Unraveling Electoral Volatility:

The Influence of Conflicting Attitudes

in Multi-Party Systems

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1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, social scientists have observed a variety of trends. Focusing on election outcomