Democracy Pirate Party for Luxembourg Popular Independent Party

Country	Mainstream Parties	Complementary Parties	System-Critical Parties	Anti-System Parties
Netherlands (1952 – 2012)	Anti-Revolutionary Party	50+ Party	Democrats 1966 (1971 – <i>Present</i>)	Centre Democrats
	Catholic People's Party	Catholic National Party		Centre Party
	Christian Democratic Appeal	Christian Union (2002 – 2006)	Pim Fortuyn List (2003 - 2006)	Communist Party of the Netherlands
	Christian Historical Union			Democrats 1966 (1967)
	Christian Union (2010 - <i>Present</i>)	Democratic Socialists		Farmers' Party
	Labour Party	Evangelical People's Party		GreenLeft (1989 – 2002)
	People's Party for Freedom and Democracy	General Elderly Alliance		Liveable Netherlands
	Political Party of Radicals (1971 – 1977)	GreenLeft (2003 – <i>Present</i>)		One Netherlands
		Independents		Pacifist Socialist Party
		New Middle Party		Party for Freedom
		Party for the Animals		Pim Fortuyn List (2002)
		Proud of the Netherlands		Political Party of Radicals (1981 – 1989)
		Roman Catholic People's Party		Reformatory Political Federation
		Union 55+		Reformed Political League
				Reformed Political Party
				Socialist Party

Country	Mainstream Parties	Complementary Parties	System-Critical Parties	Anti-System Parties
New Zealand (1951 – 2014)	Alliance Party (2002 – <i>Present</i>)	Alliance Party (1996 - 1999)	ACT New Zealand (2011 - <i>Present</i>)	ACT New Zealand (1996 – 2008)
	Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand (2002 – <i>Present</i>)	Christian Heritage Party / Christian Coalition (1990 – 1996)	New Zealand First (1999 – <i>Present</i>)	Alliance Party (1993)
	Jim Anderton's Progressive Party	Destiny New Zealand		Bill and Ben Party
	Maori Party (2005 – <i>Present</i>)	Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand (1996 - 1999)		Communist Party of New Zealand
	New Zealand Future / United New Zealand / United Future Party (2005 – <i>Present</i>)	Independents		Conservative Party
		Legalise Cannabis		Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand (1990 – 1993)
	New Zealand Labour Party	Mana Maori Party (1984 – 1996)		Kiwi Party
	New Zealand National Party	New Labour Party		LiberatiaNZ
		New Zealand Future (1999 – 2002)		Mana Movement
		New Zealand Liberal Party		McGillicuddy Serious Party
		New Zealand Party		Natural Law Party
		Outdoor Recreation Party		New Democratic Party
				New Zealand First (1993 – 1996)
				New Zealand Social Credit Party
				Values Party

Country	Mainstream Parties	Complementary Parties	System-Critical Parties	Anti-System Parties
Norway (1953 – 2013)	Christian People's Party (1965 – <i>Present</i>) Conservative Party Farmer's Party / Centre Party Liberal Party Labour Party Progress Party (2009 – <i>Present</i>) Socialist Left Party (2009 - <i>Present</i>)	Christian People's Party (1953 – 1961) The Christian Party Coastal Party Independents Liberal People's Party New People's Party Pensioner's Party Socialist Left Party (2001 - 2005)	Anders Lange's Party / Progress Party (2005)	Anders Lange's Party / Progress Party (1973 – 2001) Communist Party of Norway Environmental Party – The Greens Fatherland Party Pirate Party The Political Party Red Electoral Alliance / Red Party Socialist Electoral League Socialist Left Party (1977 – 1997) Socialist People's Party

Country	Mainstream Parties	Complementary Parties	System-Critical Parties	Anti-System Parties
Portugal (1987 - 2015)	Democratic and Social Centre / CDS - People's Party Democratic Renewal Earth Party (2015 - Present) Social Democratic Party / Portugal Ahead Coalition Socialist Party	Democratic Republican Earth Party (1999 – 2011) FREE Hope for Portugal Movement Independents National Solidarity Party for Animals and Nature	NA	Democratic Unity Coalition Left Bloc Left Revolutionary Front National Renovator Party New Democracy Party People's Democratic Union Portuguese Democratic Movement Portuguese Workers' Communist Revolutionary Socialist Unitary Democratic Coalition We, the Citizens!

Country	Mainstream Parties	Complementary Parties	System-Critical Parties	Anti-System Parties
Spain (1986 - 2016)	Aragonese Party	Asturias Forum	Andalusian Party	Amaiur
	Canarian Coalition	Citizens!	Basque Country Left	Basque Nationalist Party (1986 – 1993)
	Canarian Independent Group	Independents	Basque Nationalist Party (1996 - Present)	Basque Solidarity
	Convergence and Union (1989 – 2004)	Party Against the Mistreatment of Animals	Convergence and Union (2011)	Commitment Coalition
	Democratic and Social Centre	Union, Progress and Democracy	Galician Nationalist Bloc (2008 – Present)	Communist Unity
	People’s Coalition / People’s Party		Republican Left of Catalonia (2008 - Present)	Democracy and Freedom
	Reformist Coalition		United Left (2008)	EQUO
	Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party			Galician Nationalist Bloc (1986 – 2004)
	Valencian Union			Green List
				Navarre Yes
				Podemos
				Popular Basque Unity
				Republican Left of Catalonia (1986 – 2004)
				Ruiz-Mateos Group
				United Left – The Greens
				United Left (1986 – 2004; 2011 – Present)
				Vox
				Zero Cuts

Country	Mainstream Parties	Complementary Parties	System-Critical Parties	Anti-System Parties
Sweden (1952 - 2014)	Christian Democratic Unity / Christian Democratic Society Party / Christian Democrats (1985 - <i>Present</i>) Farmer's League / Centre Party Green Party (2010 - <i>Present</i>) People's Party / Liberal People's Party Right Party / Moderate Party Swedish Social Democratic Party	Christian Democratic Unity (1964 – 1982) Independents Swedish Senior Citizen Interest Party	Green Party (2002 – 2006) Left Party (2002 – <i>Present</i>)	Communist League – Marxist-Leninist Communist Party of Sweden Feminist Initiative Green Party (1982 – 1998) June List Left Party Communists / Left Party (1968 – 1998) New Democracy Pirate Party Sweden Democrats The New Party Workers Party Communist

Country	Mainstream Parties	Complementary Parties	System-Critical Parties	Anti-System Parties
Switzerland (1951 - 2015)	Conservative Democratic Party Evangelical People's Party Free Democratic Party / FDP – The Liberals Party of Farmers, Traders, and Independents Social Democratic Party Swiss Conservative People's Party / Christian Democratic People's Party Swiss People's Party (1971 – 1995)	Christian Social Party Green Liberal Party Group for the Protection of the Environment / Federation of Swiss Green Parties / Green Party Independent Social-Christian Party Independents Liberal Democratic Party / Liberal Democratic Union / Liberal Party Liberal Socialist Party Social-Political Group	Swiss People's Party (1999 - Present)	Alternative Left Autonomous Socialist Party Federal Democratic Union Feminist and Green Alternatives Freedom Party Geneva Citizens Movement National Action National Action Party Republican Movement Ring of Independents Solidarity Swiss Democrats Swiss Motorists' Party Swiss Party of Labour Swiss Progressive Organisations Ticino League

Country	Mainstream Parties	Complementary Parties	System-Critical Parties	Anti-System Parties
United Kingdom (1950 - 2015)	Conservative and Unionist Party Labour Party Liberal Party / Social Democratic Party – Liberal Alliance / Liberal Democrats	Independents	NA	British National Party Communist Party of Great Britain Democratic Unionist Party Ecology Party / Green Party of England and Wales Irish Nationalist National Front Plaid Cymru Referendum Party Respect Party Scottish National Party Scottish Socialist Party Sinn Fein United Kingdom Independence Party Vanguard Unionist Party

Appendix B: Procedure for Generating Measures of Party Polarisation

The following data provides supplementary information on how I constructed my index of party polarisation data in Chapter Three.

Part One – Manifesto Component Selection

As described in Chapter Three (‘Measuring ‘Crisis’ and ‘Convergence’), the raw ‘objective’ data for ideological position came from MARPOR’s analysis of party manifestos (Volkens et al. 2019). The group uses human coders to parse and code the entire text of a party’s electoral programme. The manifesto is first divided into (often several hundred) ‘quasi-sentences’, each comprising of a single statement that emphasises some policy goal, identified by one of 56 standard issue categories (Werner, Lacewell, and Volkens 2015). These 56 standard issue categories are listed in Table B.1

These individual components need to be classified as ‘left’, ‘right’, or ‘neutral’ so that the relative ideological balance in a given document can be ascertained. The most commonly used (e.g. Hino 2012; Spoon and Klüver 2019) is still MARPOR’s own ‘RiLe’ scale which is large based on inferences from the patterns and combinations of different ideas in left and right-wing philosophy around the turn of the 20th century (Volkens et al. 2013: 88–90). The components used in this scale are displayed in Table B.2.

That said, in Chapter Three I make the case for Prosser’s (2014) method of component selection being a more valid approach for reflecting left-right ideology as most would understand the concept. While I shall not recap these arguments here, the components in Prosser’s general, overarching left-right scale are listed in Table B.3; those in his economic left-right scale (which focuses only on those issues that relate to government intervention in the economy and the distribution of wealth) are listed in Table B.4. Is the relative balance of quasi-statements in manifesto that pertain to these issues which form the basis for how ‘left’ or ‘right’ leaning a given party is at any general election.

Table B.1: Issue Components in the MARPOR Dataset

Policy Domain 1: External Relations	
101 Foreign Special Relationships: Positive	412 Controlled Economy: Positive
102 Foreign Special Relationships: Negative	413 Nationalisation: Positive
103 Anti-Imperialism: Positive	414 Economic Orthodoxy: Positive
103.1 State Centred Anti-Imperialism	415 Marxist Analysis: Positive
103.2 Foreign Financial Influence	416 Anti-Growth Economy: Positive
104 Military: Positive	416.1 Anti-Growth Economy: Positive
105 Military: Negative	416.2 Sustainability: Positive
106 Peace: Positive	Policy Domain 5: Welfare and Quality of Life
107 Internationalism: Positive	501 Environmental Protection: Positive
108 European/LA Integration: Positive	502 Culture: Positive
109 Internationalism: Negative	503 Equality: Positive
110 European/LA Integration: Negative	504 Welfare State Expansion
Policy Domain 2: Freedom and Democracy	505 Welfare State Limitation
201 Freedom and Human Rights: Positive	506 Education Expansion
201.1 Freedom	507 Education Limitation
201.2 Human Rights	Policy Domain 6: Fabric of Society
202 Democracy	601 National Way of Life: Positive
202.1 General: Positive	601.1 General
202.2 General: Negative	601.2 Immigration: Negative
202.3 Representative Democracy: Positive	602 National Way of Life: Negative
202.4 Direct Democracy: Positive	602.1 General
203 Constitutionalism: Positive	602.2 Immigration: Positive
204 Constitutionalism: Negative	603 Traditional Morality: Positive
Policy Domain 3: Political System	604 Traditional Morality: Negative
301 Decentralisation: Positive	605 Law and Order
302 Centralisation: Positive	605.1 Law and Order: Positive
303 Gov and Administrative Efficiency: Positive	605.2 Law and Order: Negative
304 Political Corruption: Negative	606 Civic Mindedness: Positive
305 Political Authority: Positive	606.1 General
305.1 Political Authority: Party Competence	606.2 Bottom-Up Activism
305.2 Political Authority: Personal Competence	607 Multiculturalism: Positive
305.3 Political Authority: Strong government	607.1 General
305.4 Pre-Democratic Elites: Positive	607.2 Immigrant Integration: Diversity
305.5 Pre-Democratic Elites: Negative	607.3 Indigenous rights: Positive
305.6 Rehabilitation and Compensation	608 Multiculturalism: Negative
Policy Domain 4: Economy	608.1 General
401 Free-Market Economy: Positive	608.2 Immigrant Integration: Assimilation
402 Incentives: Positive	608.3 Indigenous rights: Negative
403 Market Regulation: Positive	Policy Domain 7: Social Groups
404 Economic Planning: Positive	701 Labour Groups: Positive
405 Corporatism: Positive	702 Labour Groups: Negative
406 Protectionism: Positive	703 Agriculture and Farmers
407 Protectionism: Negative	703.1 Agriculture and Farmers: Positive
408 Economic Goals	703.2 Agriculture and Farmers: Negative
409 Keynesian Demand Management: Positive	704 Middle Class and Professional Groups: Positive
410 Economic Growth	705 Minority Groups: Positive
411 Technology and Infrastructure: Positive	706 Non-Economic Demographic Groups: Positive
	00 No Meaningful Category Applies

Note: Taken from the most recent edition of the guidebook given to MARPOR coders (Werner et al.2015).

Table B.2: Left-Right MARPOR Issue Components in the RiLe Scale

Left	Right
103 Anti-Imperialism	104 Military: Positive
105 Military: Negative	201 Freedom and Human Rights
106 Peace	203 Constitutionalism: Positive
107 Internationalism: Positive	305 Political Authority
202 Democracy	401 Free Market Economy
403 Market Regulation	402 Incentives: Positive
404 Economic Planning	407 Protectionism: Negative
406 Protectionism: Positive	414 Economic Orthodoxy
412 Controlled Economy	505 Welfare State Limitation
413 Nationalisation	601 National Way of Life: Positive
504 Welfare State Expansion	603 Traditional Morality: Positive
506 Education Expansion	605 Law and Order: Positive
701 Labour Groups: Positive	606 Civic Mindedness: Positive

Note: Taken from the most recent edition of the guidebook given to MARPOR coders (Werner et al.2015).

Table B.3: Left-Right MARPOR Issue Components in the General Prosser Scale

Left	Right
105 Military: Negative	109 Internationalism: Negative
106 Peace	401 Free Enterprise: Positive
107 Internationalism: Positive	407 Protectionism: Negative
108 European Integration: Positive	414 Economic Orthodoxy: Positive
202 Democracy	505 Welfare State Limitation
301 Decentralisation	507 Education Limitation: Positive
303 Government and Administrative Efficiency	601 National Way of Life
403 Market Regulation: Positive	603 Traditional Morality: Positive
408 Economic Goals	608 Multiculturalism: Negative
411 Technology and Infrastructure	702 Labour Groups: Negative
412 Controlled Economy: Positive	
413 Nationalisation: Positive	
416 Anti-Growth Economy	
501 Environmental Protection	
502 Culture	
503 Social Justice	
504 Welfare State Expansion: Positive	
506 Education Expansion: Positive	
602 National Way of Life: Negative	
604 Traditional Morality: Negative	
701 Labour Groups: Positive	
705 Underprivileged Minority Groups	
706 Non-Economic Demographic Groups	

Note: Taken from Prosser (2014: 98)

Table B.4: Left-Right MARPOR Issue Components in the Economic Prosser Scale

Economic Left	Economic Right
403 Market Regulation	401 Free Enterprise: Positive
411 Technology and Infrastructure	407 Protectionism: Negative
412 Controlled Economy	414 Economic Orthodoxy: Positive
413 Nationalisation: Positive	505 Welfare State Limitation: Positive
503 Social Justice	507 Education Limitation: Positive
504 Welfare State Expansion: Positive	702 Labour Groups: Negative
506 Education Expansion: Positive	
701 Labour Groups: Positive	

Note: Taken from Prosser (2014: 99)

Part Two – Generating an Index of Mainstream Party Left-Right Polarisation for Each General Election

Following the procedure detailed in Part One leaves me with a left-right score for every party at each election for which a manifesto has been coded by the MARPOR team. I am only interested in polarisation among mainstream parties – i.e. those that have been integrated into government and accept the legitimacy of the dominant rules, norms, processes, actors and boundaries of their political community (see Appendix A for the full list) – in the post-War period of the specific advanced parliamentary democracies that I mentioned in Chapter Two. Therefore I delete all other parties and country-years from the dataset. Parties like the French National Front, Italian Communist Party, UKIP etc. do not contribute at all to my measure of party polarisation (as is appropriate; if they did, rising levels of polarisation would be endogenous to increased anti-system party success). The next task is to convert these disparate values into a single index that summarises how far apart mainstream party positions can be said to be at any given national election. The level of dispersion will then be said to capture the degree of ideological polarisation amongst mainstream parties in any given political system at that time.

In Chapter Three I argued that Dalton's (2008: 906–907) formula for the weighted sum of party deviations from the 'average' left-right position in their country is a superior measure than approaches based on the simple left-right range 'range' of a party system (cf. Abedi 2004, Arzheimer and Carter 2006; Carter 2005; Kitschelt and McGann 1995; Norris 2005; Spies and Franzmann 2011). However, given that Dalton's original formula was intended to measure polarisation in the party system as a whole (rather than just between mainstream parties), it was necessary to adjust it slightly so that resultant values would be independent of the size of the overall mainstream party vote

share. I did this by dividing the weighted contribution of each party to the total level of polarisation by the overall sum of mainstream party votes⁹². The new formula is thus

$$\text{Adjusted Dalton Polarisation Score} = 10 * \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^N V_i \left(\frac{P_i - \bar{P}}{5} \right)^2}{\sum_{i=1}^N V_i}}$$

This new variable theoretically runs from 0 (all parties, regardless of size, take the exact same position on the left-right scale) to 10 (in which large two parties, splitting the entire mainstream party vote share between them, sit at the complete opposite ends of the political spectrum).

Given that this formula is significantly more complex than the simpler ‘range’ methods described earlier, below I present a step-by-step example of how it works using German mainstream party positions (i.e. those of the Greens, the Social Democratic Party [SPD], the Christian Democratic Union-Christian Social Union [CDU-CSU] alliance, and the Free Democratic Party [FDP]).

1. Place all of the mainstream parties competing in a given national election on a single left-right spectrum (here ranging 0 to 10), and collect their vote share for that election. For Germany in 2013, these values are the following: the Greens (L-R position = 4.05; vote share = 8.44%), the FDP (5.51; 4.8%), the SPD (4.28, 25.7%), and the CDU-CSU (5.25, 41.5%). Also note the total combined vote share for mainstream parties (here, 80.44%).
2. Multiply each party’s left-right score by their vote share to get their weighted left-right position. These values are 34.182 (4.05 * 8.44) for the Greens, 26.448 (5.51 * 4.8) for the FDP, 109.996 (4.28 * 25.7) for the SPD, and 217.875 (5.25 * 41.5) for the CDU-CSU.
3. Divide each party’s weighted left-right position by the combined vote share for mainstream parties. These values are 0.424937842 (34.182/80.44) for the Greens, 0.328791646 (26.448/80.44) for the FDP, 1.36742914 (109.996/80.44) for the SPD, and 2.708540527 (217.875/80.44) for the CDU-CSU. The sum of these values is equivalent to the weighted average position of mainstream parties at that election. Here, that sum is 4.829699.
4. Next, calculate each party’s distance from this weighted average. These values are -0.779699 (4.05 - 4.829699) for the Greens, 0.680301 (5.51 - 4.829699) for the FDP, -0.549699 (4.28 - 4.829699) for the SPD, and 0.420301 (5.25 - 4.829699) for the CDU-CSU.

⁹² I am grateful for my supervisor, Professor James Tilley, for assisting me in revising Dalton’s original formula.

5. To centre these scores on the 11-point left-right scale, divide each of these figures by 5. I.e. the new distances from the weighted average are -0.1559398 for the Greens, 0.1360602 for the FDP, -0.1099398 for the SPD, and 0.0840602 for the CDU-CSU.
6. To convert these values into absolute distances from the weighted average mainstream party position, square them. The new squared distances are 0.0243172 for the Greens, 0.0185124 for the FDP, 0.0120868 for the SPD, and 0.0070661 for the CDU-CSU.
7. Now we multiply each party's new value by their vote (so their new contribution to the overall level of ideological diversity is commensurate with their status in the party system). Each party's weighted contribution to the overall distance is now 0.205237429 ($0.0243172 * 8.44$) for the Greens, 0.088859374 ($0.0185124 * 4.8$) for the FDP, 0.310629897 ($0.0120868 * 25.7$) for the SPD, and 0.293243649 ($0.0070661 * 41.5$) for the CDU-CSU.
8. Before adding these up to get the sum of squared deviations from the weighted average mainstream position, we now adjust Dalton's original formula to make sure that the overall level of polarisation is not affected by the share of the vote going to non-mainstream parties. The way we do this is by dividing each of the above values by the total mainstream party vote share, so that party systems with larger mainstream parties will not receive any 'bonus' to their level of polarisation. The new values for each party are 0.0025514 ($0.205237429 / 80.44$) for the Greens, 0.0011047 ($0.088859374 / 80.44$) for the FDP, 0.0038616 ($0.310629897 / 80.44$) for the SPD, and 0.0036455 ($0.293243649 / 80.44$) for the CDU-CSU.
9. Finally, we can add these figures up to get the weighted sum of squared deviations from the weighted average mainstream party position (adjusted for the overall size of mainstream parties). This total is 0.0111632. To give this figure a more intuitive interpretation, it is then square rooted to just give a simple weighted sum of the deviations from the weighted average mainstream party position. This figure is just 0.105656. Once multiplied by 10 (to get back to a 0-10 scale), the final figure is 1.052716. Given that this scale ranges (hypothetically) from 0-10, this indicates an extremely very low level of mainstream party polarisation in Germany in 2013. This makes sense given that no party really strays too far from the weighted average position identified earlier, least of all the two largest parties in the country.

Appendix C: Descriptive Statistics for Chapter Three

Table C.1: Descriptive Statistics and Coding Information for Variables Used in Chapter Three

Variable	Statistic / Option	Descriptive Statistics
Anti-System Party Vote Share (%)	Mean	11.1 (Logged = 2.1)
Election results were primarily sourced from Dieter Nohlen's compendiums for North America (2005), Europe (with Stover 2010), and Asia and the Pacific (with Grotz, and Hartmann 2001), with official national parliament websites consulted for more recent elections. Results refer to the percentage gained of all votes cast in first-round elections in the decisive electoral tier. See Appendix A for details on the coding of 'anti-system' parties.	Std. Dev	10.0 (L = 1.0)
	Quartile 1	3.7 (L = 1.6)
	Q2	8.4 (L = 2.2)
	Q3	16.0 (L = 2.8)
	Q4	56.0 (L = 4.0)
In the replication using a logged dependent variable (Appendix D, Table D.4), 1 is added to all values prior to the log-transformation (so that countries with no anti-system parties are not dropped).		
Anti-System and System-Critical Party Vote Share (%)	Mean	14.6
Used as an alternative dependent variable in Appendix D, Table D.6. I.e. the combined vote share for all parties with a radical ideology that fundamentally dispute the basic structures, rules, norms, boundaries and values of their political community; or else calls into question the legitimacy of the mainstream parties that do. Regardless of whether they have served in government or made alliances with governing mainstream parties or not (see Appendix A for more coding details and individual party classifications by country).	Std. Dev	11.2
	Q1	6.5
	Q2	12.1
	Q3	20.9
	Q4	58.7
Anti-System and Complementary Party Vote Share (%)	Mean	16.1
Used as an alternative dependent variable in Appendix D, Table D.7. I.e. the combined vote share for all parties that have not served in government or made alliances with other mainstream parties (i.e. confidence-and-supply arrangements or electoral pacts). Regardless of whether they have a radical ideology or not (see Appendix A for details).	Std. Dev	11.7
	Q1	7.5
	Q2	13.3
	Q3	22.2
	Q4	66.2
Mainstream Party L-R Polarisation	Mean	1.3
The weighted (by vote share) level of ideological polarisation amongst mainstream political parties. Derived from the relative emphasis of left- or right-wing 'issues' in the parties' electoral programmes. The data came from the MARPOR's Manifesto Project Dataset [Version 2019a]' (Volkens et al. 2019). See Appendix B for further details on the coding process. See Appendix A for details on the coding of 'mainstream' parties. The variable theoretically runs from 0 (no ideological differences between mainstream parties) to 10 (maximum polarisation).	Std. Dev	0.8
	Q1	0.8
	Q2	1.2
	Q3	1.8
	Q4	4.5

Mainstream Party Economic L-R Polarisation The weighted (by vote share) level of ideological polarisation amongst mainstream political parties, considering only the differences on economic issues. Derived from the relative emphasis of left- or right-wing ‘economic issues’ in the parties’ electoral programmes. The data came from the MARPOR’s Manifesto Project Dataset [Version 2019a]’ (Volkens et al. 2019). See Appendix B for further details on the coding process. See Appendix A for details on the coding of ‘mainstream’ parties. The variable theoretically runs from 0 (no ideological differences between mainstream parties on economic issues) to 10 (maximum polarisation on economic issues).	Mean	1.5
	Std. Dev	0.9
	Q1	0.9
	Q2	1.4
	Q3	2.0
	Q4	4.9
Mainstream Party L-R Range (Version 1 – Ideological Range of Left and Rightmost Mainstream Parties) The absolute difference between the ideological position (on an 11-point left-right scale) adopted by the most left-wing mainstream party, and that taken by the most right-wing mainstream party. Unlike with the main measure of polarisation that I use, no ‘weighting’ is undertaken to account for the relative sizes of these parties. The data came from the MARPOR’s Manifesto Project Dataset [Version 2019a]’ (Volkens et al. 2019). See Appendix B for further details on the coding process. See Appendix A for details on the coding of ‘mainstream’ parties.	Mean	1.7
	Std. Dev	0.9
	Q1	0.9
	Q2	1.6
	Q3	2.2
	Q4	6.5
Mainstream Party L-R Range (Version 2 – Ideological Range of Left and Rightmost Mainstream Parties) The absolute difference between the ideological position (on an 11-point left-right scale) adopted by the two largest mainstream parties (in terms of vote share). Unlike with the main measure of polarisation that I use, the positions of all other mainstream parties that are smaller than the top two are ignored completely. The data came from the MARPOR’s Manifesto Project Dataset [Version 2019a]’ (Volkens et al. 2019). See Appendix B for further details on the coding process. See Appendix A for details on the coding of ‘mainstream’ parties.	Mean	1.2
	Std. Dev	0.8
	Q1	0.5
	Q2	1.0
	Q3	1.7
	Q4	4.3
% GDPpc Growth (y – 1) The % change in Gross Domestic Product [GDP] (per capita) lagged by one year (so the change between 2012 and 2013 for an election held in 2014). These figures are for real GDP in constant 2011 national prices (US dollars) and were sourced from the Penn World Table [Version 9.1] (Feenstra, Inklaar, and Timmer 2015). Please note that an exception was made for Ireland in 2016 where growth was originally listed as 25.4% (a figure over 8 standard deviations above my sample mean). This figure is, however, artificially inflated by a process of financial ‘inversion’, whereby companies lower their tax bills by acquiring a legal address in Ireland without actually moving production to the country (OECD 2016). In place of this discredited figure, I substitute the average growth in the 2011 – 2016 Irish parliament (7.41%).	Min	-8.95
	Mean	2.32
	Std. Dev	2.68
	Q1	0.86
	Q2	2.26
	Q3	3.90
	Q4	11.34

GDPpc Level (Logged, $y - 1$) Level of real GDP per capita in constant 2011 national prices (US dollars), lagged by one year (so 2013 figures for an election held in 2014). Sourced from the Penn World Table [Version 9.1] (Feenstra, Inklaar, and Timmer 2015). I.e. an inflation-adjusted measure of the value of all goods and services produced by an economy in one year.	Min Mean Std. Dev Q1 Q2 Q3 Q4	8.8 (Non-Logged: 6895) 10.1 (NL: 26300) 0.5 (NL: 12880) 9.8 (NL: 17103) 10.1 (NL: 24335) 10.4 (NL: 33454) 11.3 (NL: 83400)
Grand Coalition Government A dummy variable coded as 1 if, prior to the election, the national government comprised of the two largest parties of the centre-left and centre-right (by vote share). ‘Left’ is taken as liberal or social democratic party family members; ‘right’ as conservative or Christian democratic. For example, in Germany in 2009 the incumbent government comprised of the Social Democratic Party [SPD] and the Christian Democratic Union [CDU-CSU]. The grand coalition dummy variable therefore equals ‘1’. However, in 2013 the incumbent government was a CDU-CSU coalition with the liberal Free Democratic Party. Therefore the dummy variable was now coded as ‘0’.	1 0	23.7% 76.3%
Effective Number of Electoral Parties (Logged, $e - 1$) The adjusted number of political parties in a country, weighted by vote share. The number of parties would equal the effective number of parties only when they are all equally sized. The figure will be higher in more fragmented party systems. The effective number of electoral parties is calculated as $1 / (\sum (Vi^2))$, where Vi is the percentage of the vote received by the ith party (Laakso and Taagepera 1979). Independents or ‘others’ are treated as a single party. Figures were taken from the combined dataset of Bormann and Golder (2013), or Michael Gallagher’s (Gallagher and Mitchell 2008) online depository if observations were missing from the former.	Min Mean Std. Dev Q1 Q2 Q3 Q4	0.7 (Non-Logged = 2.0) 1.3 (NL = 4.0) 0.3 (NL = 1.2) 1.1 (NL = 3.0) 1.3 (NL = 3.8) 1.5 (NL = 4.7) 2.1 (NL = 7.8)
Effective or Legal Electoral Threshold (Logged) An electoral threshold refers to the minimum share of the first-round vote in the decisive electoral tier (i.e. that which distributes the most seats to the lower-house of parliament) that a candidate or political party must achieve before they become entitled to any representation in a legislature. For this variable I take <i>whichever is the highest out of the following</i>: First, the ‘<i>effective electoral threshold</i>’. This is calculated using data from Bormann and Golder (2013) and the formula developed by Gallagher (Gallagher and Mitchell 2008), i.e. $75 / (X + 1)$ (where X is the average district magnitude or representatives elected per seat). In the Netherlands, the figure is 0.67, in the UK it is 37.5%. Secondly, the ‘<i>legal threshold</i>’, which is the vote share mandated by law that any party must achieve in certain countries before receiving representation in the national parliament. For example, in Sweden this is formally 4% and in Germany this is 5% (though both countries have exceptions for strong performers in a particular constituency or winning a certain number of single member districts, respectively). Calculated using data from Reading University’s ‘Electoral Change in Europe since 1945’ reports.	Min Mean Std. Dev Q1 Q2 Q3 Q4	-0.4 (Non-Logged = 0.67) 2.2 (NL = 14.5) 1.1 (NL: 13.4) 1.6 (NL: 5.0) 2.2 (NL: 9.3) 2.8 (NL: 16.7) 3.6 (NL: 37.5)

Trade Exposure (<i>Logged, y – 1</i>)		Min	2.6 (Non-Logged = 14)
A measure of exposure to economic globalisation, recorded as the sum of merchandise imports and exports as a percentage of overall GDP (adjusted for purchasing power parity). Countries more dependent on international trade will have higher values on this variable. The figure offers an estimate of the relative importance of international trade in the economy of a country. Sourced from the Penn World Table [Version 9.1] (Feenstra, Inklaar, and Timmer 2015).		Mean	4.1 (Non-Logged = 72)
		Std. Dev	0.6 (Non-Logged = 44)
		Q1	3.7 (Non-Logged = 40)
		Q2	4.1 (Non-Logged = 58)
		Q3	4.5 (Non-Logged = 91)
		Q4	5.6 (Non-Logged = 269)
Regional Decentralisation		Min	0
Decentralisation is captured by Hooghe et al.'s (2016) Regional Authority Index (RAI). This is a measure of the extent of government competencies afforded to subnational bodies. I.e. the figure is higher in countries with strong federal or devolved parliaments. The variable is an annual measure of the authority of regional governments across 10 dimensions: institutional depth, policy scope, fiscal autonomy, borrowing autonomy, representation, law making, executive control, fiscal control, borrowing control and constitutional reform.		Mean	15.15
		Std. Dev	10.71
		Q1	6.17
		Q2	13.00
		Q3	24.50
		Q4	36.95

Appendix D: Supplementary Tables for Chapter Three

The following tables present several robustness tests designed to replicate the models presented in Chapter Three, albeit with some slight variations in model specification. It is hoped that this supplementary material will further buttress the validity and credibility of my findings from that chapter.

A Note on Table D.1

These models are almost exactly the same as those presented in Table 3.1 of the main text. The dependent variable is the combined vote share of all anti-system parties in a given election; the main independent variable of interest is the interaction between the state of the economy (lagged GDP per capita growth) and the level of ideological polarisation (measured using manifesto data) amongst mainstream parties. Higher values for the lagged GDP per capita growth indicate that the national economy is performing strongly; higher values for mainstream party left-right polarisation indicate that mainstream parties can be more clearly differentiated on a left-right spectrum. The difference between these models and the originals is that here mainstream party polarisation is measured with regard to manifesto stances on ‘economic’ issues only. For example, issues that pertain to economic redistribution, government intervention in the economy and the provision of welfare services are included; issues regarding the contestation of national identity, the reform of political institutions, and international relations (which are including in the overarching measure of left-right position that is used in the original model) are ignored. As with the general left-right scale, this new measure is also taken from Prosser (2014). The essay in Appendix B explains more about the coding procedure and the exact issue components that can be considered ‘left’ or ‘right’ in regard to economic issues, are listed in Table B.4.

The results are almost identical to the original model. Anti-system parties experience greater average success when mainstream parties have similar ideological positions on left-right economic issues, and this convergence corresponds with an economic downturn. This is perhaps understandable: the Pearson’s correlation between the index of polarisation using economic issues only, and the original one which incorporates other issues is 0.80 ($n = 393$, $p < 0.01$).

A Note on Table D.2

These model are also partial replications of those presented in Table 3.1. The only difference is that here mainstream party polarisation is measured using the simple L-R range of mainstream parties. That is, the absolute difference between the ideological position (on the same 11-point left-right scale as before) adopted by the most left-wing mainstream party, and that taken by the most right-wing

mainstream party. Unlike with the main measure of polarisation that I use, no ‘weighting’ is undertaken to account for the relative sizes of these parties. This is effectively the measure of polarisation used in Abedi’s (2004) study of anti-establishment parties. Though I have discussed the limitations of this measure at length, both in the main text and in Appendix B, here I substitute it for my preferred measure of polarisation for reasons of transparency.

The results, once again, remain almost unchanged. Anti-system parties experience greater average success when the two most ‘extreme’ mainstream parties have similar ideological positions on left-right economic issues, and this convergence corresponds with an economic downturn. This is perhaps understandable given that, in my dataset, the Pearson’s correlation between this range-based measure of polarisation and my original index is 0.90 ($n = 393$, $p < 0.01$).

A Note on Table D.3

This is another replication of Table 3.1 in the main text. The difference is that here mainstream party polarisation is measured using the distance between the two largest mainstream parties. That is, the absolute difference between the ideological position (on the same 11-point left-right scale as before) adopted by the two mainstream parties who got the most votes at that election. Unlike with the main measure of polarisation that I use, the positions of smaller mainstream parties (who might be much further to the left and right of the two major parties) are ignored completely. This is effectively the measure of polarisation used in several other studies of radical parties (Arzheimer and Carter 2006; Carter 2005; Kitschelt and McGann 1995; Norris 2005; Spies and Franzmann 2011). Though I have discussed the limitations of this measure at length, both in the main text and in Appendix B, here I substitute it for my preferred measure of polarisation for reasons of transparency.

The results are fairly consistent with Table 3.1, albeit notably less strong. Anti-system parties still experience greater average success when the two largest mainstream parties in their country have more similar positions, and when the economy is doing badly; however, the coefficient of the interaction between these two variables is smaller, and only statistically significant at the 0.10 level. This is despite the fact that, in my dataset, the Pearson’s correlation between this range-based measure of polarisation and my original index is 0.86 ($n = 393$, $p < 0.01$). That said, the interaction points clearly in the same direction as before, even with this, less than ideal, alternative measure of mainstream party polarisation.

A Note on Table D.4

This is another replication of Table 3.1 in the main text. The main difference is that here the dependent variable, the total percentage vote share for all anti-system parties in a given general election, has been logged (after adding 1 so that observations with vote shares of zero are not dropped) in order to minimise potential distortions from any outlying observations with very large anti-system vote shares.

In the end, the log-transformation makes very little difference. All of the coefficients in the model point in exactly the same direction and retain conventional levels of statistical significance.

A Note on Table D.5

In Table D.5 I break my sample into two: the 62 elections that took place during a recession, and the 331 that took place against a backdrop of growing economy (i.e. whether lagged per capita GDP growth is negative or not). The idea is to compare the effects of mainstream party left-right polarisation when the economy is improving to when it is clearly getting worse (which might better reflect the idea of ‘crisis’ rather than the continuous measure of growth). This is, of course, only a crude test of my hypothesis: the sample of recession-year countries is not huge and, in practice, there is probably a lot of difference between growth that is just above 0% to growth that is much stronger. That said, the results are all consistent with the story that has been produced by the previous tables: the effect of mainstream polarisation on the anti-system vote is clearly more sizeable when the economy is in recession, as oppose to when it is growing. Once again, it appears the presence of both factors are important when trying to explain variation in the success of radical outsider parties.

A Note on Table D.6

Whereas the dependent variable in Table 3.1 is the combined vote share of all anti-system parties in a given election, in this model that total also includes the votes for so-called ‘system-critical parties’. That is, parties that do have a ‘radical ideology’, but continue to serve in government or make alliances with other mainstream parties (i.e. confidence-and-supply arrangements or electoral pacts). The dependent variable could therefore be considered the sum total of support for all ‘radical’ parties at any given election (regardless of whether these parties could be considered ‘insider’ or ‘outsider’, in relation to government). See Appendix A for details on how ‘system-critical’ and ‘anti-system party’ status was decided, and also for the list of party classifications by country. Other than this slightly different dependent variable, the rest of the model specification remains exactly the same as in Table 3.1.

The data demonstrate that while mainstream party ideological convergence remains a reliably strong predictor of the vote share going to all ‘radical’ parties, there is no longer any statistically-significant interaction with the economy. By itself, the coefficient for growth in lagged GDP per capita points in the same (negative) direction as before; however, this is not significant in the pooled cross-sectional models, or in the fixed-/random-effects models once time-period fixed-effects are controlled for. This seems to validate my decision to distinguish between these ‘types’ of parties. It may be that, although system-critical parties do not offer a radical critique of the conventional inputs of policy-making (the dominant norms, values, institutions, and actors of their political system), they are still seen as at least partly culpable for negative outcomes produced by ‘the system’, given that they have supported it through their behaviour, whether that be through joining governments or supporting them informally. Only true anti-system parties have wholly ‘clean hands’ which allow them to profit when that system appears to malfunction.

A Note on Table D.7

Whereas the dependent variable in Table 3.1 is the combined vote share of all anti-system parties in a given election, in this model that total also includes votes for so-called ‘complementary parties’. That is, parties that do not have a ‘radical ideology’, but still have not served in government or made alliances with other mainstream parties (i.e. confidence-and-supply arrangements or electoral pacts). The dependent variable could therefore be considered the sum total of support for all ‘outsider’ parties at any given election. See Appendix A for details on how ‘complementary’ and ‘anti-system party’ status was decided, and also for the list of party classifications by country. Other than this slightly different dependent variable, the rest of the model specification remains exactly the same as in Table 3.1.

While mainstream party ideological convergence remains a reliably strong predictor of the vote share going to all ‘outsider’ parties, the economy no longer has any effect (interactive or otherwise). Though the coefficient for growth in lagged GDP per capita remains negative, it does not reach conventional levels of statistical significance. This does seem to validate my decision to distinguish between these ‘types’ of parties. It may be that, because complementary parties do not offer a radical critique of the conventional inputs of policy-making (the dominant norms, values, institutions, and actors of their political system), they do not benefit from an economic disruption that seems to undermine the subsequent ‘output’ which legitimates the old way of doing things.

Table D.1: Replication of Table 3.1 in the Main Text, but Measuring Mainstream Party L-R Polarisation on Economic Issues Only

	Pooled OLS Model (With Country-Clustered SEs)				Country Fixed-Effects				Random-Effects			
	Model 1a	Model 1b	Model 1c	Model 1d	Model 2a	Model 2b	Model 2c	Model 2d	Model 3a	Model 3b	Model 3c	Model 3d
% GDP _{pc} Growth ($y - 1$)	- 0.50 (0.33)	- 1.41 * (0.64)	- 1.40 * (0.51)	- 1.27 ** (0.42)	- 0.44 ** (0.17)	- 1.23 ** (0.32)	- 1.09 ** (0.30)	- 1.03 ** (0.30)	- 0.45 ** (0.16)	- 1.25 ** (0.32)	- 1.14 ** (0.30)	- 1.10 ** (0.30)
Mainstream Party L-R Polarisation	- 2.56 ** (0.83)	- 4.19 ** (1.21)	- 3.85 ** (0.92)	- 3.50 ** (0.81)	- 1.80 ** (0.58)	- 3.22 ** (0.76)	- 2.83 ** (0.71)	- 3.07 ** (0.70)	- 1.90 ** (0.57)	- 3.35 ** (0.75)	- 2.87 ** (0.70)	- 3.15 ** (0.70)
Growth * Polarisation		0.65 * (0.29)	0.62 ** (0.22)	0.66 ** (0.19)		0.55 ** (0.19)	0.56 ** (0.18)	0.59 ** (0.18)		0.57 ** (0.19)	0.55 ** (0.18)	0.60 ** (0.18)
Grand Coalition			5.63 * (2.18)	5.84 ** (1.73)			6.81 ** (1.18)	6.34 ** (1.18)			6.41 ** (1.16)	6.04 ** (1.14)
Controls			Included	Included			Included	Included			Included	Included
Decade Fixed-Effects				Included				Included				Included
Constant	16.15 (2.26)	18.31 (2.93)	12.42 (21.91)	89.20 (41.16)	14.85 (1.01)	16.78 (1.21)	5.75 (12.84)	33.50 (32.94)	15.44 (1.50)	17.39 (1.65)	- 0.22 (11.28)	67.17 (23.73)
R^2	0.07	0.09	0.25	0.33	0.35	0.37	0.47	0.50	0.07	0.09	0.22	0.31
Corr. (u_i , X_b)					0.12	0.11	- 0.48	- 0.37				
Sigma_U					5.62	5.57	7.03	6.31	5.31	5.43	5.12	3.14
Sigma_e					8.35	8.27	7.59	7.50	8.35	8.27	7.59	7.50
Rho (ICC)					0.31	0.31	0.46	0.42	0.29	0.30	0.31	0.15
N (elections)	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393
N (countries)	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22

* p -value < 0.05; ** p -value < 0.01.

Standard errors in parenthesis.

Note: The dependent variable is the percentage vote share for all anti-system parties in a given general election in the decisive electoral tier of the lower house.

Controls: Logged effective number of electoral parties (lagged one election); logged trade exposure (lagged one year); logged level of GDP per capita (lagged one year); logged effective or legal electoral threshold; level of regional decentralisation (Regional Authority Index score). Decade fixed-effects begin with 1950-59 as the reference category.

Data Source: An original dataset compiled from multiple different sources by the author. See Chapter 3 of the main text for details.

Table D.2: Replication of Table 3.1 in the Main Text, but Measuring Mainstream Party L-R Polarisation by Maximum Ideological Range

	Pooled OLS Model (With Country-Clustered SEs)				Country Fixed-Effects				Random-Effects			
	Model 1a	Model 1b	Model 1c	Model 1d	Model 2a	Model 2b	Model 2c	Model 2d	Model 3a	Model 3b	Model 3c	Model 3d
% GDP _{pc} Growth (<i>y</i> – 1)	- 0.53 (0.34)	- 1.34 * (0.59)	- 1.36 * (0.51)	- 1.23 ** (0.44)	- 0.45 ** (0.17)	- 1.15 ** (0.32)	- 1.01 ** (0.30)	- 0.94 ** (0.30)	- 0.47 ** (0.17)	- 1.18 ** (0.32)	- 1.08 ** (0.30)	- 1.04 ** (0.30)
Mainstream Party L-R Polarisation	- 1.37 (0.77)	- 2.71 ** (0.95)	- 3.04 ** (0.84)	- 2.77 ** (0.66)	- 1.13 * (0.53)	- 2.25 ** (0.69)	- 2.19 ** (0.63)	- 2.34 ** (0.63)	- 1.15 ** (0.52)	- 2.30 ** (0.68)	- 2.20 ** (0.63)	- 2.38 ** (0.62)
Growth * Polarisation		0.52 * (0.22)	0.53 ** (0.19)	0.55 ** (0.19)		0.43 ** (0.17)	0.45 ** (0.16)	0.46 ** (0.16)		0.45 ** (0.17)	0.45 ** (0.16)	0.49 ** (0.16)
Grand Coalition			5.46 * (2.18)	5.74 ** (1.79)			6.85 ** (1.19)	6.40 ** (1.19)			6.41 ** (1.16)	6.06 ** (1.15)
Controls			Included	Included			Included	Included			Included	Included
Decade Fixed-Effects				Included				Included				Included
Constant	14.60 (1.87)	16.63 (2.46)	10.44 (21.74)	76.54 (37.93)	14.03 (1.01)	15.76 (1.22)	3.99 (12.89)	25.89 (28.92)	14.58 (1.55)	16.33 (1.70)	- 2.22 (11.27)	53.65 (21.59)
<i>R</i> ²	0.04	0.06	0.24	0.31	0.34	0.35	0.47	0.49	0.04	0.06	0.21	0.30
Corr. (u _i , X _b)					0.06	0.06	- 0.48	- 0.36				
Sigma_U					5.76	5.71	7.06	6.33	5.59	5.70	5.06	3.44
Sigma_e					8.40	8.34	7.63	7.55	8.40	8.34	7.63	7.55
Rho (ICC)					0.32	0.32	0.46	0.41	0.31	0.32	0.31	0.17
N (elections)	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393
N (countries)	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22

* *p*-value < 0.05; ** *p*-value < 0.01.

Standard errors in parenthesis.

Note: The dependent variable is the percentage vote share for all anti-system parties in a given general election in the decisive electoral tier of the lower house.

Controls: Logged effective number of electoral parties (lagged one election); logged trade exposure (lagged one year); logged level of GDP per capita (lagged one year); logged effective or legal electoral threshold; level of regional decentralisation (Regional Authority Index score). Decade fixed-effects begin with 1950-59 as the reference category.

Data Source: An original dataset compiled from multiple different sources by the author. See Chapter 3 of the main text for details.

Table D.3: Replication of Table 3.1 in the Main Text, but Measuring Mainstream Party L-R Polarisation by Distance of the Two Largest Parties

	Pooled OLS Model (With Country-Clustered SEs)				Country Fixed-Effects				Random-Effects			
	Model 1a	Model 1b	Model 1c	Model 1d	Model 2a	Model 2b	Model 2c	Model 2d	Model 3a	Model 3b	Model 3c	Model 3d
% GDP _{pc} Growth (<i>y</i> – 1)	- 0.55 (0.34)	- 0.83 † (0.44)	- 0.93 * (0.41)	- 0.85 * (0.36)	- 0.47 ** (0.17)	- 0.74 * (0.31)	- 0.70 * (0.29)	- 0.63 * (0.29)	- 0.48 ** (0.17)	- 0.75 ** (0.29)	- 0.75 ** (0.29)	- 0.70 * (0.29)
Mainstream Party L-R Polarisation	- 1.95 † (1.01)	- 2.52 * (0.98)	- 2.73 ** (0.83)	- 2.33 ** (0.90)	- 1.04 † (0.59)	- 1.57 * (0.78)	- 1.71 * (0.73)	- 1.77 ** (0.72)	- 1.16 ** (0.58)	- 1.69 ** (0.72)	- 1.69 * (0.72)	- 1.80 ** (0.72)
Growth * Polarisation		0.25 (0.30)	0.32 (0.25)	0.41 † (0.23)		0.24 (0.23)	0.35 † (0.21)	0.36 † (0.21)		0.24 (0.23)	0.33 (0.21)	0.35 † (0.22)
Grand Coalition			6.05 * (2.20)	6.25 ** (1.76)			7.04 ** (1.20)	6.61 ** (1.20)			6.62 ** (1.17)	6.33 ** (1.16)
Controls			Included	Included			Included	Included			Included	Included
Decade Fixed-Effects				Included				Included				Included
Constant	14.64 (1.99)	15.26 (2.07)	8.89 (22.52)	74.37 (37.81)	13.38 (0.88)	13.97 (1.04)	3.04 (13.22)	20.67 (29.32)	14.03 (1.41)	14.62 (1.54)	- 3.35 (11.40)	55.20 (20.86)
R ²	0.05	0.05	0.23	0.30	0.34	0.34	0.46	0.48	0.05	0.05	0.20	0.29
Corr. (u _i , X _b)					0.11	0.11	- 0.49	- 0.38				
Sigma_U					5.71	5.71	7.11	6.48	5.22	5.39	4.91	2.95
Sigma_e					8.43	8.42	7.71	7.63	8.42	8.41	7.71	7.63
Rho (ICC)					0.32	0.32	0.46	0.42	0.27	0.29	0.29	0.13
N (elections)	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393
N (countries)	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22

† *p*-value <0.10; * *p*-value < 0.05; ** *p*-value <0.01.

Standard errors in parenthesis.

Note: The dependent variable is the percentage vote share for all anti-system parties in a given general election in the decisive electoral tier of the lower house.

Controls: Logged effective number of electoral parties (lagged one election); logged trade exposure (lagged one year); logged level of GDP per capita (lagged one year); logged effective or legal electoral threshold; level of regional decentralisation (Regional Authority Index score). Decade fixed-effects begin with 1950-59 as the reference category.

Data Source: An original dataset compiled from multiple different sources by the author. See Chapter 3 of the main text for details.

Table D.4: Replication of Table 3.1 in the Main Text, but with a Logged Dependent Variable

	Pooled OLS Model (With Country-Clustered SEs)				Country Fixed-Effects				Random-Effects			
	Model 1a	Model 1b	Model 1c	Model 1d	Model 2a	Model 2b	Model 2c	Model 2d	Model 3a	Model 3b	Model 3c	Model 3d
% GDP _{pc} Growth ($y - 1$)	- 0.04 (0.03)	- 0.12 * (0.06)	- 0.12 * (0.06)	- 0.11 * (0.05)	- 0.03 (0.02)	- 0.08 * (0.03)	- 0.07 * (0.03)	- 0.06 * (0.03)	- 0.03 * (0.02)	- 0.09 ** (0.03)	- 0.08 ** (0.03)	- 0.10 ** (0.03)
Mainstream Party L-R Polarisation	- 0.29 * (0.14)	- 0.44 ** (0.13)	- 0.45 ** (0.10)	- 0.42 ** (0.09)	- 0.23 ** (0.06)	- 0.33 ** (0.08)	- 0.29 ** (0.08)	- 0.31 ** (0.08)	- 0.24 ** (0.06)	- 0.35 ** (0.08)	- 0.33 ** (0.08)	- 0.41 ** (0.08)
Growth * Polarisation		0.06 (0.03)	0.07 * (0.03)	0.07 * (0.03)		0.04 (0.02)	0.05 * (0.02)	0.05 * (0.02)		0.04 * (0.02)	0.05 * (0.02)	0.07 ** (0.02)
Grand Coalition			0.40 * (0.14)	0.40 ** (0.12)			0.48 ** (0.11)	0.44 ** (0.11)			0.46 ** (0.11)	0.40 ** (0.11)
Controls			Included	Included			Included	Included			Included	Included
Decade Fixed-Effects				Included				Included				Included
Constant	2.59 (0.15)	2.77 (0.17)	1.03 (2.11)	4.78 (2.74)	2.49 (0.09)	2.61 (0.11)	- 1.53 (1.24)	0.08 (2.74)	2.55 (0.13)	2.68 (0.15)	- 0.60 (1.02)	4.60 (1.53)
R^2	0.07	0.08	0.26	0.31	0.36	0.36	0.46	0.48	0.07	0.08	0.25	0.33
Corr. (u _i , X _b)					0.11	0.13	- 0.23	- 0.15				
Sigma_U					0.50	0.49	0.53	0.50	0.47	0.46	0.34	0.06
Sigma_e					0.78	0.78	0.73	0.72	0.78	0.78	0.73	0.72
Rho (ICC)					0.19	0.29	0.35	0.33	0.27	0.26	0.18	0.01
N (elections)	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393
N (countries)	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22

† p -value < 0.10; * p -value < 0.05; ** p -value < 0.01.

Standard errors in parenthesis.

Note: The dependent variable is the logged percentage vote share for all anti-system parties in a given general election in the decisive electoral tier of the lower house.

Controls: Logged effective number of electoral parties (lagged one election); logged trade exposure (lagged one year); logged level of GDP per capita (lagged one year); logged effective or legal electoral threshold; level of regional decentralisation. Decade fixed-effects begin with 1950-59 as the reference category.

Data Source: An original dataset compiled from multiple different sources by the author. See main text for details.

Table D.5: Modelling Aggregate Anti-System Party Electoral Support During and Outside Economic Recessions

	Pooled OLS Model (With Country-Clustered SEs)		Country Fixed-Effects	
	Model 1a <i>No Recession</i>	Model 1b <i>In Recession</i>	Model 2a <i>No Recession</i>	Model 2b <i>In Recession</i>
Mainstream Party L-R Polarisation	- 2.43 *	- 4.35 **	- 1.50 *	- 3.43 †
	(1.09)	(1.50)	(0.64)	(1.88)
Controls	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>
Constant	8.73	- 37.49	8.64	- 93.22
	(25.08)	(32.76)	(13.98)	(38.92)
R²	0.20	0.35	0.42	0.82
N (elections)	331	62	331	62
N (countries)	22	21	22	21

† *p*-value < 0.01; * *p*-value < 0.05; ** *p*-value < 0.01.

Hausmann Tests on FE v RE models: *p* = < 0.05.

Note: The dependent variable is the percentage vote share for all anti-system parties in a given general election in the decisive electoral tier of the lower house. A country-election is coded as ‘in recession’ if lagged GDP per capita growth (%) is negative.

Controls: Logged effective number of electoral parties (lagged one election); logged trade exposure (lagged one year); logged lagged level of GDP per capita (lagged one year); logged effective or legal electoral threshold; level of regional decentralisation (Regional Authority Index score); dummy variable for the presence of a grand coalition government in that year.

Data Source: An original dataset compiled from multiple different sources by the author. See main text for details

Table D.6: Modelling Variation in Aggregate Anti-System + System-Critical Party Support in 22 Advanced Parliamentary Democracies, 1950-2016

	Pooled OLS Model (With Country-Clustered SEs)				Country Fixed-Effects				Random-Effects			
	Model 1a	Model 1b	Model 1c	Model 1d	Model 2a	Model 2b	Model 2c	Model 2d	Model 3a	Model 3b	Model 3c	Model 3d
% GDP _{pc} Growth (<i>y</i> – 1)	- 0.45 (0.37)	- 0.66 (0.66)	- 0.69 (0.55)	- 0.49 (0.48)	- 0.47 ** (0.16)	- 0.70 * (0.33)	- 0.48 † (0.28)	- 0.35 (0.27)	- 0.47 ** (0.16)	- 0.70 * (0.33)	- 0.52 † (0.28)	- 0.39 (0.27)
Mainstream Party L-R Polarisation	- 2.48 † (1.41)	- 2.90 † (1.65)	- 3.27 * (1.19)	- 2.53 * (1.02)	- 1.50 ** (0.62)	- 1.95 * (0.84)	- 1.74 * (0.70)	- 1.90 ** (0.68)	- 1.55 ** (0.62)	- 2.00 * (0.83)	- 1.68 * (0.72)	- 1.81 ** (0.69)
Growth * Polarisation		0.17 (0.36)	0.22 (0.30)	0.26 (0.28)		0.18 (0.23)	0.29 (0.19)	0.28 (0.18)		0.18 (0.23)	0.26 (0.19)	0.26 (0.19)
Grand Coalition			5.67 * (1.91)	6.28 ** (1.28)			5.42 ** (1.04)	5.22 ** (1.02)			5.11 ** (1.05)	5.12 ** (1.02)
Controls			Included	Included			Included	Included			Included	Included
Decade Fixed-Effects				Included				Included				Included
Constant	18.85 (2.78)	19.36 (3.11)	- 3.25 (17.29)	88.62 (31.24)	17.63 (0.96)	18.17 (1.17)	2.09 (11.42)	59.84 (24.80)	18.18 (1.93)	18.73 (2.08)	- 10.09 (10.55)	67.57 (21.26)
R ²	0.04	0.04	0.39	0.50	0.51	0.51	0.67	0.70	0.04	0.04	0.30	0.42
Corr. (u _i , X _b)					0.06	0.06	- 0.50	- 0.31				
Sigma_U					7.85	7.85	9.54	8.13	7.91	8.14	5.52	4.69
Sigma_e					8.09	8.09	6.70	6.47	8.09	8.09	6.70	6.47
Rho (ICC)					0.49	0.49	0.67	0.61	0.49	0.50	0.41	0.34
N (elections)	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393
N (countries)	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22

† *p*-value < 0.10; * *p*-value < 0.05; ** *p*-value < 0.01.

Standard errors in parenthesis.

Note: The dependent variable is the percentage vote share for all anti-system and system-critical parties in a given general election in the decisive electoral tier of the lower house.

Controls: Logged effective number of electoral parties (lagged one election); logged trade exposure (lagged one year); logged level of GDP per capita (lagged one year); logged effective or legal electoral threshold; level of regional decentralisation. Decade fixed-effects begin with 1950-59 as the reference category.

Data Source: An original dataset compiled from multiple different sources by the author. See main text for details

Table D.7: Modelling Variation in Aggregate Anti-System + Complementary Party Support in 22 Advanced Parliamentary Democracies, 1950-2016

	Pooled OLS Model (With Country-Clustered SEs)				Country Fixed-Effects				Random-Effects			
	Model 1a	Model 1b	Model 1c	Model 1d	Model 2a	Model 2b	Model 2c	Model 2d	Model 3a	Model 3b	Model 3c	Model 3d
% GDP _{pc} Growth (<i>y</i> – 1)	- 0.41 (0.46)	- 0.50 (0.93)	- 0.59 (0.75)	- 0.38 (0.66)	- 0.35 † (0.21)	- 0.54 (0.42)	- 0.45 (0.38)	- 0.31 (0.37)	- 0.36 † (0.20)	- 0.54 (0.42)	- 0.49 (0.38)	- 0.33 (0.37)
Mainstream Party L-R Polarisation	- 3.10 * (1.08)	- 3.29 * (1.29)	- 3.69 ** (0.95)	- 3.29 * (0.93)	- 2.50 ** (0.80)	- 2.88 ** (1.08)	- 2.82 ** (0.97)	- 2.98 ** (0.95)	- 2.62 ** (0.78)	- 2.96 ** (1.06)	- 2.82 ** (0.96)	- 2.97 ** (0.95)
Growth * Polarisation		0.07 (0.46)	0.15 (0.39)	0.19 (0.36)		0.15 (0.29)	0.24 (0.26)	0.24 (0.26)		0.14 (0.29)	0.18 (0.26)	0.20 (0.26)
Grand Coalition			6.37 ** (2.36)	6.27 ** (1.94)			8.00 ** (1.44)	7.22 ** (1.42)			7.24 ** (1.39)	6.61 ** (1.34)
Controls			Included	Included			Included	Included			Included	Included
Decade Fixed-Effects				Included				Included				Included
Constant	21.04 (2.42)	21.26 (3.05)	5.23 (24.17)	61.82 (36.02)	20.12 (1.23)	20.58 (1.51)	16.71 (15.72)	43.79 (34.53)	20.67 (1.62)	21.08 (1.85)	0.93 (13.14)	59.71 (22.42)
R ²	0.05	0.05	0.26	0.34	0.26	0.26	0.43	0.46	0.05	0.05	0.24	0.33
Corr. (u _i , X _b)					0.09	0.09	- 0.65	- 0.51				
Sigma_U					5.64	5.64	8.92	7.45	5.19	5.28	4.50	2.62
Sigma_e					10.38	10.39	9.22	9.02	10.38	10.39	9.22	9.02
Rho (ICC)					0.23	0.23	0.48	0.41	0.20	0.21	0.19	0.08
N (elections)	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393
N (countries)	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22

† *p*-value <0.10; * *p*-value < 0.05; ** *p*-value <0.01.

Standard errors in parenthesis.

Note: The dependent variable is the percentage vote share for all anti-system and complementary parties in a given general election in the decisive electoral tier of the lower house.**Controls:** Logged effective number of electoral parties (lagged one election); logged trade exposure (lagged one year); logged level of GDP per capita (lagged one year); logged effective or legal electoral threshold; level of regional decentralisation. Decade fixed-effects begin with 1950-59 as the reference category.**Data Source:** An original dataset compiled from multiple different sources by the author. See main text for details.

Appendix E: Descriptive Statistics for Chapter Four

Table E.1: Descriptive Statistics and Coding Information for Variables Used in Chapter Four

Variable	Statistic / Option	Descriptive Statistics (n =87027 in 72 country-elections)
Vote Choice Vote choice is a categorical variable indicating a respondent's behaviour at that election. Respondents were coded as voting for a <i>mainstream incumbent</i> party, a <i>mainstream opposition</i> party, a <i>complementary</i> party, a <i>system-critical</i> party, an <i>anti-system</i> party or <i>abstaining</i>. Please see Appendix A for the classification of individual parties by country. Parties are classified as 'incumbent' if they held a seat in cabinet prior to the election being called. Those who respondent 'don't know' were classified as abstaining. The data comes from the CSES Integrated Module Dataset [IMD] (CSES 2019), which harmonises election studies that took place under the CSES umbrella during the first four 'modules' (waves) of the study, 1996-2016. Here I only focus on the 72 elections that took place in advanced western parliamentary democracies (see Chapter 2 in the main text for case selection justification). Vote choice was recorded as the open-ended response to either one of the following two variables in the CSES IMD, with the vote choice at the decisive electoral tier in that country: IMD3002_LH_DC = Lower house vote choice in respondent's local district. IMD3002_LH_PL = Lower house vote choice from a party-list.	Mainstream Incumbent: Mainstream Opposition: Complementary Party: System-Critical Party: Anti-System Party: Abstention:	35.7% 31.6% 6.1% 3.5% 10.2% 13%
Perceived Mainstream Party L-R Polarisation The perceived level of ideological polarisation amongst mainstream political parties. Derived from the respondents' placement of mainstream parties (up to 9 per respondent) on an 11-point left-right scale. The data comes from the CSES Integrated Module Dataset (CSES 2019), which harmonises election studies that took place under the CSES umbrella during the first four 'modules' (waves) of the study, 1996-2016. Here I only focus on the 72 elections that took place in advanced western parliamentary democracies (see Chapter 2 in the main text for case selection justification). See Appendix A for details on the coding of 'mainstream' parties. The contribution of each party to the respondents' level of perceived polarisation was weighted by their size (in terms of vote share). See Appendix B for more information about the construction of this index. The variable theoretically runs from 0 (the respondent sees no ideological difference between mainstream parties) to 10 (the respondent places two large parties at opposite ends of the ideological spectrum). Only respondents who placed at least two mainstream parties on the scale were included	Mean Std. Dev Q1 Q2 Q3 Q4	3.98 2.02 2.61 3.85 5.15 10.00

The relevant variables in the CSES IMD are **IMD3007_A - IMD3007_I** (which record the left-right score given to each party by any given respondent. The exact question wording was: "*In politics people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you place [PARTY A] on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?*").

Positive Evaluation of National Economy		Mean	2.96
Respondents were asked to evaluate the state of their particular national economy during the twelve months leading up the election/survey. These responses were scaled 1-5, so that 5 indicates the most positive evaluation ('the economy has got a lot better') and 1 the most negative ('the economy has got a lot worse').		Std. Dev	0.99
The relevant variables in the CSES IMD that were used to create this index are:		Q1	2.00
IMD3013_1: " <i>Would you say that over the past twelve months, the state of economy in [COUNTRY] has gotten better, stayed about the same, or gotten worse?</i> ": Gotten better; Stayed the same; Gotten worse.		Q2	3.00
If respondent answered "better":		Q3	4.00
IMD3013_2: " <i>Would you say much better or somewhat better?</i> " Much better; Somewhat better.		Q4	5.00
If respondent answered "worse":			
IMD3013_3: " <i>Would you say much better or somewhat better?</i> " Much worse; Somewhat worse.			
Left-Right Radicalism		Mean	1.74
Respondents to election surveys (CSES 2019) were asked to place themselves on an 11-point scale where 0 indicates they are very left-wing, and 10 indicates that they are very right-wing. The absolute distance between their chosen position and 5 (the central value) was taken to indicate how ideologically 'radical' the respondent considers themselves. No distinction is made between being far-left or far-right.		Std. Dev	1.47
The relevant variable is the CSES dataset was IMD3006: " <i>In politics people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you place yourself on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?</i> ".		Q1	0.00
		Q2	2.00
		Q3	3.00
		Q4	5.00

Partisanship		Mainstream Incumbent:	24.2%
This is a categorical variable indicating which type of party a respondent feels close to: incumbent mainstream, opposition mainstream, complementary party, system-critical party, or anti-system party. See Appendix A for classification of parties by country. Respondents were only classed as partisans if they reported feeling at least ‘somewhat close’ (the options were not close at all, not very close, somewhat close, or very close) to any given party. Respondents who did not feel at least that close to any particular party were classified as non-partisans. As were those that responded, ‘don’t know’.		Mainstream Opposition:	20.0%
The relevant variables in the CSES dataset that were used to construct this dummy are:		Complementary Party:	2.9%
IMD3005_1 : “Do you usually think of yourself as close to any particular party?” Yes; No		System-Critical Party:	2.3%
If respondent answered “No”:		Anti-System Party:	5.9%
IMD3005_2 : “Do you feel yourself a little closer to one of the political parties than the others?” Yes; No		Non-Partisan:	44.8%
If respondent answered “Yes” to either of the previous questions:			
IMD3005_3 : “Which party do you feel closest to?”			
This was an open-ended question, with respondent able to name any particular party. Responses were subsequently coded into ‘types’ of parties, using the procedure laid out in Appendix A.			
IMD3005_4 : “Do you feel very close to this party, somewhat close, or not very close?” Very close; Somewhat close; Not very close			
Respondents were only coded as ‘having’ a partisan identity if they named a particular party (IMD3005_3) and respondent being at least ‘somewhat’ or ‘very’ close to that party (IM3005_4). All other responses (including ‘don’t knows’) were coded as ‘non-partisans’.			
Gender		Male:	52%
Gender is coded 1 for females and 0 for males.		Female:	48%
The relevant variable in the CSES dataset is IMD2002 .			
Age Category		18-24:	7.8%
Self-reported age is divided into four categories: 18-24; 25-44; 45-64; 65+.		25-44:	35.1%
The relevant variable in the CSES dataset is IMD2001_1 .		45-64:	37.5%
		65+:	19.7%

Income Category	Quintile 1:	18.0%
Self-reported annual household income is divided into quintiles (based on the national distribution of household income at nearest time point available to that election) by the individual national CSES teams. The relevant variable in the CSES dataset is: IMD2006: “Taking everything together, with pensions, social benefits, salaries, profit, and all other income from selling products, money sent from abroad, and so forth, how much is the total income of your household in a month after taxes?”	Q2:	20.4%
	Q3:	21.9%
	Q4:	20.2%
	Q5:	19.5%
Education Category	Lower:	29.3%
Respondents were divided into three groups based on the age at which they reported finishing full-time education. The relevant variable in the CSES dataset is IMD2003 , which was originally coded: <i>None / Illiterate</i> (1); <i>Primary education / lower secondary education</i> (2); <i>Higher secondary education</i> (3); <i>Post-secondary (non-university) education</i> (4); <i>University education</i> (5); <i>Other</i> (6). Which was then recoded into three categories:	Middle:	45.5%
	Higher:	25.2%
1. Lower (left school pre-16) = IMD2003 = 1 or 2.		
2. Middle (left school aged 16-19) = IMD2003 = 3, 4 or 6.		
3. Higher (university qualifications) = IMD2003 = 5.		
Mainstream Party L-R Manifesto Polarisation	Mean:	1.16
The weighted (by vote share) level of ideological polarisation amongst mainstream political parties. Derived from the relative emphasis of left- or right-wing ‘issues’ in the parties’ electoral programmes. The data came from the MARPOR’s Manifesto Project Dataset [Version 2019a]’ (Volkens et al.2019). See Appendix B for further details on the coding process. See Appendix A for details on the coding of ‘mainstream’ parties. The variable theoretically runs from 0 (no ideological differences between mainstream parties) to 10 (maximum polarisation). Please note that, unlike the other variables in this model, this variable is measure at the ‘upper level’ – that is, at the country-election level - rather than varying by individual respondent.	Std. Dev:	0.65
	Q1:	0.69
	Q2:	0.99
	Q3:	1.63
	Q4:	2.59
% GDPpc Growth ($y - 1$)	Min:	- 8.95
The % change in Gross Domestic Product [GDP] (per capita) lagged by one year (so the change between 2012 and 2013 for an election held in 2014). These figures are for real GDP in constant 2011 national prices (US dollars) and were sourced from the Penn World Table [Version 9.1] (Feenstra, Inklaar, and Timmer 2015).	Mean:	1.61
	Std. Dev:	1.97
	Q1:	0.86
	Q2:	1.76

Note: Measured at the country-election level, rather than varying at the level of the individual respondent.	Q3:	2.73
	Q4:	6.09
GDPpc Level ($y - 1$)	Min:	21407
Level of real GDP per capita in constant 2011 national prices (US dollars), lagged by one year (so 2013 figures for an election held in 2014). Sourced from the Penn World Table [Version 9.1] (Feenstra, Inklaar, and Timmer 2015). I.e. an inflation-adjusted measure of the value of all goods and services produced by an economy in one year.	Mean:	40156
	Std. Dev:	13084
	Q1:	32319
	Q2:	38225
	Q3:	42923
Note: Measured at the country-election level, rather than varying at the level of the individual respondent.	Q4:	83401
Effective or Legal Electoral Threshold (Logged)	Min:	-0.40
An electoral threshold refers to the minimum share of the first-round vote in the decisive electoral tier (i.e. that which distributes the most seats to the lower-house of parliament) that a candidate or political party must achieve before they become entitled to any representation in a legislature. For this variable I take <u>whichever is the highest out of the following</u> :	Mean:	2.05
	Std. Dev:	1.01
	Q1:	1.61
	Q2:	1.88
	Q3:	2.66
	Q4:	3.62
1. The '<u>effective electoral threshold</u>'. This is calculated using the formula developed by Michael Gallagher (2019), i.e. $75 / (X + 1)$ (where X is the average district magnitude or representatives elected per seat). In the Netherlands, the figure is 0.67, in the UK it is 37.5%. 2. The '<u>legal threshold</u>', which is the vote share mandated by law that any party must achieve in certain countries before receiving representation in the national parliament. For example, in Sweden this is formally 4% and in Germany this is 5% (though both countries have exceptions for strong performers in a particular constituency or winning a certain number of single member districts, respectively).		
Effective threshold was calculated using data from Bormann and Golder (Bormann and Golder 2013); legal thresholds were obtained from Reading University's 'Electoral Change in Europe since 1945' reports.		
Note: Measured at the country-election level, rather than varying at the level of the individual respondent.		

Appendix F: Supplementary Material for Chapter Four

The following tables present several robustness tests designed to partially replicate the models presented in Chapter Four, albeit with slight variations to model specification. It is hoped that this supplementary material will further buttress the validity and credibility of my theories and findings from that chapter.

Table F.1

The models presented in Table 4.3 distinguished between five types of party: mainstream incumbent, mainstream opposition, complementary, system-critical, and anti-system, as well as abstention. Distinguishing between mainstream incumbent and mainstream opposition parties meant theoretical sense as the economic voting literature tends to focus on the propensity of voters to punish incumbent parties, rather than ‘mainstream parties’ as a whole. (Duch and Stevenson 2008; Powell and Whitten 1993). However, the literature on support for radical parties usually makes no such distinction, and voting for (say) the radical right and radical left is usually just compared against a baseline of voting for any mainstream party, whether incumbent or not (e.g. Arzheimer 2009; Gomez and Ramiro 2019, though see Hobolt and Tilley 2016). Table F.1 demonstrates what the results would look like if I pooled supporters of mainstream incumbent opposition parties together, and used this new group as the reference category for my models.

The results are practically unchanged. Voters are more likely to support an anti-system party when mainstream parties are ideologically convergent, and this depolarisation coincides with an economic downturn. This may well indicate that, under conditions of convergence, the electorate is more likely to find mainstream parties as a class responsible for poor economic performance, regardless if they happen to find themselves in government at that moment or not.

Table F.2

Table 4.3 of the main text presented the results of a multilevel multinomial logistic regression model which attempted to predict vote choice using, most importantly, the interactive product of a survey respondent’s level of perceived mainstream party polarisation (how ideologically distinct they saw mainstream parties as being) and the strength of their national economy at the time of the survey (using lagged per capita GDP growth).

As discussed in the main text, the dependent variable ‘vote choice’ had six categories: voting for the mainstream incumbent party, voting for a mainstream opposition party, voting for a complementary

party, voting for a system-critical party, voting for an anti-system party, and choosing to abstain from voting altogether. Please see Appendix A for information on how this typology was constructed. Due to limitations of space, Table 4.3 only presented the effects of the various coefficients on voting for mainstream opposition parties, anti-system parties, or abstention (which were relative to voting for mainstream incumbent parties, the reference category). Table F.2 presents the rest of the results from the model, i.e. the effects of coefficients on support for complementary parties and system-critical parties. Respectively, parties which have not served in government, but do not have a radical ideology; and parties that do serve in government (or support governing parties), but are not radical.

While I did not present a detailed set of hypotheses concerning support for these types of parties, the results are still somewhat interesting. As one might expect, believing that mainstream parties are ‘closer together’ ideologically is consistently associated with support for these ‘non-mainstream’ parties; although the coefficients for complementary parties are around half the size of those associated with support for fully-fledged anti-system parties (displayed in Table 4.3). Interestingly, voters are more likely to support complementary parties when the economy is doing badly, particularly so if they also happen to believe that mainstream parties are ideologically homogenous. That is, support for complementary parties responds to exactly the same dynamics that I theorised should boost support for anti-system parties in my crisis and convergence model. Given that there is no such effect for system-critical parties, one might infer that it is the fact that anti-system parties have ‘clean hands’ (i.e. they do not make deals with governing parties or serve in government themselves) more so than the fact that they are ‘radical’ that allows them to profit during times of economic turmoil and the discrediting of the orthodox ideology presented by establishment parties. More work will clearly be needed to confirm the relative importance of radical ideological positions and ‘outsider’ status, however. The main difference between anti-system parties and complementary parties, apart from the slightly reduced importance of perceived polarisation, appears to be the much smaller effect of ideological radicalism (i.e. placing oneself further from the centre on a left-right spectrum) on support the latter.

Table F.1: Replication of Table 4.3 in the Main Text, but Using Support for All Mainstream Parties (Not Just Incumbents) as the Reference Category

Random-Effects Multilevel Multinomial Regression	Model A (vs. Voting Mainstream Party)		Model B (vs. Voting Mainstream Party)		Model C (vs. Voting Mainstream Party)	
	Voting Anti-System	Abstention	Voting Anti-System	Abstention	Voting Anti-System	Abstention
<u>Voter Level</u>						
Perceived Mainstream Party Polarisation	- 0.13 (0.01) **	- 0.12 (0.01) **	- 0.13 (0.01) **	- 0.11 (0.01) **	- 0.11 (0.01) **	- 0.07 (0.01) **
Ideological Radicalism					0.12 (0.01) *	- 0.05 (0.01) **
Demographic Controls			Included	Included	Included	Included
Partisanship Controls					Included	Included
<u>Country-Election Level</u>						
% GDPpc Growth (y – 1)	- 0.14 (0.03) **	- 0.02 (0.03)	- 0.13 (0.03) **	- 0.04 (0.03)	- 0.13 (0.03) **	- 0.04 (0.03)
Upper Level Controls	Included	Included	Included	Included	Included	Included
<u>Cross-Level Interaction</u>						
Perceived Polarisation * GDP Growth	0.02 (0.00) **	0.00 (0.01)	0.02 (0.00) **	0.00 (0.01)	0.02 (0.00) **	0.00 (0.01)
Constant	0.59 (0.18)	- 1.35 (0.18)	0.60 (0.11)	- 1.94 (0.22)	- 1.49 (0.24)	- 2.68 (0.24)
Log Likelihood	- 85821.77		- 83755.66		- 67299.10	
Δ in Log-Likelihood	2310.34		2066.12		16456.56	
RE Variance (Lv.2)	0.331 (0.041)		0.352 (0.048)		0.270 (0.046)	
N (Lv.1 - Voters)	87027		87027		87027	
N (Lv.2 – National Elections)	72		72		72	

* p-value < 0.05; ** p-value < 0.01

Standard errors in parenthesis.

Note: The dependent variable is vote choice: ‘mainstream parties’ (the reference category); ‘complementary parties’; ‘system-critical parties’; ‘anti-system parties’; or abstention. Party classifications are listed in Appendix A. Changes in log-likelihood are relative to the last model (or the null model – no independent variables – for Model A).

Demographic Controls: Gender; age leaving education; household income; age.

Partisanship Controls: ‘Do you usually think of yourself as close to any particular party?’ (a 5-category variable indicating whether a respondent is at least ‘somewhat’ close to each of the four type of party in question, or no party at all).

Upper Level Controls: Logged level of GDP per capita (lagged one year); Logged effective or legal electoral threshold (whichever is higher).

Survey Data Source: *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems Waves 1-4 (1996 – 16)* [CSES 2018].

Economic Growth Data Source: Real per capita GDP in constant 2011 national prices (US dollars) from Penn World Table Version 9. (Feenstra *et al.* 2015).

Table F.2: Modelling Variation in Individual Anti-System Party Voting in Four CSES Survey Waves, 1996-2016 - The Rest of Table 4.3

Random-Effects Multilevel Multinomial Regression	Model A (vs. Voting Mainstream Party)		Model B (vs. Voting Mainstream Party)		Model C (vs. Voting Mainstream Party)	
	Voting Complementary	Voting System-Critical	Voting Complementary	Voting System-Critical	Voting Complementary	Voting System-Critical
<u>Voter Level</u>						
Perceived Mainstream Party Polarisation	- 0.11 (0.01) **	- 0.09 (0.01) **	- 0.10 (0.01) **	- 0.08 (0.02) **	- 0.06 (0.01) **	- 0.11 (0.02) **
Ideological Radicalism					0.03 (0.01) *	0.14 (0.02) **
Demographic Controls			Included	Included	Included	Included
Partisanship Controls					Included	Included
<u>Country-Election Level</u>						
% GDPpc Growth (y –1)	- 0.13 (0.03) **	0.00 (0.03)	- 0.10 (0.03) **	0.01 (0.03)	- 0.07 (0.01) **	0.02 (0.04)
Upper Level Controls	Included	Included	Included	Included	Included	Included
<u>Cross-Level Interaction</u>						
Perceived Polarisation * GDP Growth	0.02 (0.00) **	0.01 (0.01)	0.02 (0.00) **	0.01 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01) **	0.02 (0.01) *
Constant	- 2.38 (0.16)	- 2.75 (0.17)	- 2.40 (0.16)	- 2.45 (0.17)	- 4.48 (0.16)	- 4.98 (0.19)
Log Likelihood	- 127940.62		- 125829.25		- 91975.02	
Δ in Log-Likelihood	2799.06		2111.37		33854.84	
RE Variance (Lv.2)	0.168 (0.021)		0.166 (0.020)		0.127 (0.015)	
N (Lv.1 - Voters)	87027		87027		87027	
N (Lv.2 – National Elections)	72		72		72	

* *p*-value <0.05; ** *p*-value <0.01

Standard errors in parenthesis.

Note: The dependent variable is vote choice: ‘mainstream opposition parties’; ‘complementary parties’; ‘system-critical parties’; ‘anti-system parties’; or abstention. The reference category is voting for a mainstream incumbent. Party classifications are listed in Appendix A. Coefficients for support for anti-system, mainstream opposition, or abstention are presented in Table 4.3 of the main text. Changes in log-likelihood are relative to the last model (or the null model – no independent variables – for Model A).

Demographic Controls: Gender; age leaving education (pre-16; 16-19; post-19); household income (quintiles); age (16-24; 25-44; 45-64; 65+).

Partisanship Controls: ‘Do you usually think of yourself as close to any particular party?’ (a 6-category variable indicating whether a respondent is at least ‘somewhat’ close to each of the five type of party in question, or no party at all).

Upper Level Controls: Logged level of GDP per capita (lagged one year); logged effective or legal electoral threshold (whichever is higher).

Survey Data Source: *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems Waves 1-4 (1996 – 16)* [CSES 2018].

Economic Growth Data Source: Real per capita GDP in constant 2011 national prices (US dollars) from Penn World Table Version 9. (Feenstra *et al.* 2015).

Appendix G: Descriptive Statistics for Chapter Five

Table G.1: Descriptive Statistics for Variables Used in the BES Analysis in Chapter Five and the Conclusion

A Note on Table G.1

In what follows, I present a table of descriptive statistics for the variables used in my analysis of various British Election Study [BES] datasets.

The BES is a long-running academic research project that has interviewed a few thousand voters, a representative sample of the British electorate, at every General Election since 1964. However, due to my substantive interests in a few key variables that have only been asked regularly since 1987, I only focus on the eight studies from that contest onwards during the multivariate analysis contained in this thesis:

1987 BES Cross-Section (Heath, Jowell, and Curtice 1993)

1992 BES Cross-Section (Heath, Jowell, and Curtice 1993)

1997 BES Cross-Section (Heath, Jowell, and Curtice 1999)

2001 BES Cross-Section (Clarke et al. 2003)

2005 BES Post-Election Survey (Clarke et al. 2006)

2010 BES Cross-Section (Whiteley and Sanders 2014)

2015 BES Face-to-face Post-election Survey Version 4.0. (Fieldhouse et al. 2016)

2017 BES Face-to-face Post-election Survey Version 1.5. (Fieldhouse et al. 2018)⁹³

Table G.1 records descriptive statistics and coding information for the variables used in my analysis of these studies. This analysis takes place in both Chapter 5 and the Conclusion section of my thesis. The reported values are after the survey weight for that particular weight has been applied. The codes refer to those used in the relevant original BES dataset.

⁹³ All of these datasets were downloaded from the official British Election Study website on 02/12/2019.

Table G.1: Descriptive Statistics for Variables Used in the BES Analysis in Chapter Five and the Conclusion by BES Edition

Variable	Statistic / Option	BES 1987	BES 1992	BES 1997	BES 2001	BES 2005	BES 2010	BES 2015	BES 2017
		N = 6000	N = 5232	N = 3615	N = 3035	N = 4791	N = 3512	N = 2987	N = 2194
'Great Difference' between Lab-Con	Yes	83.6%	55.0%	32.5%	27.4%	21.8%	37.2%	27.3%	42.2%
Respondents were asked: “ <i>Considering everything the Conservative and Labour Parties stand for, would you say that ‘There is a great difference between them’; ‘There is some difference’; ‘There is not much difference between them’; or ‘Don’t Know’.</i> ” I recoded this data to create a dummy variable indicating whether the respondent said there was a ‘great difference’ (1), or only ‘some’, ‘not much’ difference or ‘don’t know’ (0).	No	16.4%	45.0%	67.5%	72.6%	78.2%	62.8%	72.7%	57.8%
The original BES variables used to construct this dummy variable are v14d (1987), v15b (1992), conlabdf (1997), cq11 (2001), cq8 (2005), cq9 (2010), and q11 (2015 and 2017).									
Smallest Respondent – Lab/Con Gap on L-R Axis	Mean	NA	NA	1.22	1.08	1.03	NA	1.57	1.63
Respondents were asked: “ <i>In politics people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you place yourself on the following scale?</i> ”. They were subsequently presented with an 11-point scale running from 0 (very left-wing) to 10 (very right-wing). After placing themselves on this scale, a follow-up question asked respondents: “ <i>Where would you place the following parties</i> ” on the same 11-point scale. Among the parties they were asked to place were Labour and the Conservatives. I use both respondents’ self-placements and their party placements to create an index measuring how far from their own ideal ideological position they see Labour or the Conservatives (whichever is nearer) being. The resulting index runs from 0 to 10, where 0 indicates at least one of Labour or the Conservatives is seen to be at the voters’ own ideal spot, and 10 indicates that the respondent sees both parties as being as far away from their own position as possible.	Std. Dev			1.27	1.35	1.19		1.46	1.42
	Quartile 1			0.00	0.00	0.00		0.00	1.00
	Quartile 2			1.00	1.00	1.00		1.00	1.00
	Quartile 3			2.00	2.00	1.00		2.00	2.00
	Quartile 4			10.00	10.00	10.00		10.00	10.00

The original BES variables used to construct this index are **resplr**, **lablr**, and **conlr** (1997); **bq38f**, **bq38a**, and **bq38n** (2001); **bq39a**, **bq39b**, and **bq39c** (2005); and **e01**, **cses_q1_1**, and **cses_q1_2** (2015 and 2017).

Smallest Respondent – Lab/Con Gap on Tax Issues	Mean	1.32	1.20	1.19	1.51	0.97	0.95	1.36	1.35
Respondents were asked: “Some people feel that government should put up taxes a lot and spend much more on health and social services ... Other people feel that government should cut taxes a lot and spend much less on health and social services ... What comes closest to your own views about taxes and spending”. They were subsequently presented with an 11-point scale running from 0 (cut taxes/spend less) to 10 (raise taxes/spend more). After placing themselves on this scale, a follow-up question asked respondents: “Where would you place the following parties” on the same 11-point scale. Among the parties they were asked to place were Labour and the Conservatives. I use both respondents’ self-placements and their party placements to create an index measuring how far from their own ideal position on tax/spend issues they see Labour or the Conservatives (whichever is nearer) being. The resulting index runs from 0 to 10, where 0 indicates at least one of Labour or the Conservatives is seen to be at the voters’ own ideal spot, and 10 indicates that the respondent sees both parties as being as far away from their own position as possible.	Std. Dev	1.58	1.42	1.50	1.64	1.16	1.17	1.47	1.40
	Quartile 1	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Quartile 2	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
	Quartile 3	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	2.00
	Quartile 4	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	9.00	9.00	10.00	10.00
The original BES variables used to construct this index are v29a , v29b , and v29c (1987); va36a , va36b , and va36c (1992); rtxspd , and labtxspd , contxspd (1997); bq39a , bq39b , and bq39c (2001); bq38a , bq38b , and bq38c (2005); bq40_1 , bq40_2 , and bq40_3 (2010); and g01_1 , g01_2 , and g01_3 (2015 and 2017).									
Smallest Respondent – Lab/Con Gap on Lib-Auth Issues	Mean	1.34	1.69	1.01	2.01	1.38	1.50	1.79	1.78
Due to variations in the type of questions asked by the BES over time, I had to use the answers to two different questions to create the measure of how far apart voters see Labour and the Conservatives from themselves on so-called ‘second dimension’, ‘sociocultural’ or ‘libertarian-authoritarian’ issues (i.e. ideological issues that do not pertain to the ‘classic’ left-right divide). In all but one of the BES studies between 1987 and 2010 I used attitudes to the trade-off between protecting civil rights and cutting crime; in 1997 I use attitudes to gender roles; with the 2015 and 2017 editions I used attitudes to EU integration.	Std. Dev	1.77	2.15	1.56	2.02	1.53	1.62	2.18	2.02
	Quartile 1	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Quartile 2	1.00	1.00	0.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
	Quartile 3	2.00	2.00	1.00	3.00	2.00	2.00	3.00	3.00
	Quartile 4	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00

Respondents in the 1987, 1992, 2001, 2005, and 2010 editions were asked: “Some people feel that protecting civil rights is more important than cutting crime...Other people feel that cutting crime is more important than protecting civil rights...What comes closest to your own views about law and order?”. In some editions the question wording substituted ‘the civil liberties’/‘rights of the accused’ for ‘civil rights’, but the principle of a trade-off with cutting or reducing crime was maintained in each.

Respondents in the 1997 edition were asked: “Which of these comes closest to your views. “Women should have an equal role with men in running business, industry and government” or “A woman’s place is in the home”?”

Respondents in the 2015 and 2017 editions were asked: “Which of these comes closest to your views. Britain should “Do all it can to unite fully with the European Union” or Britain should “Do all it can to protect its independence from the European Union”?”

Respondents were then presented with 11-point scales running from 0 (protect rights/women equal role/ EU unification) to 10 (cut crime/women’s place is the home/protect independence). After placing themselves on these scales, follow-up questions asked them: “Where would you place the following parties” on the same scales. Among the parties they were asked to place were Labour and the Conservatives. I use both respondents’ self-placements and their party placements to create an index measuring how far from their own ideal position on these ‘libertarian-authoritarian’ issues they see Labour or the Conservatives (whichever is nearer) being. The resulting index runs from 0 to 10, where 0 indicates at least one of Labour or the Conservatives is seen to be at the voters’ own ideal spot, and 10 indicates that the respondent sees both parties as being as far away from their own position as possible.

The original BES variables used to construct this index are: **v39a**, **v39b**, and **v39c** (1987); **va39a**, **va39b**, and **va39c** (1992); **rwhom2**, **labwhom2**, and **conwhom2** (1997); **cq13a**, **cq13b**, and **cq13c** (2001); **bq40a**, **bq40b**, and **bq40c** (2005); **bq41_1**, **bq41_2**, and **bq41_3** (2010); and **p03_1**, **p03_2**, and **p03_3** (2015 and 2017).

Respondent Radicalism on L-R Axis	Mean	NA	NA	1.58	1.35	1.28	NA	1.31	1.50
As previously mentioned, BES respondents were asked to place themselves on an 11-point scale running from 0 (very left-wing) to 10 (very right-wing). I	Std. Dev			1.53	1.44	1.31		1.38	1.42
	Quartile 1			0.00	0.00	0.00		0.00	0.00

recoded this data to create an index of how ideologically radical any given voter was. This was achieved by taking the absolute difference between the respondent's chosen position and 5, i.e. the central value of the 11-point scale. Values therefore range from 0 to 5, with higher values indicating that the respondent considered themselves to be further away from a 'centrist' ideological position (regardless of whether this is to the left or right of the centre).

See above for the original BES variables used to construct this index.

Quartile 2	1.00	1.00	1.00		1.00	1.00
Quartile 3	3.00	2.00	2.00		2.00	2.00
Quartile 4	5.00	5.00	5.00		5.00	5.00

Respondent Radicalism on Tax-Spend Issues

As previously mentioned, BES respondents were asked to place themselves on an 11-point scale running from 0 (cut taxes/spend less) to 10 (raise taxes/spend more). I recoded this data to create an index of how radical any given voter's opinions on government spending were. This was achieved by taking the absolute difference between the respondent's chosen position and 5, i.e. the central value of the 11-point scale. Values therefore range from 0 to 5, with higher values indicating that the respondent considered themselves to be further away from a 'centrist' ideological position (regardless of whether this is to the left or right of the centre).

See above for the original BES variables used to construct this index.

Mean	2.25	2.52	2.68	1.99	1.54	1.52	1.75	2.12
Std. Dev	1.85	1.83	1.79	1.64	1.44	1.46	1.59	1.67
Quartile 1	0.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Quartile 2	2.00	3.00	3.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	2.00
Quartile 3	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	2.00	2.00	3.00	3.00
Quartile 4	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00

Respondent Radicalism on Lib-Auth Issues

As previously mentioned, BES respondents were asked to place themselves on various 11-point scales concerning 'second dimension issues' – law and order, gender roles, and EU integration in different BES studies. I recoded this data to create an index of how radical any given voter was on these 'libertarian-authoritarian' scales. This was achieved by taking the absolute difference between the respondent's chosen position and 5, i.e. the central value of the 11-point scale. Values therefore range from 0 to 5, with higher values indicating that the respondent considered themselves to be further away from a 'centrist' position (regardless of whether this is to the left or right of the centre).

See above for the original BES variables used to construct this index.

Mean	2.69	3.09	4.13	2.83	2.19	2.36	2.55	2.86
Std. Dev	1.92	1.82	1.49	1.91	1.65	1.73	1.81	1.79
Quartile 1	1.00	2.00	4.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Quartile 2	3.00	3.00	5.00	3.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	3.00
Quartile 3	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	5.00
Quartile 4	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00

Lab-Con Gap on Left-Right Axis	Mean	NA	NA	4.61	2.78	2.74	NA	4.72	5.69
As previously mentioned, BES respondents were asked to place Labour and the Conservatives on an 11-point scale running from 0 (very left-wing) to 10 (very right-wing). I use these party placements to create an index of how ideologically polarised respondents perceived Labour and Conservatives as being in left-right terms. This index is the absolute difference between where they place each party, and runs from 0 (if the respondent believes that both parties share the same left-right position) to 10 (if the respondent believes that the parties lie at opposite ends of the spectrum).	Std. Dev			2.68	2.13	2.11		2.74	2.63
	Quartile 1			3.00	1.00	1.00		3.00	4.00
	Quartile 2			5.00	2.00	2.00		5.00	6.00
	Quartile 3			6.00	4.00	4.00		6.00	7.00
	Quartile 4			10.00	10.00	10.00		10.00	10.00

See above for the original BES variables used to construct this index.

Lab-Con Gap on Tax Issues	Mean	5.11	5.09	3.99	2.14	2.03	2.35	2.89	3.70
As previously mentioned, BES respondents were asked to place Labour and the Conservatives on an 11-point scale running from 0 (cut taxes/spend less) to 10 (raise taxes/spend more). I use these party placements to create an index of how ideologically polarised respondents perceived Labour and Conservatives as being on tax-spend issues. This index is the absolute difference between where they place each party, and runs from 0 (if the respondent believes that both parties share the same position) to 10 (if the respondent believes that the parties lie at opposite ends of the spectrum).	Std. Dev	3.05	3.09	3.00	2.00	1.78	2.07	2.29	2.58
	Quartile 1	3.00	3.00	2.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00
	Quartile 2	5.00	5.00	4.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	3.00	3.00
	Quartile 3	8.00	8.00	6.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	5.00
	Quartile 4	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00

See above for the original BES variables used to construct this index.

Lab-Con Gap on Lib-Auth Issues	Mean	3.62	3.45	2.37	2.03	2.00	2.04	2.81	3.38
As previously mentioned, BES respondents were asked to place Labour and the Conservatives on various 11-point scale regarding 'sociocultural' issues, running from 0 (protect accused's rights/women equal role/unite fully with the EU) to 10 (cut crime/women's place in the home/protect British independence). I use these party placements to create an index of how ideologically polarised respondents perceived Labour and Conservatives as being on second-dimension issues. This index is the absolute difference between where they place each party, and runs from 0 (if the respondent believes that both parties share the same position) to 10 (if the respondent believes that the parties lie at opposite ends of the spectrum).	Std. Dev	3.04	2.85	2.65	2.07	1.82	2.05	2.46	2.77
	Quartile 1	1.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	1.00
	Quartile 2	3.00	3.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	3.00
	Quartile 3	6.00	5.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	5.00
	Quartile 4	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00

See above for the original BES variables used to construct this index.

Working- or Middle-Class Identity	Yes	46%	45%	50%	46%	41%	49%	63%	59%
BES respondents were asked: “ <i>Do you think of yourself as belonging to any particular class?</i> ”. They could reply “Yes, Middle Class”, “Yes, Working Class”, “Yes, Other”, “No”, or “Don’t Know”. I used these responses to create a dummy variable recording whether a respondent considers themselves “middle” or “working-class” (1), or gave any other response (0). I take no account of later follow-up questions designed to push the respondent to one camp or another	No	54%	55%	50%	54%	59%	51%	37%	41%
The original BES variables used to construct this index are: v44a (1987), v55a (1992), srsoccl1 (1997), bq47 (2001), bq55 (2005), bq67 (2010), and w01 (2015 and 2017).									
Capacity for Strong Government Gap	Difference	65.3%	60.3%	65.0%	55.5%	51.1%	55.5%	46.1%	52.1%
BES respondents were asked “ <i>On the whole, would you describe the X Party nowadays as capable of being a strong government, not capable of being a strong government, or neither/both?</i> ”. Two of the parties they were asked about were the Conservatives and Labour. I used responses to the questions to create a dummy variable indicating whether the respondent thinks there is a difference between these parties in their capacity for ‘strong government’ (i.e. they say one party is capable and the other is not), or whether they thinks there is no difference (i.e. both parties are equally capable/incapable, or the respondent does not know about whether they are or not).	No Difference	34.7%	39.7%	35.0%	45.0%	48.9%	44.5%	53.4%	47.9%
The original BES variables used to construct this index are: v19d1 and v19d2 (1987), v19a and v19b (1992), labstrgv and constrgv (1997), bq16a and bq16b (2001), cq7a and cq7b (2005), cq8_1 and cq8_2 (2010), and q02_1 and q02_2 (2015 and 2017).									
Lab-Con Class Representation Gap	Mean	1.57	NA	1.23	0.90	0.90	0.90	1.24	1.45
BES respondents were asked: “ <i>Some people say that all political parties look after certain groups and are not so concerned about others. How closely do you think the X Party looks after the interests of... (a) middle class people ...(and (b) working class people?</i> ”. Respondents could answer: ‘very closely’, ‘fairly closely’, ‘not very closely’, ‘not at all closely’, or ‘don’t know’. Two of the parties they were asked about were the Conservatives and Labour. I used respondents ratings of the extent to which either party was concerned about the interests of the working and middle classes to create a new variable, ‘ <i>perceived</i>	Std. Dev	1.07		0.94	0.82	0.82	0.92	1.06	1.10
	Quartile 1	1.00		1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00
	Quartile 2	2.00		1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
	Quartile 3	2.00		2.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	2.00
	Quartile 4	4.00		4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00

class representation gap’, which indicated the extent to which the respondent sees the parties as being polarised over the sort of social groups they are most focused on representing.

This index was constructed in the following way. After rating how closely the Labour Party “*looks after the interests*” of the working and then the middle class (using scales of 1-4 with higher numbers equalling greater closeness) the score for representation of the middle class was then deducted from the rating of how well Labour looked after the working class. This gave each respondent a rating of -2 to +2 (scores of -3 and -2 and +2 and +3 were combined as there are relatively few observations at the extremes), where lower numbers equal relatively greater concern for the interests of the middle class, and higher numbers for the interests of the working class. The same index was then constructed from the respondent’s placements of the Conservatives on the same scales. I then took the simple difference between each party’s score to derive the index of how differently respondents viewed the two parties in terms of social representation. A maximum score of 4 would, for example, mean that one party is much more focused on representing the middle class (scoring -2) while the other one is much more focused on the working class (scoring +2). A score of zero indicates that both parties are primarily focused on the same class, or that neither have strong class-based differences in terms of whose interests they represent. Please note that this question was not asked in the 1992 edition.

The original BES variables used to construct this variable are: **v123a**, **v124a**, **v123b**, and **v124b** (1987); **labintwc**, **conintwc**, **labintmc**, and **conintmc** (1997); **cq9a**, **cq10a**, **cq9b**, and **cq10b** (2001); **cq2a**, **cq3a**, **cq2b**, and **cq3b** (2005); **cq2_1**, **cq3_1**, **cq2_2**, and **cq3_2** (2010); and **b13_5**, **b12_5**, **b13_3**, and **b12_3** (2015 and 2017).

Party Leader Ratings Gap	Mean	0.56	0.56	4.11	3.69	3.03	3.44	3.31	4.32
Respondents were asked: “ <i>let’s think about party leaders for a moment. Using a scale that runs from 0 to 10, where 0 means strongly dislike and 10 means strongly like, how do you feel about X?</i> ”. Among the party leaders that they were asked to evaluate were the leaders of the Labour and Conservative parties (with the relevant names of these leaders obviously varying from study to study). From these ratings I created a “party leader ratings gap”, which is the absolute difference between how favourable the respondent feels towards, say Tony Blair and John Major (in 1997). The values of this variable range from 0 (the	Std. Dev	0.50	0.50	3.10	2.74	2.44	2.55	2.59	2.95
	Quartile 1	0	0	2.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00
	Quartile 2	1	1	4.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	4.00
	Quartile 3	1	1	6.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	7.00
	Quartile 4	1	1	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00

respondent likes or dislikes both equally) to 10 (the respondent likes one party's leader and strongly dislikes the other). The only exception is with the 1987 and 1992 BES where the variable is necessarily binary, simply recording whether the respondent finds only Thatcher or Kinnock as "likeable" (vs finding both or neither likeable).

The original BES variables used to construct this index are: **v20g1** and **v20g2** (1987); **v24a** and **v24b** (1992); **blrlike** and **majlike** (1997); **bq25a** and **bq25b** (2001); **bq19a** and **bq19n** (2005); **bq15_1** and **bq15_2** (2010); and **i01_1** and **i01_2** (2015 and 2017).

Lab-Con Partisanship	Partisan	61%	78%	65%	68%	61%	59%	65%	72%
Survey respondents were asked " <i>Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat or what?</i> ", with them being able to choose from several other listed parties in addition to the big three. They could also choose 'other', 'none' or 'don't know'. I recoded this data to create a dummy variable indicating whether the respondent said that they considered themselves as Labour or Conservative (1), or gave any other answer (0).	Non-Partisan	29%	22%	35%	32%	39%	41%	35%	28%

The original BES variables used to construct this dummy variable are: **v12a** (1987); **partyId** (1992); **ptyidsc** and **ptyclsmu** (1997); **bq2a** (2001); **bq9ax** and **bq9dx** (2005); **bq9_1**, **bq9_3**, and **bq9_4** (2010); **d01** (2015 and 2017).

Strength of Lab-Con Partisanship	Mean	1.39	1.50	1.31	1.24	1.06	1.09	1.19	1.36
After the aforementioned question inquiring about whether the respondent identified with Labour or the Conservatives, a follow-up question asked respondents: " <i>Would you call yourself very strong [party], fairly strong or not very strong?</i> ". I used both the original variable where respondents indicated their party of choice, and this follow-up question to create a measure of how strongly any given respondent identifies with Labour or the Conservatives. This is coded as 0 if the respondent does not identify with Labour or the Conservatives, 1 if they do but "Not very" strongly, 2 if they do but only "fairly strongly", and 3 if they do "very strongly".	Std. Dev	1.08	1.02	1.08	1.02	1.00	1.05	1.03	1.03
	Quartile 1	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Quartile 2	2.00	2.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00
	Quartile 3	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
	Quartile 4	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00

The original BES variables used to construct this dummy variable are: **v12a**, **v12b**, and **v12c** (1987); **partyid** and **idstrng** (1992); **ptyidsc** and **ptyclsmu** (1997); **bq2a** and **bq2d** (2001); **bq9ax**, **bq9dx** and **bclosew** (2005); **bq9_1**, **bq9_3**, and **bq9_4** (2010); **d01**, **d03**, and **d04** (2015 and 2017).

Age	Mean	46.5	46.8	46.2	47.3	47.4	47.6	49.7	50.8
Respondents' age (in years).	Std. Dev	18.4	17.6	17.5	18.3	18.4	18.9	18.0	18.2
The original BES variables used to construct this dummy variable are: v58c (1987); v915c (1992); rage (1997); bq72 (2001); tq77 (2005); bq89 (2010); and Age (2015 and 2017).	Quartile 1	31.0	32.0	32.0	33.0	32.0	33.0	35.0	36.0
	Quartile 2	44.0	45.0	44.0	45.0	46.0	46.0	50.0	52.0
	Quartile 3	61.0	61.0	60.0	61.0	61.0	62.0	64.0	65.0
	Quartile 4	99.0	96.0	97.0	98.0	99.0	97.0	97.0	99.0
Gender	Male	52%	53%	51%	51%	52%	52%	53%	53%
Respondents' gender (1 for female, 0 for male).	Female	48%	47%	49%	49%	48%	48%	47%	47%
The original BES variables used to construct this dummy variable are: v58b (1987); v915b (1992); rsex (1997); bq104 (2001); tq76 (2005); bq88 (2010); and y09 (2015 and 2017).									
Education	Lower	48.8%	42.5%	31.4%	27.9%	28.8%	19.4%	28.3%	24.6%
Respondents' highest level of formal education. I distinguish between three categories of respondents: those with only GCSE-equivalent qualifications or below (1), those with A/O-levels or equivalent (2), and those with undergraduate or postgraduate degrees (3).	Middle	41.2%	44.2%	44.5%	43.7%	43.7%	46.3%	33.2%	33.1%
	Higher	10.0%	13.3%	24.1%	28.4%	27.5%	34.3%	38.5%	42.3%
The original BES variable names used to construct this index are: v55 (1987); v911 (1992); hedqual (1997); bq75b (2001); bq81 (2005); zq95_1 (2010); and edlevel (2015 and 2017).									
Occupational Class	Professional and Managerial	25.2%	28.0%	31.1%	37.6%	35.6%	36.5%	36.2%	38.0%
Respondents' occupational social class. I distinguish between nine categories of respondents: professionals and managers (e.g. CEOs, lawyers, software designers, doctors) (1); routine non-manual and service (e.g. office workers, clerks, secretaries, shop assistants) (2); the self-employed (3); skilled working class and foreman (e.g. plumbers, electricians, fitters) (4); semi or unskilled	Routine Non-Manual	24.2%	24.2%	21.8%	19.7%	20.0%	25.6%	26.2%	26.8%
	Self-Employed	7.3%	7.1%	8.9%	7.4%	9.1%	5.3%	12.7%	13.5%

manual workers (e.g. machine operators, assemblers, coalminers) (5). Pensioners were classified by their last occupation. Some respondent's class was identified by that of their spouse if they were not currently employed or did not give a valid answer. The original BES variables name used to construct this index are: v50a5 and v52a5 (1987); v905_p and v908_p (1992); rgiclass and sgiclass (1997); gld11r and gld11s (2001); rgoldth and sgoldth (2005); zq98_1 and zq98_2 (2010); and ns_sec and y27 (2015 and 2017).	Skilled WC and Foremen	17.0%	15.7%	15.9%	16.2%	17.1%	16.0%	11.4%	9.9%
	Semi/Unskilled WC	26.3%	25.0%	22.3%	19.1%	18.3%	16.4%	13.4%	11.8%
Trade Union Membership	Yes	26.2%	22.8%	22.5%	19.3%	19.6%	18.5%	16.1%	13.1%
Respondents were categorised depending on whether or not they are currently a member of a trade union or not. The original BES variables name used to construct this index are: v49c (1987); v903c (1992); unionsa (1997); trades (2001); tq80a (2005); zq94_1 (2010); and y08 (2015 and 2017).	No	73.8%	77.2%	77.5%	80.7%	80.4%	81.5%	83.9%	86.9%
Religion	CoE / CoS	46.5%	45.5%	40.1%	42.7%	36.0%	29.0%	36.5%	18.8%
Respondents were categorised depending on what religious beliefs they subscribed to: <i>Church of England/Scotland</i> [CoE/CoS]; <i>Catholic</i> ; <i>other Christian</i> ; <i>non-Christian religions</i> (e.g. Muslims, Hindus, Jews etc.); and <i>the non-religious</i> . The original BES variables name used to construct this index are: v59a (1987); v916 (1992); religion (1997); wreligs (2001); tq83b (2005); zq106_2 (2010); and y06 (2015 and 2017).	Catholic	9.8%	10.0%	11.3%	10.6%	9.3%	8.6%	8.8%	7.1%
	Christian (Other)	8.5%	11.4%	11.0%	3.7%	3.9%	5.8%	4.3%	18.6%
	Non-Christian	2.1%	2.1%	4.2%	7.6%	7.1%	7.2%	7.7%	8.6%
	No Religion	33.2%	31.0%	33.4%	42.7%	43.7%	49.5%	42.6%	46.8%
Housing Tenure	Owners	71.2%	72.1%	71.0%	70.5%	72.8%	68.5%	67.7%	69.8%
Respondents were categorised according to their current type of accommodation: owner-occupiers; those renting from the council or local housing association; and those renting privately. Please note that some surveys did not allow for the separate classification of the last two. The original BES variables name used to construct this index are: v60ab (1987); v919b (1992); tenure2 (1997); owns (2001); tq79a and tq79c (2005); zq93_1 and zq93_3 (2010); and y03 (2015 and 2017).	Social Renters	23.6%	22.1%	18.5%	29.5%	15.7%	14.4%	17.2%	14.9%
	Private Renters	5.2%	5.8%	10.5%		11.5%	17.1%	15.2%	15.3%

Table G.2: Descriptive Statistics for Variables Used in the BESIP Analysis in Chapter Five

A Note on Table G.2

In what follows, I present a table of descriptive statistics for the variables used in my analysis of the British Election Study Internet Panel [BESIP] dataset.

The BESIP is a non-probability survey of around 30,000 respondents per wave. Fieldwork is carried out online by the British polling company YouGov, who encourage members of the public to sign-up to join the online pool of respondents to whom surveys such as this one can be fielded. Given that the purpose of panel studies is to track changes in behaviour and attitudes over time, the same respondents are asked to complete new waves of the survey at regular intervals (with fresh ‘top-up’ samples of new respondents being added every so often to maintain as large a sample as possible). Though YouGov try to maintain as (nationally) representative a sample pool as possible for each survey, they provide survey weights to ensure that under- (over-)represented groups are treated as more (less) influential in the overall analysis. For analyses that span multiple waves of the BESIP, such as my own, they also provide ‘panel weights’ which correct for the tendency of certain types of people being more likely than others to drop out of the sample pool between waves. This way the representativity of the panel is maintained over time.

As of the time of writing (Autumn 2019), there have been 16 waves of the BESIP, beginning in February/March 2014, and concluding in May/June 2019. Given that I am particularly interested in the changes that took place between the 2015 and 2017 General Elections (when the major British parties became more ideologically polarised, see Figures 5.1-5.3 of the main text) and, in any case, certain key variables for my study are only asked irregularly, I only focus on a few of these waves. Nearly all of the BESIP-based analysis in Chapter 5 is from one (or more) of the following⁹⁴:

Wave 2 - 22nd May 2014 - 25th June 2014
Wave 5 - 31st March 2015 - 6th May 2015
Wave 6 - 8th May 2015 - 26th May 2015
Wave 8 - 6th May 2016 - 22nd June 2016
Wave 12 - 5th May 2017 - 7th Jun 2017

⁹⁴ The only exception to this rule is where one particular variable or another was not measured in the same wave as the others. For example, while perceptions of the differences between what Labour and the Conservatives stand for was recorded in Wave 5, respondents’ levels of partisanship (i.e. the hypothesised dependent variable in the relationship between the two) was not (being next available in Wave 6). In cases like this I simply use the most recently available value for any given independent variable, and treat it as if it came from the same wave as the dependent variable. There are only a few instances of this issue, and I make note of all of them on the table below.

Table G.2 records descriptive statistics and coding information for the variables used in my analysis for each of these five waves. The codes refer to those used in the ‘British Election Study Combined Wave 1-18 Internet Panel’ (Fieldhouse et al. 2019), which is where all of the data for my BESIP-based analysis was sourced from. The descriptive statistics are for the values after the survey weight for that particular weight has been applied.

Table G.2: Descriptive Statistics for Variables Used in the BESIP Analysis Chapter Five by BESIP Wave

Variable	Statistic / Option	Wave 2	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 8	Wave 12
		Eng/Wales = 24,190	Eng/Wales = 25,189	Eng/Wales = 24,712	Eng/Wales = 27,447	Eng/Wales = 30,092
		Scotland = 6051	Scotland = 5535	Scotland = 5361	Scotland = 4231	Scotland = 4302
Vote Green	Yes	4.7%	4.7%	3.8%	4.4%	2.3%
Survey respondents were asked “<i>if there were a UK General Election tomorrow, which party would you vote for?</i>”. In Wave 6 this was phrased as “<i>Which party did you vote for?</i>”, as that wave was fielded directly after the 2015 General Election. They were then shown a list of between eight and ten of the largest parties in England, Scotland, and Wales (with the additional options of ‘other’, ‘would not vote’, and ‘don’t know’). I used the respondent’s answers to this question to create a dummy variable that was coded 1 if the respondent selected the Green Party, and 0 if they selected any other party. I only included respondents to this question that were from England and Wales. The original BESIP variable used to construct this dummy variable is ‘generalElectionVote_’.	No	95.3%	95.3%	96.2%	95.6%	97.7%
Vote UKIP	Yes	17.6%	11.9%	14.1%	20.2%	4.8%
As above, but this new dummy variable was coded as 1 if the respondent selected the United Kingdom Independence Party, and 0 if they selected any other party. I only included respondents to this question that were from England and Wales.	No	82.4%	88.1%	85.9%	79.8%	95.2%
Vote SNP	Yes	34.6%	48.5%	49.0%	48.5%	39.4%
As above, but this new dummy variable was coded as 1 if the respondent selected the United Kingdom Independence Party, and 0 if they selected any other party I only included respondents to this question that were from Scotland..	No	65.4%	51.5%	51.0%	51.5%	60.6%

'Great Difference' between Lab-Con	Yes	NA	NA	37.4%	NA	59.0%
Respondents were asked “ <i>Considering everything the Conservative and Labour Parties stand for, would you say that ‘There is a great difference between them’; ‘There is some difference’; or ‘There is not much difference between them’</i> ”. I recoded this data to create a dummy variable indicating whether the respondent said there was a ‘great difference’ (1), or only ‘some’ or ‘not much’ difference (0). Note: This question was only asked in Waves 5 and 11. Given that these surveys were conducted only a month before those of Waves 6 and 12, respectively, I just treated them as if they had been recorded in those waves when most other important variables in a given model were recorded only at those later times.	No			62.6%		41.0%
The original BESIP variable used to construct this dummy variable is ‘ partydiffconlab_ ’.						
L-R Axis Gap between Lab-Con	Mean	5.13	NA	5.22	5.23	5.84
Respondents were asked “ <i>In politics people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you place the following parties on this scale</i> ”. They were subsequently presented with an 11-point scale running from 0 (very left-wing) to 10 (very right-wing). Among the parties they were asked to place were Labour and the Conservatives. I use these party placements to create an index of how ideologically polarised respondents perceived Labour and Conservatives as being. This index is the absolute difference between where they place each party, and runs from 0 (if the respondent believes that both parties share the same left-right position) to 10 (if the respondent believes that the parties lie at opposite ends of the spectrum).	Std. Dev	2.85		2.61	2.66	2.57
	Quartile 1	3.00		3.00	3.00	4.00
	Q2	5.00		5.00	5.00	6.00
	Q3	7.00		7.00	7.00	8.00
	Q4	10.00		10.00	10.00	10.00
The original BESIP variables used to construct this index are ‘ lrLab_ ’ and ‘ lrCon_ ’.						
Redistribution Axis Gap between Lab-Con	Mean	3.88	NA	4.56	NA	4.59
Respondents were asked “ <i>Some people feel that government should make much greater efforts to make people’s incomes more equal. Other people feel that government should be much less concerned about how equal people’s incomes are. Where would you place yourself and the political parties on this scale?</i> ”. They were subsequently presented with an 11-point scale running from 0 (“government should try to make incomes equal”) to 10 (“government should be less concerned about equal incomes”). Among the parties they were asked to place were Labour and the Conservatives. I use these party placements to create an index of how ideologically polarised respondents perceived Labour and Conservatives as being. This index is the absolute difference between where they place each party, and runs from 0 (if the respondent believes that both parties share the same position on income redistribution) to 10 (if the respondent believes that the parties lie at opposite ends of the spectrum).	Std. Dev	2.93		2.86		3.17
	Q1	1.00		2.00		2.00
	Q2	4.00		5.00		5.00
	Q3	6.00		7.00		7.00
	Q4	10.00		10.00		10.00

The original BESIP variables used to construct this index are ‘**redistCon_**’, and ‘**redistLab_**’.

Smallest Respondent – Lab/Con Gap on L-R Axis	Mean	1.55	NA	1.44	1.44	1.45
Std. Dev	1.56			1.48	1.42	1.37
Q1	0.00			0.00	0.00	0.00
Q2	1.00			1.00	1.00	1.00
Q3	2.00			2.00	2.00	2.00
Q4	10.00			10.00	10.00	10.00

Respondents were asked “*In politics people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you place yourself on the following scale?*”. They were subsequently presented with an 11-point scale running from 0 (very left-wing) to 10 (very right-wing). After placing themselves on this scale, a follow-up question asked respondents. “*Where would you place the following parties*” on the same 11-point scale. Among the parties they were asked to place were Labour and the Conservatives. I use both respondents’ self-placements and their party placements to create an index measuring how far from their own ideal ideological position they see Labour or the Conservatives (whichever is nearer) being. The resulting index runs from 0 to 10, where 0 indicates at least one of Labour or the Conservatives is seen to be at the voters’ own ideal spot, and 10 indicates that the respondent sees both parties as being as far away from their own position as possible.

The original BESIP variables used to construct this index are ‘**leftRight_**’ (for self-placement) and ‘**lrLab_**’ and ‘**lrCon_**’ (for the party placements).

Smallest Respondent – Lab/Con Gap on Redistribution Axis	Mean	1.58	NA	1.53	NA	1.35
Std. Dev	1.91			1.79		1.62
Q1	0.00			0.00		0.00
Q2	1.00			1.00		1.00
Q3	2.00			2.00		2.00
Q4	10.00			10.00		10.00

Respondents were asked “*Some people feel that government should make much greater efforts to make people’s incomes more equal. Other people feel that government should be much less concerned about how equal people’s incomes are. Where would you place yourself and the political parties on this scale?*”. They were subsequently presented with an 11-point scale running from 0 (“government should try to make incomes equal”) to 10 (“government should be less concerned about equal incomes”). I use both respondents’ self-placements and their placements of Labour and the Conservatives to create an index measuring how far from their own ideal position on redistribution they see Labour or the Conservatives (whichever is nearer) being. The resulting index runs from 0 to 10, where 0 indicates at least one of Labour or the Conservatives is seen to be at the voters’ own ideal spot, and 10 indicates that the respondent sees both parties as being as far away from their own position as possible.

The original BESIP variables used to construct this index are ‘**redistSelf_**’, ‘**redistCon_**’, and ‘**redistLab_**’.

Smallest Respondent – Lab/Con Gap on EU Axis Respondents were asked “Some people feel that Britain should do all it can to unite fully with the European Union. Other people feel that Britain should do all it can to protect its independence from the European Union. Where would you place yourself and the political parties on this scale” They were subsequently presented with an 11-point scale running from 0 (“Unite fully with the European Union”) to 10 (“Protect our independence”). I use both respondents’ self-placements and their placements of Labour and the Conservatives to create an index measuring how far from their own ideal position on EU integration they see Labour or the Conservatives (whichever is nearer) being. The resulting index runs from 0 to 10, where 0 indicates at least one of Labour or the Conservatives is seen to be at the voters’ own ideal spot, and 10 indicates that the respondent sees both parties as being as far away from their own position as possible. The original BESIP variables used to construct this index are ‘EUIntegrationSelf_’, ‘EUIntegrationCon_’, and ‘EUIntegrationLab_’.	Mean	2.59	NA	2.15	3.26	2.17
	Std. Dev	2.67		2.29	2.96	2.15
	Q1	1.00		0.00	1.00	0.00
	Q2	2.00		1.00	2.00	2.00
	Q3	4.00		3.00	5.00	3.00
	Q4	10.00		10.00	10.00	10.00
Respondent Radicalism on L-R Axis As previously mentioned, BESIP respondents were asked to place themselves on an 11-point scale running from 0 (left) to 10 (right). I recoded this data to create an index of how ideologically radical any given respondent is. This was achieved by taking the absolute difference between the respondent’s chosen position and 5, i.e. the central value of the 11-point scale. Values therefore range from 0 to 5, with higher values indicating that the respondent considered themselves to be further away from a ‘centrist’ ideological position (regardless of whether this is to the left or right of the centre). See above for the original BES variables used to construct this index.	Mean	1.92	NA	1.99	1.89	1.89
	Std. Dev	1.45		1.43	1.39	1.47
	Q1	1.00		1.00	1.00	1.00
	Q2	2.00		2.00	2.00	2.00
	Q3	3.00		3.00	3.00	3.00
	Q4	5.00		5.00	5.00	5.00
Respondent Radicalism on Redistribution Axis As previously mentioned, BESIP respondents were asked to place themselves on an 11-point scale running from 0 (“government should try to make incomes equal”) to 10 (“government should be less concerned about equal incomes”). I recoded this data to create an index of how ideologically radical any given respondent is. This was achieved by taking the absolute difference between the respondent’s chosen position and 5, i.e. the central value of the 11-point scale. Values therefore range from 0 to 5, with higher values indicating that the respondent considered themselves to be further away from a ‘centrist’ ideological position (regardless of whether this is to the left or right). See above for the original BES variables used to construct this index.	Mean	2.54	NA	2.63	NA	2.56
	Std. Dev	1.80		1.77		1.79
	Q1	1.00		1.00		1.00
	Q2	2.00		2.00		2.00
	Q3	4.00		5.00		5.00
	Q4	5.00		5.00		5.00

Respondent Radicalism on EU Axis As previously mentioned, BESIP respondents were asked to place themselves on an 11-point scale running from 0 (“Unite fully with the European Union”) to 10 (“Protect our independence”). I recoded this data to create an index of how ideologically radical any given respondent is. This was achieved by taking the absolute difference between the respondent’s chosen position and 5, i.e. the central value of the 11-point scale. Values therefore range from 0 to 5, with higher values indicating that the respondent considered themselves to be further away from a ‘centrist’ ideological position (regardless of whether this is to the left or right of the centre). See above for the original BES variables used to construct this index.	Mean	2.98	NA	2.91	3.01	3.25
	Std. Dev	1.83		1.83	1.82	1.79
	Q1	1.00		1.00	1.00	2.00
	Q2	3.00		3.00	3.00	4.00
	Q3	5.00		5.00	5.00	5.00
	Q4	5.00		5.00	5.00	5.00
EU Ref Remain (Intention) Respondents were asked “<i>If there was a referendum on Britain’s membership of the European Union how do you think you would vote?</i>”. They could reply “Stay in the EU”, “Leave the EU”, “I would not vote” or “Don’t Know”. I recoded these responses into a dummy indicating a preference for ‘Remain’ (1), or any other option (0). The original BESIP variable used to construct this dummy is ‘euRefVote_’.	Yes	42.7%	NA	40.5%	NA	44.9%
	No	57.4%		59.5%		55.1%
Scot Indy Ref Yes (Intention) Scottish respondents were asked “<i>If there was another referendum on Scottish independence, how do you think you would vote?</i>”. They could reply “I would vote “Yes” (leave the UK)”, “I would vote “No” (stay in the UK)”, “Would not vote” or “Don’t Know””. I recoded these responses into a dummy indicating a preference for ‘independence’ (1), or any other option (0). The original BESIP variable used to construct this dummy is ‘scotReferendumIntention_’.	Yes	38.0%	NA	37.3%	NA	35.3%
	No	62.0%		62.7%		64.8%
Lab-Con Partisanship Survey respondents were asked “<i>Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat or what?</i>”, with them being able to choose from several other listed parties in addition to the big three. They could also choose ‘other’, ‘none’ or ‘don’t know’. I recoded this data to create a dummy variable indicating whether the respondent said that they considered themselves as Labour or Conservative (1), or gave any other answer (0). The original BESIP variable used to construct this dummy variable is ‘partyId_’.	Yes	58.0%	NA	51.8%	52.6%	52.2%
	No	42.0%		48.2%	47.3%	47.8%

Strength of Lab-Con Partisanship After the previous question about considering oneself as Labour, Conservative, etc, those who named a party were then asked: “<i>Would you call yourself very strong, fairly strong, or not very strong</i> X?”. I combined answers to this question with those of the previous one to create a scale of identification with either Labour or the Conservatives. If respondents said they did not identify with either they were assigned a value of 0, those who identified but ‘not very strongly’ received 1, ‘fairly strong’ received 2 , and those who said they identified ‘very strongly’ received the highest value of 3. The original BESIP variable used to construct this index is ‘partyIdStrength_’.	Mean	1.11	NA	1.25	1.16	1.05
	Std. Dev	1.08		1.15	1.12	1.13
	Q1	0.00		0.00	0.00	0.00
	Q2	1.00		1.00	1.00	1.00
	Q3	2.00		2.00	2.00	2.00
	Q4	3.00		3.00	3.00	3.00
Age Respondents’ age (in years), indexed to February 2014. The original BESIP variable is ‘Age’.	Mean	47.2	NA	46.4	45.4	46.8
	Std. Dev	16.6		16.7	16.8	16.4
	Q1	33		32	31	33
	Q2	48		48	47	47
	Q3	61		60	59	61
	Q4	93		95	94	105
Gender Respondents’ gender (1 for female, 0 for male). The original BESIP variable is ‘gender’.	Male	48.7%	48.5%	48.5%	48.5%	48.5%
	Female	51.3%	51.5%	51.5%	51.5%	51.5%
Education Respondents’ highest level of formal education. I distinguish between three categories of respondents: those with only GCSE-equivalent qualifications or below (1), those with A/O-levels or equivalent (2), and those with undergraduate or postgraduate degrees (3). The original BESIP variable name used to construct this index is ‘edlevel_’.	Lower	37.0%	36.2%	37.0%	35.6%	34.1%
	Middle	22.9%	23.9%	23.7%	24.5%	25.1%
	Higher	40.1%	39.9%	39.9%	40.0%	40.7%

Occupational Class						
Respondents' occupational social class. I distinguish between nine categories of respondents: professionals or higher technical workers (e.g. lawyers, software designers, doctors) (1); managers and senior administrators (e.g. CEOs,. finance managers etc.) (2); clerical workers and junior managers/administrators (e.g. office workers, junior doctors, clerks, secretaries etc) (3); salesmen and service workers (e.g. shop assistants, care assistants, paramedics) (4); foremen and supervisors of manual workers (e.g. building site foremen) (5); skilled manual workers (e.g. plumbers, electricians, fitters) (6); semi or unskilled manual workers (e.g. machine operators, assemblers, coalminers) (7); others outside the labour market (students, retirees, the temporarily unemployed) (8); the long-term unemployed and those that have never worked (9). The original BESIP variable name used to construct this index is 'profile_work_type_'.	Professional and Higher Technical	15.6%	16.2%	16.4%	15.1%	14.8%
	Managers/Senior Administrators	13.6%	13.4%	13.0%	12.5%	12.2%
	Clerical Workers and Junior Admin	25.7%	24.9%	24.6%	26.3%	25.0%
	Salesmen and Service Workers	6.8%	8.0%	7.2%	7.5%	7.1%
	Foremen and Supervisors	2.2%	2.4%	2.4%	2.1%	1.7%
	Skilled Manual	6.7%	7.0%	6.1%	7.1%	6.6%
	Semi/Unskilled Manual	11.2%	11.7%	11.4%	12.0%	10.7%
	Non-Labour Force	15.5%	13.2%	14.9%	13.0%	18.3%
	Never Worked	2.7%	3.2%	4.2%	4.4%	3.6%
Household Income Quintile						
Respondents' annual combined household income from wages, salaries, and rents before tax deductions (pre-tax). The BESIP divided respondents into 15 categories depending on the size of their yearly earnings. To make the analysis more manageable, I aggregated these categories into five quintiles in reference to HM Revenue and Customs' official yearly estimates of the distribution of pre-tax income in the United Kingdom (Gov.UK 2020). Respondents' in the first quintile therefore earn less than £15,000 per year (1); in the second quintile this is £15,000 to £19,999 (2); in the third quintile £20,000 to £29,999 (3); in the fourth quintile £30,000 to £39,999 (4); and, in the fifth quintile respondents earn over £40,000 (5). The original BESIP variable name used to construct this index is 'profile_gross_household'.	First Quintile	21.8%	21.5%	26.7%	23.3%	22.5%
	Second Quintile	11.1%	11.0%	10.4%	10.7%	10.6%
	Third Quintile	21.3%	21.6%	20.0%	21.1%	20.9%
	Fourth Quintile	16.7%	16.5%	15.4%	16.4%	16.1%
	Fifth Quintile	29.2%	29.5%	27.6%	28.6%	29.9%

Appendix H: Supplementary Material for Chapter Five

The following tables present various models designed to corroborate those presented in Chapter Five of the main text, or else replicate them using a slightly different model specification for the purpose of sensitivity analysis. It is hoped that this supplementary material will further buttress the validity and credibility of my theories and findings from that chapter.

A Note on Tables H.1-H.8

Figure 5.4 in the main text is an odds ratio plot that demonstrates the relative sizes of the effects of a one-standard deviation increase in several attitudinal variables on the likelihood that a given respondent will express an attachment to either Labour or the Conservatives. The data in question come from a number of logistic regressions conducted using data from various editions of the British Election Study between 1987 and 2017. Survey respondents were asked “*Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat or what?*”, with them being able to choose from several other listed parties in addition to the big three. They could also choose ‘other’, ‘none’ or ‘don’t know’. I recoded this data to create a dummy variable indicating whether the respondent said that they considered themselves to be Labour or Conservative (1), or gave any other answer (0). I present the raw coefficients from these regressions in the following eight tables.

Many of the important variables in these tables remain the same in each study. The ‘great difference’ variable refers to respondents’ answer to the question: “*considering everything that Labour and Conservatives stand for ... how much difference is there between them*”? A respondent scores 1 if they responded ‘a great deal’ of difference, 0 if they responded ‘not very much’ or only ‘some’ difference. Similarly, the variable about whether one party is capable of providing strong government is always binary, with a score of 1 if the respondent claims only Labour or the Conservatives is able to do this (rather than both or neither). Having a working-class (WC) or ‘middle-class’ (MC) identity is another binary variable that indicates whether the respondent thinks of themselves as belonging to either class. Finally, all of the demographic control variables and the dependent variable itself do not change notably from survey to survey.

Please note that, while effort was made to make the variables including in each model as similar as possible, there are (inevitably) some subtle variations in model specification. The ‘perceived self-party gap’ variables are simply the distance from the respondent’s own position and where they perceive Labour or the Conservatives (whichever is nearer) to be on two 11-point scales: cutting tax v raising government spending (the ‘tax gap’), and a libertarian v authoritarian scale (the ‘lib-auth

dimension'). The former scale is always the same throughout; however, the exact question used to form the latter scale varied somewhat. Respondents in the 1987, 1992, 2001, 2005, and 2010 editions were asked a question about the relative importance of '*protecting civil rights*' vs '*cutting crime*'; respondents in the 1997 edition whether '*women should have an equal ... in running business and government*' or, rather that '*a woman's place is in the home*'; finally, respondents in the 2015 and 2017 editions were presented with a scale running from '*Britain uniting fully with the EU*' to '*Do all we can to protect our independence*'. The logic to all these variables, that lower values indicate a respondent sees less difference between Labour and Conservatives on this issue, remains the same, however. The exact same variables used to construct these scales were also used for the tax and lib-auth 'radicalism' variables. Both variables run from 0-5 and are constructed by taking the absolute difference between each respondent's own self-placement on these policy scales and the central value (i.e. 5 on a 0-10 scale). Higher values therefore indicate the respondent is closer to the ideological extremes.

The construction procedure for all of these variables (including the full original question wording and BES codes) can be found in Table G.1 in Appendix G.

**Table H.1: Modelling Likelihood of Mainstream Partisanship
– BES 1987**

Logistic Regression	
<u>Variable</u>	<u>Coefficient (Std. Err)</u>
‘Great Difference’ between Lab-Con	0.37 (0.12) **
Respondent Tax Radicalism	0.03 (0.02)
Respondent Lib-Auth Radicalism	0.09 (0.02) **
Perceived Self-Party Gap on Tax Dimension	- 0.10 (0.03) **
Perceived Self-Party Gap on Lib-Auth Dim.	- 0.13 (0.02) **
Lab-Con Capacity for Strong Gov Gap	- 0.17 (0.09)
Respondent WC or MC Identity	0.34 (0.08) **
Demographic Controls	<i>Included</i>
Constant	0.20 (0.27)
N	3171

* *p-value* < 0.05; ** *p-value* < 0.01. *Standard errors in parenthesis.*

Note: The dependent variable is feeling an attachment (partisanship) to either Labour or the Conservatives (no matter the strength of that attachment), where 1 indicates that the respondent indeed feels ‘close’ to Labour or the Conservatives, and 0 indicates no such attachment. The ‘Lib-Auth’ dimension here refers to the trade-off between cutting crime v protecting civil liberties.

Demographic Control Variables: Age (years), gender, age leaving education (pre-16, 16-18, or 19+), occupational class (professional and managerial; routine non-manual and service; self-employed; skilled working class and foreman; semi- and unskilled working class – respondent’s class was identified by that of their spouse if they were not currently employed), current trade union membership status, religion (Church of England/Scotland; Catholic; other Christian; non-Christian Religion; no Religion); and housing tenure (owner-occupier, social renter or private renter).

Survey Data: 1987 British Election Study [BES] Face to Face Cross-Section (Heath, Jowell, and Curtice 1993a).

Table H.2: Modelling Likelihood of Mainstream Partisanship
– BES 1992

Logistic Regression	
<u>Variable</u>	<u>Coefficient (Std. Err)</u>
'Great Difference' between Lab-Con	0.44 (0.14) **
Respondent Tax Radicalism	0.05 (0.04)
Respondent Lib-Auth Radicalism	0.03 (0.04)
Perceived Self-Party Gap on Tax Dimension	- 0.16 (0.05) **
Perceived Self-Party Gap on Lib-Auth Dim.	- 0.12 (0.03) **
Lab-Con Capacity for Strong Gov Gap	0.24 (0.15)
Respondent WC or MC Identity	0.13 (0.15)
Demographic Controls	<i>Included</i>
Constant	1.26 (0.45)
N	1506

* *p-value* < 0.05; ** *p-value* < 0.01. *Standard errors in parenthesis.*

Note: The dependent variable is feeling an attachment (partisanship) to either Labour or the Conservatives (no matter the strength of that attachment), where 1 indicates that the respondent indeed feels 'close' to Labour or the Conservatives, and 0 indicates no such attachment. The 'Lib-Auth' dimension here refers to the trade-off between cutting crime v protecting civil liberties.

Demographic Control Variables: Age, gender, age leaving education, occupational class, current trade union membership status, religion, and housing tenure.

Survey Data: 1992 British Election Study [BES] Face to Face Cross-Section (Heath, Jowell, and Curtice 1993b).

Table H.3: Modelling Likelihood of Mainstream Partisanship
– BES 1997

Logistic Regression	
<u>Variable</u>	<u>Coefficient (Std. Err)</u>
‘Great Difference’ between Lab-Con	0.68 (0.11) **
Respondent Tax Radicalism	- 0.03 (0.03)
Respondent Lib-Auth Radicalism	0.02 (0.03)
Perceived Self-Party Gap on Tax Dimension	- 0.10 (0.03) **
Perceived Self-Party Gap on Lib-Auth Dim.	- 0.09 (0.03) **
Lab-Con Capacity for Strong Gov Gap	0.01 (0.10)
Respondent WC or MC Identity	0.35 (0.10) **
Demographic Controls	<i>Included</i>
Constant	0.13 (0.36)
N	2640

* *p-value* < 0.05; ** *p-value* < 0.01. *Standard errors in parenthesis.*

Note: The dependent variable is feeling an attachment (partisanship) to either Labour or the Conservatives (no matter the strength of that attachment), where 1 indicates that the respondent indeed feels ‘close’ to Labour or the Conservatives, and 0 indicates no such attachment. The ‘Lib-Auth’ dimension here refers to the trade-off between allowing women an equal role in government and business v maintaining their place at home.

Demographic Control Variables: Age, gender, age leaving education, occupational class, current trade union membership status, religion, and housing tenure.

Survey Data: 1997 British Election Study [BES] Face to Face Cross-Section (Heath, Jowell, and Curtice 1999).

Table H.4: Modelling Likelihood of Mainstream Partisanship
– BES 2001

Logistic Regression	
<u>Variable</u>	<u>Coefficient (Std. Err)</u>
‘Great Difference’ between Lab-Con	1.06 (0.18) **
Respondent Tax Radicalism	0.07 (0.05)
Respondent Lib-Auth Radicalism	0.18 (0.04) **
Perceived Self-Party Gap on Tax Dimension	- 0.18 (0.05) **
Perceived Self-Party Gap on Lib-Auth Dim.	- 0.18 (0.04) **
Lab-Con Capacity for Strong Gov Gap	- 0.09 (0.14)
Respondent WC or MC Identity	0.45 (0.14) **
Demographic Controls	<i>Included</i>
Constant	0.12 (0.47)
N	1592

* *p-value* < 0.05; ** *p-value* < 0.01. *Standard errors in parenthesis.*

Note: The dependent variable is feeling an attachment (partisanship) to either Labour or the Conservatives (no matter the strength of that attachment), where 1 indicates that the respondent indeed feels ‘close’ to Labour or the Conservatives, and 0 indicates no such attachment. The ‘Lib-Auth’ dimension here refers to the trade-off between cutting crime v protecting civil liberties.

Demographic Control Variables: Age, gender, age leaving education, occupational class, current trade union membership status, religion, and housing tenure.

Survey Data: 2001 British Election Study [BES] Face to Face Cross-Section (Clarke et al. 2003).

Table H.5: Modelling Likelihood of Mainstream Partisanship
– BES 2005

Logistic Regression	
<u>Variable</u>	<u>Coefficient (Std. Err)</u>
‘Great Difference’ between Lab-Con	0.90 (0.22) **
Respondent Tax Radicalism	0.08 (0.06)
Respondent Lib-Auth Radicalism	0.18 (0.06) **
Perceived Self-Party Gap on Tax Dimension	- 0.23 (0.08) **
Perceived Self-Party Gap on Lib-Auth Dim.	- 0.17 (0.06) **
Lab-Con Capacity for Strong Gov Gap	0.39 (0.17) *
Respondent WC or MC Identity	0.15 (0.16)
Demographic Controls	<i>Included</i>
Constant	- 0.26 (0.50)
N	1933

* *p-value* < 0.05; ** *p-value* < 0.01. *Standard errors in parenthesis.*

Note: The dependent variable is feeling an attachment (partisanship) to either Labour or the Conservatives (no matter the strength of that attachment), where 1 indicates that the respondent indeed feels ‘close’ to Labour or the Conservatives, and 0 indicates no such attachment. The ‘Lib-Auth’ dimension here refers to the trade-off between cutting crime v protecting civil liberties.

Demographic Control Variables: Age, gender, age leaving education, occupational class, current trade union membership status, religion, and housing tenure.

Survey Data: 2005 British Election Study [BES] Face to Face Cross-Section (Clarke et al. 2006).

Table H.6: Modelling Likelihood of Mainstream Partisanship
– BES 2010

Logistic Regression	
<u>Variable</u>	<u>Coefficient (Std. Err)</u>
‘Great Difference’ between Lab-Con	0.93 (0.16) **
Respondent Tax Radicalism	0.04 (0.06)
Respondent Lib-Auth Radicalism	0.18 (0.05) **
Perceived Self-Party Gap on Tax Dimension	0.10 (0.06)
Perceived Self-Party Gap on Lib-Auth Dim.	- 0.14 (0.05) **
Lab-Con Capacity for Strong Gov Gap	0.76 (0.15) **
Respondent WC or MC Identity	0.49 (0.15) **
Demographic Controls	<i>Included</i>
Constant	- 1.56 (0.49)
N	1489

* $p\text{-value} < 0.05$; ** $p\text{-value} < 0.01$.

Standard errors in parenthesis.

Note: The dependent variable is feeling an attachment (partisanship) to either Labour or the Conservatives (no matter the strength of that attachment), where 1 indicates that the respondent indeed feels ‘close’ to Labour or the Conservatives, and 0 indicates no such attachment. The ‘Lib-Auth’ dimension here refers to the trade-off between cutting crime v protecting civil liberties.

Demographic Control Variables: Age, gender, age leaving education, occupational class, current trade union membership status, religion, and housing tenure.

Survey Data: 2010 British Election Study [BES] Face to Face Cross-Section (Whiteley and Sanders 2014).

**Table H.7: Modelling Likelihood of Mainstream Partisanship
– BES 2015**

Logistic Regression	
<u>Variable</u>	<u>Coefficient (Std. Err)</u>
‘Great Difference’ between Lab-Con	0.50 (0.14) **
Respondent Tax Radicalism	0.05 (0.04)
Respondent 2 nd Dim Radicalism	0.01 (0.04)
Perceived Self-Party Gap on Tax Dimension	- 0.18 (0.04) **
Perceived Self-Party Gap on Lib-Auth Dim.	- 0.13 (0.03) **
Lab-Con Capacity for Strong Gov Gap	0.46 (0.12) **
Respondent WC or MC Identity	0.21 (0.12)
Demographic Controls	<i>Included</i>
Constant	0.56 (0.34)
N	2015

* *p-value* < 0.05; ** *p-value* < 0.01. *Standard errors in parenthesis.*

Note: The dependent variable is feeling an attachment (partisanship) to either Labour or the Conservatives (no matter the strength of that attachment), where 1 indicates that the respondent indeed feels ‘close’ to Labour or the Conservatives, and 0 indicates no such attachment. The ‘Lib-Auth’ dimension here refers to the trade-off between uniting with the EU and protecting British independence.

Demographic Control Variables: Age, gender, age leaving education, occupational class, current trade union membership status, religion, and housing tenure.

Survey Data: 2015 British Election Study [BES] Face to Face Cross-Section (Fieldhouse et al. 2016).

Table H.8: Modelling Likelihood of Mainstream Partisanship
– BES 2017

Logistic Regression	
<u>Variable</u>	<u>Coefficient (Std. Err)</u>
‘Great Difference’ between Lab-Con	0.43 (0.14) **
Respondent Tax Radicalism	0.02 (0.04)
Respondent 2 nd Dim Radicalism	0.01 (0.04)
Perceived Self-Party Gap on Tax Dimension	- 0.16 (0.05) **
Perceived Self-Party Gap on Lib-Auth Dim.	- 0.11 (0.04) **
Lab-Con Capacity for Strong Gov Gap	0.94 (0.14) **
Respondent WC or MC Identity	0.24 (0.14)
Demographic Controls	<i>Included</i>
Constant	1.19 (0.41)
N	1615

* *p-value* < 0.05; ** *p-value* < 0.01. *Standard errors in parenthesis.*

Note: The dependent variable is feeling an attachment (partisanship) to either Labour or the Conservatives (no matter the strength of that attachment), where 1 indicates that the respondent indeed feels ‘close’ to Labour or the Conservatives, and 0 indicates no such attachment. The ‘Lib-Auth’ dimension here refers to the trade-off between uniting with the EU and protecting British independence.

Demographic Control Variables: Age, gender, age leaving education, occupational class, current trade union membership status, religion, and housing tenure.

Survey Data: 2017 British Election Study [BES] Face to Face Cross-Section (Fieldhouse et al. 2018).

A Note on Tables H.9-H.12

As with Figure 5.4, Figure 5.5 in the main text is an odds ratio plot that demonstrates the relative sizes of the effects of a one-standard deviation increase in several attitudinal variables on the likelihood that a given respondent will express an attachment to either Labour or the Conservatives. The data, once again, come from editions of the British Election Study. The only difference is that in this figure the main independent variable – respondent perceptions of mainstream party ideological polarisation – is measured using the distance between where each respondent places the Labour and Conservatives parties on an 11-point left-right scale, rather than by them affirming “great differences” between what those parties stand for. Given that I am using this general left-right scale, all the variables in the previous figure that were derived from respondent’s self- and party-placements on an 11-point scale running from “cut tax” to “increase government spending” have also been replaced by placements along this general left-right spectrum, rather than those concerned with tax-spend policy per se. All the other variables in each model remain the same.

Once again, I present the raw coefficients from these regressions in the following three tables. In a note under each table I explain the exact questions used to generate positions along the ‘Lib-Auth’ dimension. The construction procedure for all of these variables (including the original question wording and BES codes) can be found in Table G.1 in Appendix G.

**Table H.9: Modelling Likelihood of Mainstream Partisanship
– BES 1997**

Logistic Regression	
<u>Variable</u>	<u>Coefficient (Std. Err)</u>
Lab-Con Left-Right Axis Gap	0.13 (0.03) **
Respondent Left-Right Radicalism	0.39 (0.05) **
Respondent Lib-Auth Radicalism	- 0.02 (0.04)
Perceived Self-Party Gap on L-R Dim	- 0.22 (0.05) **
Perceived Self-Party Gap on Lib-Auth Dim	- 0.08 (0.04) *
Lab-Con Capacity for Strong Gov Gap	- 0.10 (0.12)
Respondent WC or MC Identity	0.29 (0.12) *
Demographic Controls	<i>Included</i>
Constant	0.09 (0.42)
N	2043

* *p-value* < 0.05; ** *p-value* < 0.01.

Standard errors in parenthesis.

Note: The dependent variable is feeling an attachment (partisanship) to either Labour or the Conservatives (no matter the strength of that attachment), where 1 indicates that the respondent indeed feels ‘close’ to Labour or the Conservatives, and 0 indicates no such attachment. The ‘Lib-Auth’ dimension here refers to the trade-off between allowing women an equal role in government and business v maintaining their place at home.

Demographic Control Variables: Age, gender, age leaving education, occupational class, current trade union membership status, religion, and housing tenure.

Survey Data: 1997 British Election Study [BES] Face to Face Cross-Section (Heath et al.1999).

Table H.10: Modelling Likelihood of Mainstream Partisanship
– BES 2001

Logistic Regression	
<u>Variable</u>	<u>Coefficient (Std. Err)</u>
Lab-Con Left-Right Axis Gap	0.04 (0.04)
Respondent Left-Right Radicalism	0.49 (0.07) **
Respondent Lib-Auth Radicalism	0.19 (0.04) **
Perceived Self-Party Gap on L-R Dim	- 0.39 (0.07) **
Perceived Self-Party Gap on Lib-Auth Dim	- 0.17 (0.05) **
Lab-Con Capacity for Strong Gov Gap	- 0.12 (0.16)
Respondent WC or MC Identity	0.49 (0.16) **
Demographic Controls	<i>Included</i>
Constant	- 0.04 (0.51)
N	1427

* *p-value* < 0.05; ** *p-value* < 0.01. *Standard errors in parenthesis.*

Note: The dependent variable is feeling an attachment (partisanship) to either Labour or the Conservatives (no matter the strength of that attachment), where 1 indicates that the respondent indeed feels ‘close’ to Labour or the Conservatives, and 0 indicates no such attachment. The ‘Lib-Auth’ dimension here refers to the trade-off between cutting crime v protecting civil liberties.

Demographic Control Variables: Age, gender, age leaving education, occupational class, current trade union membership status, religion, and housing tenure.

Survey Data: 2001 British Election Study [BES] Face to Face Cross-Section (Clarke et al.2003).

Table H.11: Modelling Likelihood of Mainstream Partisanship
– BES 2005

Logistic Regression	
<u>Variable</u>	<u>Coefficient (Std. Err)</u>
Lab-Con Left-Right Axis Gap	0.19 (0.05) **
Respondent Left-Right Radicalism	0.33 (0.08) **
Respondent Lib-Auth Radicalism	0.19 (0.06) **
Perceived Self-Party Gap on L-R Dim	- 0.43 (0.09) **
Perceived Self-Party Gap on Lib-Auth Dim	- 0.16 (0.07) *
Lab-Con Capacity for Strong Gov Gap	0.45 (0.17) **
Respondent WC or MC Identity	0.10 (0.17)
Demographic Controls	<i>Included</i>
Constant	- 0.40 (0.54)
N	1820

* $p\text{-value} < 0.05$; ** $p\text{-value} < 0.01$. *Standard errors in parenthesis.*

Note: The dependent variable is feeling an attachment (partisanship) to either Labour or the Conservatives (no matter the strength of that attachment), where 1 indicates that the respondent indeed feels ‘close’ to Labour or the Conservatives, and 0 indicates no such attachment. The ‘Lib-Auth’ dimension here refers to the trade-off between cutting crime v protecting civil liberties.

Demographic Control Variables: Age, gender, age leaving education, occupational class, current trade union membership status, religion, and housing tenure.

Survey Data: 2005 British Election Study [BES] Face to Face Cross-Section (Clarke et al.2006).

Table H.12: Modelling Likelihood of Mainstream Partisanship
– BES 2015

Logistic Regression	
<u>Variable</u>	<u>Coefficient (Std. Err)</u>
Lab-Con Left-Right Axis Gap	0.12 (0.03) **
Respondent Left-Right Radicalism	0.25 (0.07) **
Respondent Lib-Auth Dim Radicalism	0.01 (0.05)
Perceived Self-Party Gap on L-R Dim	- 0.30 (0.06) **
Perceived Self-Party Gap on Lib-Auth Dim	- 0.15 (0.04) **
Lab-Con Capacity for Strong Gov Gap	0.55 (0.17) **
Respondent WC or MC Identity	0.25 (0.17)
Demographic Controls	<i>Included</i>
Constant	0.23 (0.50)
N	1047

* *p-value* < 0.05; ** *p-value* < 0.01. *Standard errors in parenthesis.*

Note: The dependent variable is feeling an attachment (partisanship) to either Labour or the Conservatives (no matter the strength of that attachment), where 1 indicates that the respondent indeed feels ‘close’ to Labour or the Conservatives, and 0 indicates no such attachment. The ‘Lib-Auth’ dimension here refers to the trade-off between uniting with the EU and protecting British independence.

Demographic Control Variables: Age, gender, age leaving education, occupational class, current trade union membership status, religion, and housing tenure.

Survey Data: 2015 British Election Study [BES] Face to Face Cross-Section (Fieldhouse et al.2016).

A Note on Table H.13

In Table 5.10 of the main text I present several cross-lagged structural equation models [CLEMs] relating respondents' partisanship to their perceptions of polarisation. These models simultaneously estimate the effect of past feelings of closeness to Labour or the Conservatives on present perceptions of Labour-Conservative polarisation and the effect of past perceptions of polarisation on present feelings of closeness. They do this while also controlling for autocorrelation (i.e. the effect of lagged values of the same variable with itself at the present time), as well as several other covariates. This modelling strategy was used by Lupu (2015) to ascertain the direction of causality between feeling close to a party and believing that party to be ideologically distinct in relation to others. He found that, using a dataset of US high school graduates reinterviewed at multiple intervals over a thirty-decade period, prior beliefs in the ideological divisions between the Republican and Democratic Parties was a better predictor of subsequent attachment to either of these two parties than prior feelings of attachment were of subsequent belief in ideological divisions. This is essentially the same finding that I report in Table 5.10 (albeit with a contemporary representative sample of British voters rather than pool of US high school graduates from the 1960s). However, there are still several differences between my model specification in Table 5.10 and Lupu's. In Table H.13 I attempt to more directly replicate the findings of Lupu (2015: 347–350) by adopting as similar modelling specification as possible.

Like myself, Lupu uses wishes to know the direction of causality between binary measures of partisanship (“thinking of oneself as Republican or Democrat”) and perceived polarisation (affirming “important differences between what the two parties’ stand for”). These are exactly the same as their equivalents in my own dataset: “thinking of oneself as either Labour or Conservative”, and believing that there is a “great difference” between what those parties stand for. Lupu utilises the ‘Political Socialisation Study’, a four-wave panel study of a cohort of US high school seniors beginning in 1965. He runs his CLSEM utilising clustered standard errors (by individual) rather than weights given his sample is inherently non-representative nationally. Lupu's results, displayed in Model A in the form of standardised coefficients, indicate that perceived polarisation is the dominant factor in the relationship between polarisation and partisan attachments, once controlling for respondent gender and political knowledge (a basic world history and civics test out of 5). In fact, partisanship appears to have no effect on polarisation perceptions once these controls and lagged partisanship is accounted for.

In Models B-D, I use data from the British Election Studies Internet Panel [BESIP, Fieldhouse et al. 2019] concerning the same British voters in 2015 (BESIP Wave 6: 8th - 26th May 2015) and 2017 (BESIP Wave 12: 7th June 2017). I specify each model differently. All three contain the same

controls that Lupu uses: gender, and political knowledge test score out of 5 (here a test at recognising the job title of several world leaders). However, Model B uses a complete nationally representative sample (using sample panel weights); Model C, like Lupu, uses just sixth-form graduates (an equivalent level of education to US high school seniors); and Model D the same population but, as with Lupu, clustered standard errors rather than sample weights. The latter model specification is exactly like Lupu's, albeit using British voters over a shorter time interval.

Models B and C indicate that the impact of prior polarisation perceptions on partisanship is stronger than prior partisanship on polarisation. In the case of Model D, the two effects are essentially equal (indicating the effects are bidirectional). All of these results look fairly similar, however. In fact, the standardised impact of prior partisanship on current polarisation is almost exactly the same as that uncovered by Lupu in his own study. The only major differences between Lupu's main results and my own are his slightly smaller autoregressive effects for partisanship, and smaller coefficients for the effect of lagged partisanship on current polarisation. Neither of these differences are surprising. One would expect to see a greater impact of prior partisanship (both on its own future values and subsequent perceived polarisation) when panel waves are only two years apart, as in my model, than when they are, on average, 11 years apart as in Lupu's study.

Overall, the fact that I was able to effectively replicate the findings from Lupu's own widely-cited study using a very different sample pool and political context gives me even more faith in the validity of the hypothesis that perceptions of polarisation are not wholly (or even mostly) artefacts of motivated reasoning on the part of partisans.

Table H.13: Cross-Lagged Structural Equation Models Relating Perceived Polarisation and Feeling Close to Labour or the Conservatives

Cross-Lagged Structural Equation Model	Lupu Dataset (Lupu 2013)	British Election Study Dataset		
	Model A US High School Graduates (1965,1973, 1982, 1997)	Model B GB Electorate (2015, 2017)	Model C GB Sixth-Form Graduates (2015, 2017)	Model D GB Sixth-Form Graduates (2015, 2017) [No Weighting]
Feel Close to Rep/Dem or Lab/Con				
<u>Perceived Rep/Dem or Lab/Con Polarisation (lagged)</u>	0.08 (0.02) **	0.09 (0.02) **	0.08 (0.02) **	0.08 (0.01) **
<u>Rep/Dem or Lab/Con Partisan (lagged)</u>	0.29 (0.02) **	0.62 (0.02) **	0.63 (0.02) **	0.68 (0.01) **
Female	0.09 (0.02) **	0.04 (0.02) *	0.04 (0.02) *	- 0.00 (0.01)
Political Knowledge	0.03 (0.02)	0.04 (0.02) *	0.01 (0.02)	0.02 (0.01) *
Constant	0.51 (0.06)	0.18 (0.05)	0.25 (0.06)	0.25 (0.03)
Perceived Rep/Dem or Lab/Con Polarisation				
<u>Perceived Rep/Dem or Lab/Con Polarisation (lagged)</u>	0.28 (0.02) **	0.34 (0.02) **	0.33 (0.02) **	0.30 (0.01) **
<u>Rep/Dem or Lab/Con Partisan (lagged)</u>	0.01 (0.02)	0.05 (0.02) *	0.04 (0.03)	0.08 (0.01) **
Female	0.06 (0.02) **	0.01 (0.02)	- 0.01 (0.03)	- 0.04 (0.01) **
Political Knowledge	0.16 (0.02) **	0.17 (0.02) **	0.16 (0.03) **	0.12 (0.01) **
Constant	0.49 (0.06)	0.49 (0.07)	0.52 (0.09)	0.77 (0.04)
N – Observations	2669	4935	3194	6879
N – Respondents	1178	4935	3194	6879
N- Waves	4	2	2	2

* p -value <0.05; ** p -value <0.01

Coefficients have been standardised. Standard errors in parenthesis.

Note: These are cross-lagged structural equation models (CLSEMs) that attempt to ascertain the direction of causality between a binary measure of partisanship (“thinking of oneself as Labour or Conservative”) and perceived polarisation (affirming “great differences between what the two parties’ stand for”). The coefficients have been standardised to allow one to work out whether the effect of lagged partisanship on subsequent perceptions of polarisation is greater than that of lagged perceptions of polarisation on subsequent feelings of partisanship (while controlling for autocorrelation and any other covariates in the model). These models are like those in Table 5.10 of the main text, but here they have been specified slightly differently in order to directly replicate the findings of Lupu (2015: 347-35), whose own results (using graduates from US high schools in the mid-1960s and attitudes towards the Democratic and Republican parties rather than their British counterparts) are presented in Model A. He runs his CLSEM utilising clustered standard errors (by individual) rather than weights given his sample is inherently non-representative nationally. In Models B-D, I use data from the BESIP concerning the same British voters in 2015 and 2017. I specify each model differently. All three contain the same controls that Lupu uses: gender, and political knowledge test score out of 5 (here a test at recognising the job title of several world leaders). However, Model B uses a complete nationally representative sample (using sample panel weights); Model C, like Lupu, uses just sixth-form graduates (an equivalent level of education to US high school seniors); and Model D the same population but, as with Lupu, clustered standard errors rather than sample weights (i.e. just like Lupu’s model specification, albeit with a British sample over a shorter time period).

Data: British Election Study Combined Wave 1-16 Internet Panel (Fieldhouse et al. 2019).

Appendix I: Descriptive Statistics for Chapter Six

In what follows, I present a table of descriptive statistics for the variables used in my analysis of data from the original survey conducted on my behalf by YouGov in Germany from the 2nd to the 5th July 2019. The exact wording of this survey (in both the original German-language version and English-language translation) can be viewed in Appendix J. I present these statistics separately for each of my five treatment groups as well as the ‘null group’ that did receive any of the information vignettes about the various political parties:

Group 1	Basic Information Group
Group 2	Coalition Convergence Group
Group 3	Policy Convergence Group
Group 4	Coalition and Policy Convergence Group
Group 5	Policy Polarisation Group
Null Group	No Information Group

The descriptive statistics for the first five groups are only for the group of respondents who can actually be classified as ‘treated’. We restricted our sample to this subsection by systematically removing respondents who clearly did not read the assigned text. Similarly to Lupu (Lupu 2013) we remove any respondent who spent fewer than 15 seconds (i.e. an average of 5 seconds a slide) on the treatment, as well as any respondent who spent more than 15 minutes. Only the answers given by these respondents are actually used in the analysis that takes place in Chapter Six. This ‘screening’ does not apply to those in the ‘null group’, given that they were not exposed to any experimental treatment, and therefore had no text to read.

Table I.1: Descriptive Statistics for Variables Used in Chapter Six by Treatment Category

Variable	Statistic / Option	Group1 (238)	Group 2 (214)	Group 3 (234)	Group 4 (226)	Group 5 (235)	Null Group (258)
Age	Mean	52.6	51.9	52.1	51.7	52.4	48.9
Respondents' ages (in years) were collected by YouGov prior to my survey.	Std. Dev	16.5	16.2	15.6	15.0	16.3	17.0
	Quartile 1	40.0	39.0	40.0	41.0	40.0	35.0
	Q2	55.0	54.0	54.0	53.4	55.0	50.0
	Q3	66.0	64.0	65.0	63.0	66.0	62.0
	Q4	85.0	83.0	84.0	89.0	89.0	119.0
Gender	Male	43%	51%	47%	47%	54%	55%
Respondents' genders were collected by YouGov prior to my survey.	Female	57%	49%	53%	53%	46%	45%
University Education	Yes	43%	36.5%	37.6%	36.3%	32.7%	35.7%
Respondents' levels of education was collected by YouGov prior to my survey.	No	56%	63.6%	62.4%	63.7%	67.2%	64.3%
Income Quintile?	Yes	23.4%	18.9%	20.4%	21.6%	23.9%	20.2%
Respondents' monthly post-tax household income was collected by YouGov prior to my survey. Based on the distribution of responses to this question I created a dummy variable indicating whether or not a respondent's income was in the top 25% of those surveyed. The cut-off for membership of this group was earning more than 3500 Euros per month (post-tax).	No	76.6%	81.1%	79.6%	78.4%	76.1%	79.8%
Region	East Germany	21.4%	23.8%	20.9%	23.5%	21.7%	23.3%
The region that each respondent lived in was recorded by YouGov prior to my survey. I used this information to create a dummy variable indicating whether or not the respondent is located in any of the five German states that made up the former-German Democratic Republic. As I cannot disaggregate Berlin-based respondents into east and west, they are all counted as being in west Germany for this variable.	West Germany	78.6%	76.2%	79.1%	76.6%	78.3%	76.7%

Ideological Radicalism	Mean	1.27	1.44	1.30	1.15	1.43	1.31
At some point prior to my survey, YouGov asked respondents to place themselves on an 11-point scale where 0 indicated that they are very left-wing, and 10 indicated that they are very right-wing. I took the absolute distance between their chosen position and 5 (the central value) to indicate how ideologically ‘radical’ the respondent considers themselves. No distinction is made between being far-left or far-right.	Std. Dev	1.44	1.58	1.44	1.34	1.44	1.55
	Q1	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Q2	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
	Q3	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
	Q4	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
Level of Political Interest	Mean	3.07	3.03	2.95	2.95	3.10	2.98
At some point prior to my survey, YouGov asked respondents to place themselves on a 5-point scale according to their level of political interest, where 1 equals minimal interest and 5 the absolute maximum.	Std. Dev	0.98	1.11	0.94	1.01	1.00	1.04
	Q1	3.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	3.00	2.00
	Q2	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
	Q3	4.00	4.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	3.00
	Q4	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
Partisanship	CDU-CSU	24.1%	20.6%	18.9%	21.7%	18.7%	22.1%
Prior to my survey, and shortly after the 2017 Bundestag election, YouGov asked respondents whether they “felt close” to any particular political party. This variable records their response. Note that ‘Non-Partisan’ includes those replying with ‘Don’t Know’.	SPD	14.8%	16.4%	12.9%	15.5%	19.6%	13.6%
	Die Linke	7.6%	8.4%	8.2%	8.0%	9.4%	11.2%
	Greens	12.2%	9.8%	9.9%	10.2%	10.2%	8.9%
	FDP	5.5%	4.7%	5.2%	5.3%	4.3%	5.0%
	AfD	9.3%	9.4%	7.7%	10.6%	12.8%	11.2%
	Other Party	2.5%	4.2%	1.7%	1.8%	3.0%	1.6%
	Non-Partisan	24.1%	26.6%	35.6%	27.0%	22.1%	26.4%
Vote Intention	SPD	11.8%	15.0%	12.8%	10.2%	15.7%	9.3%
This variable was recorded as party of my 2019 survey. Following exposure to the assigned information about various German political parties, respondents were asked who they would vote for if a Federal Election were to be held tomorrow. This variable records their response. Note that ‘Would not Vote’ includes those replying with ‘Don’t Know’. Please see Appendix J for the actual wording of this question.	CDU-CSU	22.7%	17.3%	18.0%	21.2%	19.6%	19.8%
	FDP	5.5%	7.0%	6.4%	6.2%	6.4%	6.2%
	Greens	20.2%	17.3%	15.4%	17.7%	16.2%	20.2%
	AfD	11.8%	13.1%	14.5%	15.0%	14.5%	16.3%
	Die Linke	9.2%	9.4%	10.3%	10.6%	10.2%	9.3%
	Other Party	6.3%	5.6%	9.0%	4.4%	6.0%	5.0%
	Would not Vote	12.6%	15.4%	13.7%	14.6%	11.5%	13.9%

Perceived SPD-CDU/CSU Polarisation	Mean	4.98	5.18	4.89	5.08	5.13	4.57
This variable was recorded as party of my 2019 survey. Following exposure to the assigned information about various German political parties, respondents were asked whether they thought that there were important differences between what the SPD and the CDU-CSU stood for. They could place their responses on a scale of 0-10, where 0 is “very similar” and 10 is “very different”. Please see Appendix J for the actual wording of this question.	Std. Dev	2.30	2.45	2.27	2.43	2.44	2.50
	Q1	3.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
	Q2	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
	Q3	7.00	7.00	6.00	7.00	7.00	6.00
	Q4	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0
Perceived SPD-CDU/CSU-Green-FDP Polarisation	Mean	5.91	6.15	5.71	5.80	6.01	5.57
This variable was recorded as party of my 2019 survey. Following exposure to the assigned information about various German political parties, respondents were asked whether they thought that there were important differences between the four parties that had participated in federal governments - the SPD, the CDU-CSU, the Greens, and the FDP. Respondents were asked to place their responses on a scale of 0-10, where 0 is “very similar” and 10 is “very different”. Please see Appendix J for the actual wording of this question.	Std. Dev	2.45	2.48	2.47	2.39	2.27	2.49
	Q1	5.00	5.00	4.00	4.00	5.00	4.00
	Q2	6.00	6.00	5.00	6.00	6.00	5.00
	Q3	8.00	8.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00
	Q4	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0
Level of Belief in Politicians Keeping their promises?	Mean	2.37	2.26	2.30	2.51	2.28	2.42
This variable was recorded as party of my 2019 survey. Following exposure to the assigned information about various German political parties, respondents were asked whether or not they agreed that parties in Germany generally implement the policies they promise during election campaigns. Responses were scaled 1-5, where 1 indicates “strongly disagree” and 5 “strongly agree”. Please see Appendix J for the actual wording of this question.	Std. Dev	1.05	0.88	0.89	0.94	0.91	1.00
	Quartile 1	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
	Q2	2.00	2.00	2.00	3.00	2.00	2.00
	Q3	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
	Q4	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.00	5.00
Strength of Partisan Attachment	Mean	1.74	1.77	1.75	1.88	1.86	1.80
This variable was recorded as party of my 2019 survey. Following exposure to the assigned information, respondents were asked exactly how close they now felt to the party YouGov recorded they were close to shortly after the 2017 Federal Election (and long before my survey). Responses were scaled 0 to 3, where 0 equals “I no longer feel close to this party”, 1 equals “not very close”, 2 “somewhat close” and 3 “very close”. Only respondents who previously acknowledged feeling close to a mainstream party (CDU-CSU, SPD, Greens, or FDP) are included in this variable. Please see Appendix J for the actual wording of this question.	Std. Dev	0.78	0.74	0.68	0.72	0.67	0.74
	Quartile 1	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
	Q2	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
	Q3	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
	Q4	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00

Appendix J: Supplementary Material for Chapter Six

Table J.1: Original Survey Experiment Transcript

Here I present the script that respondents to our experimental survey, which was fielded online by YouGov from the 2nd to the 5th July 2019, were faced with. I also list the options that participants could respond with. Please note that there are some questions (variables) included in the script which do not form any part of the analysis conducted during this thesis. I also do not present the original survey vignettes (i.e. party statements) themselves in this section. The English-language translations of these statements are available in the main text (Chapter Five, pp.X-X); the authentic German-language vignettes are presented in Appendix J, J.2.

Below I present both the original English-language script that I designed for this chapter. Individual questions are highlighted in bold. Below each block of text I also present, in italics, the German-language script that respondents actually saw. The latter was created by various native-speaking political science students, working from the original English version. In fact, many of these individuals were heavily involved in redrafting the original script to better fit the realities of contemporary German politics. I therefore must extend my utmost gratitude to Leo Madje, Friederike Haberstroh, Filip Bubenheimer, Celine Li, Theresa Feicht (all based at the *University of Oxford*) and Lisa Bischoff (*Ruhr-Universität Bochum*) for their invaluable insights and research assistance. That said, I alone am responsible for any remaining errors in the script. Please also note that respondents' demographic data is collected automatically by YouGov when interested parties sign-up to receive surveys (and at regular intervals thereafter); therefore this background information was not inquired about in my own survey.

*** Start Survey***

Part One – Economic Attitudes⁹⁵

We'd like to ask you a few questions about economic conditions.

Wir würden Ihnen gerne einige Fragen zur wirtschaftlichen Lage stellen.

On the whole, how satisfied are you with your present household financial situation?

1. Very dissatisfied;
2. Somewhat dissatisfied;
3. Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied;
4. Somewhat satisfied;
5. Very satisfied

⁹⁵ These subheadings did not appear in the original survey.

Wie zufrieden sind Sie, alles in allem, mit der gegenwärtigen finanziellen Lage Ihres Haushalts?

1. *Sehr unzufrieden;*
2. *Eher unzufrieden;*
3. *Weder zufrieden noch unzufrieden;*
4. *Eher zufrieden;*
5. *Sehr zufrieden*

And how does the financial situation of your household now compare with what it was 12 months ago? The financial situation today is...

1. A lot worse;
2. A little worse;
3. Stayed the same;
4. A little better;
5. A lot better

Und wie schätzen Sie die gegenwärtige finanzielle Lage Ihres Haushalts im Vergleich zu vor 12 Monaten ein? Die finanzielle Lage heute ist...

1. *Viel schlechter;*
2. *Etwas schlechter;*
3. *Gleich geblieben;*
4. *Etwas besser;*
5. *Viel besser*

On the whole, how satisfied are you with your present state of the general economy in Germany?

1. Very dissatisfied;
2. Somewhat dissatisfied;
3. Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied;
4. Somewhat satisfied;
5. Very satisfied

Wie zufrieden sind Sie, alles in allem, mit der gegenwärtigen Wirtschaftslage in Deutschland?

1. *Sehr unzufrieden;*
2. *Eher unzufrieden;*
3. *Weder zufrieden noch unzufrieden;*
4. *Eher zufrieden;*
5. *Sehr zufrieden*

And how do you think the general economic situation in Germany has changed over the last 12 months? The economic situation today is...

1. A lot worse;
2. A little worse;
3. Stayed the same;
4. A little better;
5. A lot better

Und wie hat sich, Ihrer Meinung nach, die wirtschaftliche Lage in Deutschland in den letzten 12 Monaten verändert? Die wirtschaftliche Lage heute ist...

1. *Viel schlechter;*
2. *Etwas schlechter;*
3. *Gleich geblieben;*

4. *Etwas besser;*
5. *Viel besser*

Part Two – Party Vignettes

On the following three pages you will find information about some of the biggest political parties in Germany. Please read the information on each page and then click ">". We will then ask you some questions about these parties. Reading the information takes a total of 3-4 minutes.

Auf den folgenden drei Seiten erhalten Sie Informationen über einige der größten politischen Parteien in Deutschland. Bitte lesen Sie die Informationen auf jeder Seite durch und klicken Sie dann ">". Im Anschluss werden wir Ihnen einige Fragen zu diesen Parteien stellen. Das Lesen der Informationen dauert insgesamt 3-4 Minuten.

*** Vignettes Presented ***

Part Three – Political Attitudes

We have a number of political parties in Germany, each of which would like to get your vote. If there was a Bundestag election next Sunday, which party would you vote for?

1. SPD;
2. CDU-CSU;
3. FDP;
4. The Greens;
5. AfD
6. Die Linke
7. Some other party
8. Would not vote
9. Don't Know

Es gibt in Deutschland eine Reihe an politischen Parteien, die um Ihre Wählerstimme werben. Welche Partei würden Sie wählen, wenn am nächsten Sonntag Bundestagswahl wäre?

1. SPD;
2. CDU-CSU;
3. FDP;
4. The Greens;
5. AfD;
6. Die Linke;
7. Andere Partei
8. Würde nicht wählen
9. Weiß nicht

Thinking about German politics some more, how probable is it that you will ever vote for the following parties? Please answer on a scale where '0' means "Not at all probable" and '10' means "Very probable".

1. SPD [0-10]
2. CDU-CSU [0-10]
3. FDP [0-10]
4. The Greens [0-10]
5. AfD [0-10]
6. Die Linke [0-10]

Wenn Sie nun etwas näher über Politik in Deutschland nachdenken – für wie wahrscheinlich halten Sie es, dass Sie jemals die folgenden Parteien wählen werden? Bitte nutzen Sie für Ihre Antwort die unten stehende Skala von 0 bis 10, auf der 0 “überhaupt nicht wahrscheinlich” und 10 “sehr wahrscheinlich” bedeutet.

1. SPD [0-10]
2. CDU-CSU [0-10]
3. FDP [0-10]
4. The Greens [0-10];
5. AfD [0-10]
6. Die Linke [0-10]

When considering everything that the SPD and the CDU-CSU stand for, some say that these parties are very similar today; others say that there are many important differences between them. On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is “Very similar” and 10 is “Very different”, how different do you think that these parties are?

1. 0-10
2. Don’t Know

Betrachtet man alle politischen Inhalte, die SPD und CDU/CSU insgesamt vertreten, so sagen einige, dass sich diese Parteien sehr ähnlich sind – andere hingegen sagen, dass zwischen diesen Parteien wichtige Unterschiede bestehen. Wie ähnlich oder unterschiedlich sind diese Parteien Ihrer Ansicht nach? Bitte nutzen Sie für Ihre Antwort die unten stehende Skala von 0 bis 10, auf der 0 “sehr ähnlich” und 10 “sehr unterschiedlich” bedeutet.

1. 0-10
2. Weiß nicht

Think now about all four parties that have entered national government (that is, the SPD, CDU-CSU, Greens and FDP). When considering everything that these parties stand for, some say that these parties are very similar today; others say that there are many important differences between them. On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is “Very similar” and 10 is “Very different”, how different do you think these parties are?

1. 0-10
2. Don’t Know

Betrachten wir nun alle vier Parteien, die schon auf Bundesebene regiert haben – sprich die SPD, CDU/CSU, die Grünen und die FDP. Betrachtet man alle politischen Inhalte, die diese Parteien insgesamt vertreten, so sagen einige, dass sich all diese Parteien sehr ähnlich sind - andere hingegen sagen, dass zwischen all diesen Parteien wichtige Unterschiede bestehen. Wie ähnlich oder unterschiedlich sind diese Parteien Ihrer Ansicht nach? Bitte nutzen Sie für Ihre Antwort die unten stehende Skala von 0 bis 10, auf der 0 “sehr ähnlich” und 10 “sehr unterschiedlich” bedeutet.

1. 0-10
2. Weiß nicht

Some people say that political parties in Germany generally implement the policies they promise during election campaigns, others disagree. What do you think?

1. Disagree strongly;
2. Disagree somewhat;
3. Neither agree nor disagree;
4. Agree somewhat;
5. Strongly agree;
6. Don’t know

Manche Leute sagen: Alles in allem setzen die politischen Parteien in Deutschland die politischen Vorhaben um, die sie im Wahlkampf versprochen haben. Andere Leute sehen dies anders. Was sagen Sie dazu?

1. *Stimme überhaupt nicht zu;*
2. *Stimme eher nicht zu;*
3. *Stimme teilweise zu/teilweise nicht zu;*
4. *Stimme eher zu;*
5. *Stimme sehr zu;*
6. *Weiß nicht*

Suppose that a devastating new economic crisis befell Germany tomorrow. Which party do you think would have the best policies to guide the country out of the crisis?

1. SPD;
2. CDU-CSU;
3. FDP;
4. The Greens;
5. AfD
6. Die Linke
7. Some other party
8. No Party
9. Don't Know

Angenommen, Deutschland rutscht morgen in eine schwere Wirtschaftskrise. Welche Partei hätte, ihrer Ansicht nach, das beste politische Programm, um das Land aus der Krise zu führen?

1. *SPD;*
2. *CDU-CSU;*
3. *FDP;*
4. *The Greens;*
5. *AFD;*
6. *Die Linke;*
7. *Eine Andere Partei*
8. *Keine dieser Parteien*
9. *Weiß nicht*

In a previous YouGov survey you said that you tend to feel close to the * [X⁹⁶] * party. How close would you say that you feel to this party?

1. Very close;
2. Quite close;
3. Not close;
4. I no longer feel close to this party at all;
5. Don't know

*In einer früheren YouGov Umfrage haben Sie angegeben, dass Sie * der/den [X] * nahestehen. Wie nahe stehen Sie dieser Partei? Fühlen Sie sich ihr ...*

1. *Sehr nahe;*
2. *Ziemlich nahe;*
3. *Nicht besonders nahe;*
4. *Nicht besonders nahe;*

⁹⁶ 'X' was automatically replaced with the party the respondent had said they were close when YouGov last enquired about their partisanship. This question was skipped if the respondent had previously stated that they had no such affiliation.

5. Weiß nicht

Thank you for your participation.

Vielen Dank für Ihre Teilnahme.

* End of Survey *

Table J.2: Original German-Language Survey Experiment Treatments

Below I present the original online vignettes that respondent's to the YouGov survey were randomly assigned to read. These are, naturally, in German. The English-language version (from which the translators worked from) are presented in pages 234-238 of the main text.

To recap, there were five treatment groups, so five groups of vignettes are presented below.

	Group		Treatment Description	Predicted Effect
Group 1	Basic Information Group		Receives uncontroversial descriptive information about each party's age and traditional ideology.	None – Reference Group
Group 2	Coalition Group	Convergence	Receives all the basic information along with an additional statement noting examples of how each mainstream party has become increasingly willing to enter coalition with their traditional rivals on the other side of the political spectrum.	Increases support for the AfD and Die Linke at the expense of the four mainstream parties.
Group 3	Policy Group	Convergence	Receives all the basic information along with an additional statement noting examples of how each mainstream party has introduced or supported legislation at odds with their traditional ideological platform, and more associated with that of their political opponents.	Increases support for the AfD and Die Linke at the expense of the four mainstream parties.
Group 4	Coalition and Convergence Group	Policy	Receives all of the basic information, alongside the 'coalition convergence' and 'policy convergence' group statements.	Increases support for the AfD and Die Linke at the expense of the four mainstream parties.
Group 5	Policy Polarisation Group		Receives all the basic information along with an additional statement noting examples of how each mainstream party has actually recommitted themselves to their traditional ideology.	Decreases support for the AfD and Die Linke; shores up support for the four mainstream parties.

Introduction Slide



Auf den folgenden drei Seiten erhalten Sie Informationen über einige der größten politischen Parteien in Deutschland. Bitte lesen Sie die Informationen auf jeder Seite durch und klicken Sie dann ">". Im Anschluss werden wir Ihnen einige Fragen zu diesen Parteien stellen. Das Lesen der Informationen dauert insgesamt 3-4 Minuten.



(English Translation)



The following three pages provide information about some of the largest political parties in Germany. Please read the information on each page and then click ">". We will then ask you some questions about these parties. Reading the information takes a total of 3-4 minutes.



Group 1 – Basic Information

YouGov®



Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD)

Partei der linken Mitte, gegründet 1863. Die SPD setzt sich traditionell für starke Gewerkschaften und soziale Gerechtigkeit ein.



Christlich Demokratische Union/Christlich-Soziale Union (CDU/CSU)

Die Unionsparteien, politisch rechts der Mitte, bilden seit 1949 ein Bündnis. Traditionell setzen sie sich für Familienwerte, begrenztes Eingreifen des Staates in die Wirtschaft und Haushaltsdisziplin ein.



YouGov®



Freie Demokratische Partei (FDP)

Partei rechts der Mitte, gegründet 1948. Die FDP setzt sich traditionell für Freiheitsrechte, Privatisierungen, Steuersenkungen und Deregulierung ein.



Die Grünen

Partei der linken Mitte, gegründet 1980. Die Grünen setzen sich traditionell für Umweltschutz und den Schutz von Minderheiten ein.



Group 2 - Coalition Convergence Information

YouGov



Christlich Demokratische Union/Christlich-Soziale Union (CDU/CSU)

Die Unionsparteien, politisch rechts der Mitte, bilden seit 1949 ein Bündnis. Traditionell setzen sie sich für Familienwerte, begrenztes Eingreifen des Staates in die Wirtschaft und Haushaltsdisziplin ein.

Historisch betrachtet waren andere Parteien rechts der Mitte die bevorzugten Koalitionspartner der Union. In den letzten drei von vier Bundesregierungen hat die Union aber in einer Koalition mit der SPD regiert. Die Union regiert gegenwärtig auch zusammen mit der SPD in fünf, und zusammen mit den Grünen in vier Bundesländern.



Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD)

Partei der linken Mitte, gegründet 1863. Die SPD setzt sich traditionell für starke Gewerkschaften und soziale Gerechtigkeit ein.

Historisch betrachtet waren andere Parteien der linken Mitte die bevorzugten Koalitionspartner der SPD. In den letzten drei von vier Bundesregierungen hat die SPD aber in einer Koalition mit CDU/CSU regiert. Die SPD regiert gegenwärtig auch zusammen mit der CDU in fünf Bundesländern.



YouGov



Die Grünen

Partei der linken Mitte, gegründet 1980. Die Grünen setzen sich traditionell für Umweltschutz und den Schutz von Minderheiten ein.

Historisch betrachtet waren andere Parteien der linken Mitte die bevorzugten Koalitionspartner der Grünen. Gegenwärtig regieren die Grünen aber in einer Koalitionsregierung mit der CDU in vier, und mit der FDP in zwei Bundesländern. Nach der Bundestagswahl 2017 begaben sich die Grünen in Koalitionsverhandlungen mit Union und FDP, die allerdings scheiterten.



Freie Demokratische Partei (FDP)

Partei rechts der Mitte, gegründet 1948. Die FDP setzt sich traditionell für Freiheitsrechte, Privatisierungen, Steuersenkungen und Deregulierung ein.

Historisch betrachtet waren andere Parteien rechts der Mitte die bevorzugten Koalitionspartner der FDP, allerdings hat die Partei auch Koalitionsregierungen mit der SPD gebildet. Die FDP regiert gegenwärtig in einer Koalition mit der SPD in einem Bundesland, und mit den Grünen in zwei Bundesländern.



Group 3 – Policy Convergence Information

YouGov



Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD)

Partei der linken Mitte, gegründet 1863. Die SPD setzt sich traditionell für starke Gewerkschaften und soziale Gerechtigkeit ein.

Nach Ansicht vieler Expert/innen ist die SPD in letzter Zeit programmatisch in die Mitte gerückt. Zum Beispiel führte die SPD die unter den Namen "Agenda 2010" und "Hartz IV" bekannten Reformen durch, die Steuersenkungen, Kürzungen der Leistungen für Arbeitslose und Sanktionen für manche Empfänger/innen von Sozialleistungen beinhalteten.



Christlich Demokratische Union/Christlich-Soziale Union (CDU/CSU)

Die Unionsparteien, politisch rechts der Mitte, bilden seit 1949 ein Bündnis. Traditionell setzen sie sich für Familienwerte, begrenztes Eingreifen des Staates in die Wirtschaft und Haushaltsdisziplin ein.

Nach Ansicht vieler Expert/innen ist die Union in letzter Zeit programmatisch in die Mitte gerückt. Zum Beispiel hat die Union Eingriffe in die Wirtschaft unterstützt, indem sie den Mindestlohn und die Mietpreisbremse mit eingeführt hat.



YouGov



Freie Demokratische Partei (FDP)

Partei rechts der Mitte, gegründet 1948. Die FDP setzt sich traditionell für Freiheitsrechte, Privatisierungen, Steuersenkungen und Deregulierung ein.

Nach Ansicht vieler Expert/innen ist die FDP in letzter Zeit programmatisch in die Mitte gerückt. Zum Beispiel hat die FDP während ihrer letzten Regierungsbeteiligung auf Bundesebene Steuern und Staatsausgaben nur wenig gesenkt.



Die Grünen

Partei der linken Mitte, gegründet 1980. Die Grünen setzen sich traditionell für Umweltschutz und den Schutz von Minderheiten ein.

Nach Ansicht vieler Expert/innen sind die Grünen in letzter Zeit programmatisch in die Mitte gerückt. Zum Beispiel unterstützten die Grünen die "Agenda 2010" und die "Hartz IV"-Reformen, die Steuersenkungen, Kürzungen der Leistungen für Arbeitslose und Sanktionen für manche Empfänger/innen von Sozialleistungen beinhalteten.



Group 4 – Coalition and Policy Convergence Information

YouGov



Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD)

Partei der linken Mitte, gegründet 1863. Die SPD setzt sich traditionell für starke Gewerkschaften und soziale Gerechtigkeit ein.

Nach Ansicht vieler Expert/innen ist die SPD in letzter Zeit programmatisch in die Mitte gerückt. Zum Beispiel führte die SPD die unter den Namen "Agenda 2010" und "Hartz IV" bekannten Reformen durch, die Steuersenkungen, Kürzungen der Leistungen für Arbeitslose und Sanktionen für manche Empfänger/innen von Sozialleistungen beinhalteten.

Historisch betrachtet waren andere Parteien der linken Mitte die bevorzugten Koalitionspartner der SPD. In den letzten drei von vier Bundesregierungen hat die SPD aber in einer Koalition mit CDU/CSU regiert. Die SPD regiert gegenwärtig auch zusammen mit der CDU in fünf Bundesländern.



Christlich Demokratische Union/Christlich-Soziale Union (CDU/CSU)

Die Unionsparteien, politisch rechts der Mitte, bilden seit 1949 ein Bündnis. Traditionell setzen sie sich für Familienwerte, begrenztes Eingreifen des Staates in die Wirtschaft und Haushaltsdisziplin ein.

Nach Ansicht vieler Expert/innen ist die Union in letzter Zeit programmatisch in die Mitte gerückt. Zum Beispiel hat die Union Eingriffe in die Wirtschaft unterstützt, indem sie den Mindestlohn und die Mietpreisbremse mit eingeführt hat.

Historisch betrachtet waren andere Parteien rechts der Mitte die bevorzugten Koalitionspartner der Union. In den letzten drei von vier Bundesregierungen hat die Union aber in einer Koalition mit der SPD regiert. Die Union regiert gegenwärtig auch zusammen mit der SPD in fünf, und zusammen mit den Grünen in vier Bundesländern.



YouGov



Die Grünen

Partei der linken Mitte, gegründet 1980. Die Grünen setzen sich traditionell für Umweltschutz und den Schutz von Minderheiten ein.

Nach Ansicht vieler Expert/innen sind die Grünen in letzter Zeit programmatisch in die Mitte gerückt. Zum Beispiel unterstützten die Grünen die "Agenda 2010" und die "Hartz IV"-Reformen, die Steuersenkungen, Kürzungen der Leistungen für Arbeitslose und Sanktionen für manche Empfänger/innen von Sozialleistungen beinhalteten.

Historisch betrachtet waren andere Parteien der linken Mitte die bevorzugten Koalitionspartner der Grünen. Gegenwärtig regieren die Grünen aber in einer Koalitionsregierung mit der CDU in vier, und mit der FDP in zwei Bundesländern. Nach der Bundestagswahl 2017 begaben sich die Grünen in Koalitionsverhandlungen mit Union und FDP, die allerdings scheiterten.



Freie Demokratische Partei (FDP)

Partei rechts der Mitte, gegründet 1948. Die FDP setzt sich traditionell für Freiheitsrechte, Privatisierungen, Steuersenkungen und Deregulierung ein.

Nach Ansicht vieler Expert/innen ist die FDP in letzter Zeit programmatisch in die Mitte gerückt. Zum Beispiel hat die FDP während ihrer letzten Regierungsbeteiligung auf Bundesebene Steuern und Staatsausgaben nur wenig gesenkt.

Historisch betrachtet waren andere Parteien rechts der Mitte die bevorzugten Koalitionspartner der FDP, allerdings hat die Partei auch Koalitionsregierungen mit der SPD gebildet. Die FDP regiert gegenwärtig in einer Koalition mit der SPD in einem Bundesland, und mit den Grünen in zwei Bundesländern.



Group 5 – Policy Polarisation Information

YouGov



Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD)

Partei der linken Mitte, gegründet 1863. Die SPD setzt sich traditionell für starke Gewerkschaften und soziale Gerechtigkeit ein.

Nach Ansicht vieler Expert/innen ist die SPD in letzter Zeit programmatisch nach links gerückt. Zum Beispiel sagen führende SPD-Politiker/innen, man werde Agenda 2010 und Hartz IV "hinter uns lassen", Steuern und Sozialleistungen erhöhen und bestimmte Sanktionen für Empfänger/innen von Sozialleistungen abschaffen.



Christlich Demokratische Union/Christlich-Soziale Union (CDU/CSU)

Die Unionsparteien, politisch rechts der Mitte, bilden seit 1949 ein Bündnis. Traditionell setzen sie sich für Familienwerte, begrenztes Eingreifen des Staates in die Wirtschaft und Haushaltsdisziplin ein.

Nach Ansicht vieler Expert/innen ist die Union in letzter Zeit programmatisch nach rechts gerückt. Zum Beispiel hat die Partei Forderungen der SPD nach weiteren Eingriffen in die Wirtschaft wie einer Erhöhung des Mindestlohns und einer Erweiterung der Mietpreisbremse, stark widersprochen.



YouGov



Die Grünen

Partei der linken Mitte, gegründet 1980. Die Grünen setzen sich traditionell für Umweltschutz und den Schutz von Minderheiten ein.

Nach Ansicht vieler Expert/innen sind die Grünen in letzter Zeit programmatisch nach links gerückt. Zum Beispiel fordert die Partei die Rücknahme der mit "Agenda 2010" und der "Hartz IV" eingeführten Sanktionen für manche Empfänger/innen von Sozialleistungen und will Steuern und Sozialleistungen erhöhen.



Freie Demokratische Partei (FDP)

Partei rechts der Mitte, gegründet 1948. Die FDP setzt sich traditionell für Freiheitsrechte, Privatisierungen, Steuersenkungen und Deregulierung ein.

Nach Ansicht vieler Expert/innen ist die FDP in letzter Zeit programmatisch nach rechts gerückt. Zum Beispiel fordert die FDP nachdrücklich umfangreiche Steuersenkungen und Ausgabenkürzungen.



AfD – Die Linke Information

Each of the treatment vignettes above ended with a short piece of information about the two anti-system parties in Germany, the *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) and *Die Linke*. The text was exactly the same in for all treatment groups.

YouGov

DIE LINKE.

Die Linke

Linke Partei, gegründet 2007. Befürwortet die Überwindung eines "Kapitalismus, der auf Ungleichheit, Ausbeutung, Expansion und Konkurrenz beruht".

Die Linke steht den etablierten Parteien und ihrer Politik sehr kritisch gegenüber und war nie an einer Bundesregierung beteiligt.



Alternative für Deutschland (AfD)

Rechte Partei, gegründet 2013. Die AfD fordert eine starke Begrenzung der Zuwanderung, niedrigere Staatsausgaben und einen geringeren Einfluss der Europäischen Union.

Die AfD steht den etablierten Parteien und ihrer Politik sehr kritisch gegenüber und war nie an einer Bundesregierung beteiligt.



A Note on Table J.3

The purpose of the survey experiment outlined in Chapter Six is to induce different perceptions about the extent of mainstream party ideological polarisation by randomly assigning respondents various text vignettes about German political parties. The idea was that those receiving information suggesting that these parties had similar policies would be systematically less likely to emphasise differences between what these various parties stood for. I hypothesised that exposure to ‘convergence information’ would be linked to anti-system voting, due to voter frustration over the mainstream parties in their country denying them sufficient political choice, and weaker feelings of attachment to mainstream parties, as it is increasingly hard to distinguish one party’s ‘brand’ from any other.

In Table 6.3 of Chapter Six, I present the results of a ‘manipulation check’ designed to test that receiving information suggesting that mainstream parties were more/less similar had the intended effect on perceptions of convergence. For the most part, the treatment was ‘successful’ in this regard. However, there is a risk that, while intending to just manipulate perceptions of convergence, I inadvertently also induced other sorts of political attitudes that might create alternative causal pathways to subsequent changes in vote choice or strength of partisanship.

This possibility is addressed by Lupu (Lupu 2013: 59) in his similar experiment which attempted to induce perceptions of convergence amongst a survey pool of Argentinian voters. He notes that *“it is plausible that this information could instead prime respondents to think about whether parties are responsive...Thinking about mandate responsiveness might generate a negative reaction if respondents have normative preferences for parties that fulfil their electoral platforms”*. This idea is based on the work of Susan Stokes (Stokes 2001), who has argued that the tendency for parties to fail to meet the *“expectations they created in campaigns about the actions they would take once elected”* violates popular ideas about mandate representation and can undermine democracy by *“threatening to debase all campaign messages, authentic and disingenuous alike”* (p5; p.182). She claims that this sort of “bait-and-switch”, usually of nominally left-leaning parties moving right after their election, was the main cause of party-system breakdowns in Latin America during the 1980s and 1990s, rather than the ideological convergence of major parties per se. To test this theory, Lupu asks his respondents, post-treatment, whether they agreed or disagreed that *“political parties in Argentina generally implement the policies they promise during the election campaigns”*.

I use the exact same measure here as my dependent variable, substituting Germany for Argentina (see Table J.1 for the exact wording). Answers were transformed into 5-point scale of agreement, ranging 1-5. As in the main text, I restrict analysis to those who were actually plausibly ‘treated’,

i.e. those who spent at least 15 seconds on reading the treatment slides (i.e. an average of at least 5 seconds per slide) and no more than 15 minutes. I also interact the treatment with political interest as treatment is likely to be much less effective on highly-informed voters who have already been exposed to the information contained in the vignettes.

Regardless of whether one also controls for feeling close to a mainstream party, the OLS regression reveals no evidence to support a claim that my treatment is causing lower partisan sentiment (etc) by provoking lower trust in parties, rather than perceptions of mainstream party convergence per se.

Table J.3: Survey Experiment Manipulation Check: Do Treatments Induce Perceptions that Mainstream Parties Break their Manifesto Promises?

Ordinary Least Squares Regressions	DV: “Parties in Germany generally implement the policies they promise during election campaigns (1 – 5 Scale)”	
	Model A	Model B
Treatment Group		
Basic Treatment	- 0.22 (0.30)	- 0.37 (0.28)
Coalition Convergence Treatment	0.02 (0.28)	- 0.02 (0.27)
Policy Convergence Treatment	0.34 (0.29)	0.33 (0.28)
Policy and Coalition Convergence Treatment (Ref: Polarisation Treatment)	0.22 (0.29)	0.22 (0.28)
Political Interest	0.09 (0.07)	0.03 (0.06)
Treatment Group * Political Interest		
Basic Treatment	0.10 (0.09)	0.14 (0.09)
Coalition Convergence Treatment	- 0.02 (0.09)	- 0.00 (0.08)
Policy Convergence Treatment	- 0.10 (0.09)	- 0.09 (0.09)
Policy and Coalition Convergence Treatment	0.00 (0.09)	0.00 (0.09)
Partisanship		
Partisanship Attachment to SPD, CDU-CSU, Greens, or FDP		0.64 (0.05) **
Constant	2.02 (0.21)	1.85 (0.20)
N - Respondents	1115	1115
R-Squared	0.02	0.13

† p-value < 0.10; * p-value < 0.05; ** p-value < 0.01.

Standard errors in parenthesis.

Note: The dependent variable is level of agreement with the statement “political parties in Germany generally implement the policies they promise during the election campaigns (see Table J.1 for the exact wording). Answers were transformed into 5-point scale of agreement, ranging 1-5.

Source: Original YouGov Survey in Germany, 2nd – 5th July 2019

Appendix K: Supplementary Material for the Conclusion

A Note on Tables K.1-K.7

Figure 7.3 in the main text is an odds ratio plot that demonstrates the impacts of a one-standard deviation increase in several attitudinal variables on the likelihood that a respondent believes that “*considering everything that Labour and Conservatives stand for ... there is a great difference between them*” (1) as opposed to believing that there is “*only some*” or “*not much*” difference between them (0). These estimates come from a number of logistic regressions conducted using data from various editions of the British Election Study between 1987 and 2017. The only exception is the 1992 edition, which is excluded as it lacks a few of the key variables in which I am interested in using to predict belief in polarisation. I present the raw coefficients from these regressions in the following seven tables.

I use a variety of different variables to predict belief in Labour-Conservative polarisation. While this outcome variable is exactly the same in wording and construction in every edition of the BES that I include, some of these independent variables are inevitably slightly different in particular years. In what follows I explain how each predictor variable was constructed in general, and when a particular edition of the BES forces me to deviate from this pattern.

The first three variables, the ‘gap’ variables, are all derived from questions which asked respondents to place Labour and the Conservatives on different axes in regard to their ideological position or abilities on certain issues.

The first of these variables, ‘perceived class representation gap’, is taken from the work of Evans and Tilley (2017: 131–132) was constructed by taking each respondent’s relative placement of both parties on spectrums of how well they represent particular social classes. After rating how closely each party “looks after the interests” of the working and then the middle class (using scales of 1–4 with higher numbers equalling greater closeness) the score for representation of the middle class was then deducted from the rating of how well they looked after the middle class. This gave each party, for each respondent, a rating of -2 to +2 (after scores of -3 and -2 and +2 and +3 were combined owing to relatively few observations at the extremes), where lower numbers equal relatively greater concern for the interests of the middle class, and higher numbers for the interests of the working class. The simple difference between each respondent’s rating of each party was used to derive how different they viewed the social representation of each party. A maximum score of 5 would, for example, mean that one party is much more focused on representing the middle class (scoring -2)

while the other one is much more focused on the working class (scoring +2). A score of zero indicates both parties are primarily focused on the same class, or that neither have strong class-based differences in representative ability.

There are two other ‘gap variables’. The first is the ‘tax-spend preference gap’ (should we cut taxes or increase government spending on services?); the second is the ‘libertarian-authoritarian preference gap’. This content of this latter variable changes over time. In some editions it refers to the trade-off between cutting crime and protecting liberties, at other times the trade-off is maintaining a women’s role in the home and giving women an equal say in government in business, or whether the UK should unite with the EU fully or protect its independence. Respondents were asked to place various parties anywhere at or between these extremes on 11-point scales. The absolute gap between where respondents place Labour and the Conservatives on these spectrums was then used as the respondent’s perceived gulf between the parties on each particular issue. Therefore, higher values indicate that the respondent saw the two parties as being more polarised on these fundamental ideological questions.

The next two variables are all ‘valence ratings’, indicating whether a respondent prefers one party over another on particular considerations. ‘Capacity for strong government’ is a binary variable, indicating whether a respondent believes that only one of Labour or the Conservatives is “capable of being a strong government” or that both (or neither) are. The party leader approval gap (named after the relevant Labour and Conservative leaders in that particular year) is the absolute difference between how favourable the respondent feels towards that figure on a scale of 1 (strongly dislike) to 11 (strongly like). Higher values indicate that one party leader was more strongly preferred to the other. The only exception is 1987 where the variable is necessarily binary, simply recording whether the respondent finds only Thatcher or Kinnock as “likeable” (vs finding both or neither likeable).

The rest of the main predictor variables are all about the particular identity, ideology, and partisan leanings of the respondent. ‘WC/MC identity’ is a binary variable recording whether a respondent “ever thinks of themselves as belonging to a particular class”, whether working or middle. I take no account of later follow-up questions designed to push the respondent to one camp or another. The ‘radicalism’ variables are the absolute differences between the position the respondent places themselves at on each of the aforementioned of 11-point policy scales mentioned previously and 5 (the central point on a 0 to 10 spectrum). Higher values therefore indicate how radical (or ‘non-centrist’) a respondent is on a particular issue. Finally, ‘Lab-Con Partisan’ is another dummy variable designed to capture underlying partisan leanings, which is coded as 1 if a respondent answers ‘yes’ and either Labour or the Conservatives when asked if “generally speaking, do you think of yourself as Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat or what?”.

Finally, every model contains a multitude of control variables which, due to limitations of space, are not presented in the tables. Demographic controls include a respondents age (in years), gender, the age at which they left education (pre-16, 16-18 or 19+ / after university), their occupational social class (professional and managerial; routine non-manual and service; self-employed; skilled working class and foreman; semi- and unskilled working class), whether they currently belonged to a trade union or not, their religion (Church of England/Scotland; Catholic; other Christian; non-Christian religion; none); and their housing tenure (owner-occupier; social renter; private renter). Finally, I also controlled for far away the respondent believes Labour or the Conservatives (whichever is closer) are to their own ideal point on the tax-spend, and libertarian-authoritarian policy scales mentioned earlier. The larger this value is, the further any mainstream party is from that voter's own position.

In the models below I enter these variables sequentially. Each table has six models. The first three (A-C) look at just the perceived class, tax-spend, and crime-liberty (or EU unity-independence) gaps, respectively (while controlling for all the aforementioned variables plus a respondents own sense of class identity or radicalism on the relevant policy scale). Model D contains all of these variables. Model E also adds in the 'valence gap' variables (party leader and capacity for strong government), and the final model, Model F, also adds in partisanship (feelings of closeness).

More information on the construction procedure for all of these variables (including the original question wording and BES codes), in addition to descriptive statistics for each by BES wave, can be found in Table G.1 in Appendix G.

Table K.1: What predicts the belief that there is “a great difference” between what Labour and the Conservatives stand for? (1987)

<i>Logistic Regression Models</i>	Model A	Model B	Model C	Model D	Model E	Model F
	Class Only	Tax-Spend Only	Crime v Liberty Only	Combined	Combined w/ Valence	Combined w/ PID
Perceived Class Representation Gap	0.22 (0.06) **			0.17 (0.06) **	0.17 (0.06) **	0.18 (0.06) **
Perceived Tax-Spend Preference Gap		0.10 (0.02) **		0.08 (0.02) **	0.07 (0.02) **	0.07 (0.02) **
Perceived Cut Crime v Protect Civil Liberties Preference Gap			0.09 (0.02) **	0.06 (0.02) **	0.06 (0.02) **	0.06 (0.02) **
Only One Party is Capable of ‘Strong Government’					0.44 (0.13) **	0.45 (0.13) **
Thatcher v Kinnock Approval Gap					0.46 (0.12) **	0.43 (0.12) **
WC/MC Identity	0.37 (0.12) **			0.38 (0.12) **	0.39 (0.12) **	0.36 (0.12) **
Tax Radicalism		- 0.10 (0.03) **		- 0.10 (0.03) **	- 0.09 (0.04) **	- 0.10 (0.04) **
Lib-Auth Radicalism			- 0.05 (0.03)	- 0.04 (0.03)	- 0.04 (0.03)	- 0.04 (0.03)
Lab-Con Partisan						0.35 (0.13) **
Demographic Controls	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>
Tax/L-A Distance Controls						<i>Included</i>
Constant	1.58 (0.38)	1.62 (0.39)	1.84 (0.39)	1.27 (0.40)	0.79 (0.42)	0.75 (0.41)
N	2672	2672	2672	2672	2672	2672

* *p*-value < 0.05; ** *p*-value < 0.01.

Standard errors in parenthesis.

Note: The dependent variable in these logistic regression models is the belief that, “*considering everything that Labour and Conservatives stand for ... there is a great difference between them*” (1) vs the belief that there is “*only some*” or “*not much*” difference between what these two parties stand for (0). Please see Table G.1 in Appendix G for information on how all of these variables were constructed, descriptive statistics, and the original British Election Study codes required to create them.

Control Variables: Demographic controls include respondent *age*, *gender*, age leaving *education*, *occupational class*, *trade union membership*, *religion*, and *housing tenure*. *Tax/ Lib-Auth distance controls* are two variables recording the distance between where a respondent places themselves and where they place Labour or Conservatives (whichever is nearest to them) on 11-point policy scales. In this edition of the BES, the Libertarian-Authoritarian policy scale concerned whether one thinks that we should prioritise ‘cutting crime’ or ‘protecting the rights of the accused’.

Survey Data: 1987 British Election Study [BES] Face to Face Cross-Section (Heath, Jowell, and Curtice 1993a)

Table K.2: What predicts the belief that there is “a great difference” between what Labour and the Conservatives stand for? (1997)

<i>Logistic Regression Models</i>	Model A	Model B	Model C	Model D	Model E	Model F
	Class Only	Tax-Spend Only	Crime v Liberty Only	Combined	Combined w/ Valence	Combined w/ PID
Perceived Class Representation Gap	0.30 (0.06) **			0.26 (0.06) **	0.20 (0.06) **	0.19 (0.06) **
Perceived Tax-Spend Preference Gap		0.06 (0.02) **		0.03 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)
Perceived Cut Crime v Protect Civil Liberties Preference Gap			0.08 (0.02) **	0.05 (0.02) *	0.03 (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)
Only One Party is Capable of ‘Strong Government’					0.09 (0.12)	0.09 (0.11)
Major v Blair Approval Gap					0.18 (0.02) **	0.16 (0.02) **
WC/MC Identity	0.56 (0.11) **			0.51 (0.11) **	0.50 (0.11) **	0.48 (0.11) **
Tax Radicalism		0.02 (0.03)		0.01 (0.03)	- 0.01 (0.03)	- 0.01 (0.03)
Lib-Auth Radicalism			0.04 (0.04)	0.03 (0.04)	0.01 (0.04)	0.01 (0.04)
Lab-Con Partisan						0.36 (0.12) **
Demographic Controls	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>
Tax/L-A Distance Controls						<i>Included</i>
Constant	- 2.04 (0.37)	- 1.63 (0.35)	- 1.69 (0.38)	- 2.24 (0.40)	- 2.58 (0.41)	- 2.60 (0.40)
N	2375	2375	2375	2375	2375	2375

* *p*-value < 0.05; ** *p*-value < 0.01.

Standard errors in parenthesis.

Note: The dependent variable in these logistic regression models is the belief that, “*considering everything that Labour and Conservatives stand for ... there is a great difference between them*” (1) vs the belief that there is “*only some*” or “*not much*” difference between what these two parties stand for (0). Please see Table G.1 in Appendix G for more information on coding.

Control Variables: Demographic controls include respondent *age*, *gender*, age leaving *education*, *occupational class*, *trade union membership*, *religion*, and *housing tenure*. *Tax/ Lib-Auth distance controls* are two variables recording the distance between where a respondent places themselves and where they place Labour or Conservatives (whichever is nearest to them) on 11-point policy scales. In this edition of the BES, the Libertarian-Authoritarian policy scale concerned where one stands on the trade-off between giving women an ‘equal role in government and business decisions’, and affirming that a ‘women’s place is in the home’.

Survey Data: 1997 British Election Study [BES] Face to Face Cross-Section (Heath, Jowell, and Curtice 1999).

Table K.3: What predicts the belief that there is “a great difference” between what Labour and the Conservatives stand for? (2001)

<i>Logistic Regression Models</i>	Model A	Model B	Model C	Model D	Model E	Model F
	Class Only	Tax-Spend Only	Crime v Liberty Only	Combined	Combined w/ Valence	Combined w/ PID
Perceived Class Representation Gap	0.47 (0.09) **			0.38 (0.10) **	0.33 (0.11) **	0.32 (0.11) **
Perceived Tax-Spend Preference Gap		0.20 (0.04) **		0.15 (0.04) **	0.03 (0.04)	0.02 (0.04)
Perceived Cut Crime v Protect Civil Liberties Preference Gap			0.19 (0.04) **	0.17 (0.04) **	0.14 (0.04) **	0.12 (0.04) **
Only One Party is Capable of ‘Strong Government’					0.66 (0.18) **	0.65 (0.18) **
Blair v Hague Approval Gap					0.27 (0.03) **	0.25 (0.03) **
WC/MC Identity	0.34 (0.15) **			0.34 (0.16) *	0.17 (0.17)	0.16 (0.17)
Tax Radicalism		0.15 (0.05) **		0.15 (0.05) **	0.15 (0.05) **	0.18 (0.03) **
Lib-Auth Radicalism			- 0.05 (0.04)	- 0.05 (0.04)	- 0.08 (0.04)	- 0.05 (0.05)
Lab-Con Partisan						0.46 (0.21) *
Demographic Controls	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>
Tax/L-A Distance Controls						<i>Included</i>
Constant	- 1.31 (0.52)	- 1.18 (0.49)	- 0.84 (0.51)	- 1.75 (0.54)	- 2.54 (0.59)	- 2.54 (0.63)
N	1303	1303	1303	1303	1303	1303

* *p*-value < 0.05; ** *p*-value < 0.01.

Standard errors in parenthesis.

Note: The dependent variable in these logistic regression models is the belief that, “considering everything that Labour and Conservatives stand for ... there is a great difference between them” (1) vs the belief that there is “only some” or “not much” difference between what these two parties stand for (0). Please see Table G.1 in Appendix G for more information on coding.

Control Variables: Demographic controls include respondent *age*, *gender*, age leaving *education*, *occupational class*, *trade union membership*, *religion*, and *housing tenure*. *Tax/ Lib-Auth distance controls* are two variables recording the distance between where a respondent places themselves and where they place Labour or Conservatives (whichever is nearest to them) on 11-point policy scales. In this edition of the BES, the Libertarian-Authoritarian policy scale concerned whether one thinks that we should prioritise ‘cutting crime’ or ‘protecting the rights of the accused’.

Survey Data: 2001 British Election Study [BES] Face to Face Cross-Section (Clarke et al. 2003).

Table K.4: What predicts the belief that there is “a great difference” between what Labour and the Conservatives stand for? (2005)* *p*-value < 0.05; ** *p*-value < 0.01.

Standard errors in parenthesis.

Logistic Regression Models	Model A	Model B	Model C	Model D	Model E	Model F
	Class Only	Tax-Spend Only	Crime v Liberty Only	Combined	Combined w/ Valence	Combined w/ PID
Perceived Class Representation Gap	0.34 (0.13) **			0.26 (0.13) *	0.15 (0.13)	0.13 (0.14)
Perceived Tax-Spend Preference Gap		0.24 (0.06) **		0.21 (0.06) **	0.15 (0.06) *	0.16 (0.07) *
Perceived Cut Crime v Protect Civil Liberties Preference Gap			0.10 (0.06)	0.03 (0.06)	- 0.03 (0.06)	- 0.01 (0.07)
Only One Party is Capable of ‘Strong Government’					0.98 (0.22) **	0.95 (0.22) **
Blair v Howard Approval Gap					0.21 (0.05) **	0.18 (0.04) **
WC/MC Identity	- 0.00 (0.20)			- 0.03 (0.06)	- 0.08 (0.21)	- 0.12 (0.21)
Tax Radicalism		0.11 (0.07)		0.12 (0.07)	0.12 (0.08)	0.14 (0.08)
Lib-Auth Radicalism			- 0.05 (0.06)	- 0.05 (0.06)	- 0.07 (0.07)	- 0.08 (0.08)
Lab-Con Partisan						0.48 (0.25)
Demographic Controls	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>
Tax/L-A Distance Controls						<i>Included</i>
Constant	- 3.24 (0.72)	- 3.40 (0.72)	- 2.95 (0.70)	- 3.58 (0.74)	- 4.18 (0.79)	- 4.36 (0.84)
N	1723	1723	1723	1723	1723	1723

Note: The dependent variable in these logistic regression models is the belief that, “*considering everything that Labour and Conservatives stand for ... there is a great difference between them*” (1) vs the belief that there is “*only some*” or “*not much*” difference between what these two parties stand for (0). Please see Table G.1 in Appendix G for more information on coding.

Control Variables: Demographic controls include respondent *age*, *gender*, age leaving *education*, *occupational class*, *trade union membership*, *religion*, and *housing tenure*. *Tax/ Lib-Auth distance controls* are two variables recording the distance between where a respondent places themselves and where they place Labour or Conservatives (whichever is nearest to them) on 11-point policy scales. In this edition of the BES, the Libertarian-Authoritarian policy scale concerned whether one thinks that we should prioritise ‘cutting crime’ or ‘protecting the rights of the accused’.

Survey Data: 2005 British Election Study [BES] Face to Face Cross-Section (Clarke et al. 2006).

Table K.5: What predicts the belief that there is “a great difference” between what Labour and the Conservatives stand for? (2010)

* $p\text{-value} < 0.05$; ** $p\text{-value} < 0.01$.

Standard errors in parenthesis.

<i>Logistic Regression Models</i>	Model A	Model B	Model C	Model D	Model E	Model F
	Class Only	Tax-Spend Only	Crime v Liberty Only	Combined	Combined w/ Valence	Combined w/ PID
Perceived Class Representation Gap	0.28 (0.09) **			0.24 (0.09) **	0.23 (0.09) *	0.24 (0.09) **
Perceived Tax-Spend Preference Gap		0.15 (0.04) **		0.10 (0.04) *	0.06 (0.04)	0.06 (0.04)
Perceived Cut Crime v Protect Civil Liberties Preference Gap			0.14 (0.04) **	0.10 (0.04) **	0.01 (0.04)	0.01 (0.04)
Only One Party is Capable of ‘Strong Government’					0.48 (0.17) **	0.40 (0.17) *
Brown v Cameron Approval Gap					0.21 (0.04) **	0.18 (0.04) **
WC/MC Identity	0.29 (0.15) *			0.23 (0.15)	0.24 (0.15)	0.17 (0.16)
Tax Radicalism		0.12 (0.05) *		0.10 (0.06)	0.09 (0.06)	0.08 (0.06)
Lib-Auth Radicalism			0.08 (0.05)	0.08 (0.05)	0.09 (0.05)	0.07 (0.06)
Lab-Con Partisan						0.76 (0.19) **
Demographic Controls	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>
Tax/L-A Distance Controls						<i>Included</i>
Constant	- 0.62 (0.52)	- 0.82 (0.52)	- 0.72 (0.53)	- 1.31 (0.55)	- 1.75 (0.57)	- 2.00 (0.58)
N	1213	1213	1213	1213	1213	1213

Note: The dependent variable in these logistic regression models is the belief that, “*considering everything that Labour and Conservatives stand for ... there is a great difference between them*” (1) vs the belief that there is “*only some*” or “*not much*” difference between what these two parties stand for (0). Please see Table G.1 in Appendix G for more information on coding.

Control Variables: Demographic controls include respondent *age*, *gender*, age leaving *education*, *occupational class*, *trade union membership*, *religion*, and *housing tenure*. *Tax/ Lib-Auth distance controls* are two variables recording the distance between where a respondent places themselves and where they place Labour or Conservatives (whichever is nearest to them) on 11-point policy scales. In this edition of the BES, the Libertarian-Authoritarian policy scale concerned whether one thinks that we should prioritise ‘cutting crime’ or ‘protecting the rights of the accused’.

Survey Data: 2010 British Election Study [BES] Face to Face Cross-Section (Whiteley and Sanders 2014).

Table K.6: What predicts the belief that there is “a great difference” between what Labour and the Conservatives stand for? (2015)

<i>Logistic Regression Models</i>	Model A	Model B	Model C	Model D	Model E	Model F
	Class Only	Tax-Spend Only	Unite v Indy Only	Combined	Combined w/ Valence	Combined w/ PID
Perceived Class Representation Gap	0.12 (0.06) *			0.08 (0.06)	0.09 (0.06)	0.08 (0.06)
Perceived Tax-Spend Preference Gap		0.13 (0.03) **		0.10 (0.03) **	0.08 (0.03) **	0.08 (0.03) **
Perceived Unite with EU v Protect UK Independence Gap			0.10 (0.03) **	0.08 (0.03) **	0.04 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)
Only One Party is Capable of ‘Strong Government’					0.80 (0.14) **	0.78 (0.13) **
Cameron v Miliband Approval Gap					0.16 (0.03) **	0.15 (0.03) **
WC/MC Identity	0.32 (0.13) *			0.28 (0.13) *	0.29 (0.13) *	0.28 (0.13) *
Tax Radicalism		- 0.04 (0.04)		- 0.06 (0.04)	- 0.03 (0.04)	- 0.02 (0.05)
Lib-Auth Radicalism			0.07 (0.04) *	0.07 (0.04)	0.05 (0.04)	0.07 (0.04)
Lab-Con Partisan						0.18 (0.16)
Demographic Controls	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>
Tax/L-A Distance Controls						<i>Included</i>
Constant	- 2.10 (0.41)	- 1.95 (0.39)	- 2.10 (0.39)	- 2.50 (0.42)	- 3.38 (0.44)	- 3.39 (0.46)
N	1636	1636	1636	1636	1636	1636

* *p*-value < 0.05; ** *p*-value < 0.01.

Standard errors in parenthesis.

Note: The dependent variable in these logistic regression models is the belief that, “considering everything that Labour and Conservatives stand for ... there is a great difference between them” (1) vs the belief that there is “only some” or “not much” difference between what these two parties stand for (0). Please see Table G.1 in Appendix G for more information on coding.

Control Variables: Demographic controls include respondent *age*, *gender*, age leaving *education*, *occupational class*, *trade union membership*, *religion*, and *housing tenure*. *Tax/ Lib-Auth distance controls* are two variables recording the distance between where a respondent places themselves and where they place Labour or Conservatives (whichever is nearest to them) on 11-point policy scales. In this edition of the BES, the Libertarian-Authoritarian policy scale concerned whether one thinks that we should ‘unite fully with the EU’ or ‘protect the UK’s independence’.

Survey Data: 2015 British Election Study [BES] Face to Face Cross-Section (Fieldhouse et al. 2016).

Table K.7: What predicts the belief that there is “a great difference” between what Labour and the Conservatives stand for? (2017)

<i>Logistic Regression Models</i>	Model A	Model B	Model C	Model D	Model E	Model F
	Class Only	Tax-Spend Only	Unite v Indy Only	Combined	Combined w/ Valence	Combined w/ PID
Perceived Class Representation Gap	0.28 (0.06) **			0.21 (0.06) **	0.21 (0.06) **	0.21 (0.06) **
Perceived Tax-Spend Preference Gap		0.20 (0.03) **		0.16 (0.03) **	0.13 (0.03) **	0.13 (0.03) **
Perceived Unite with EU v Protect UK Independence Gap			0.14 (0.03) **	0.12 (0.03) **	0.08 (0.03) **	0.08 (0.03) **
Only One Party is Capable of ‘Strong Government’					0.69 (0.14) **	0.67 (0.14) **
May v Corbyn Approval Gap					0.15 (0.03) **	0.15 (0.03) **
WC/MC Identity	0.24 (0.12) *			0.16 (0.13)	0.19 (0.13)	0.19 (0.13)
Tax Radicalism		- 0.01 (0.04)		- 0.01 (0.04)	- 0.04 (0.05)	- 0.03 (0.05)
Lib-Auth Radicalism			0.08 (0.04) *	0.08 (0.04) *	0.03 (0.04)	0.03 (0.04)
Lab-Con Partisan						0.16 (0.16)
Demographic Controls	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>
Tax/L-A Distance Controls						<i>Included</i>
Constant	- 2.06 (0.43)	- 1.98 (0.43)	- 1.94 (0.41)	- 2.70 (0.45)	- 3.38 (0.48)	- 3.51 (0.50)
N	1371	1371	1371	1371	1371	1371

* p -value < 0.05; ** p -value < 0.01.

Standard errors in parenthesis.

Note: The dependent variable in these logistic regression models is the belief that, “considering everything that Labour and Conservatives stand for ... there is a great difference between them” (1) vs the belief that there is “only some” or “not much” difference between what these two parties stand for (0). Please see Table G.1 in Appendix G for more information on coding.

Control Variables: Demographic controls include respondent *age*, *gender*, age leaving *education*, *occupational class*, *trade union membership*, *religion*, and *housing tenure*. *Tax/ Lib-Auth distance controls* are two variables recording the distance between where a respondent places themselves and where they place Labour or Conservatives (whichever is nearest to them) on 11-point policy scales. In this edition of the BES, the Libertarian-Authoritarian policy scale concerned whether one thinks that we should ‘unite fully with the EU’ or ‘protect the UK’s independence’.

Survey Data: 2017 British Election Study [BES] Face to Face Cross-Section (Fieldhouse et al. 2018)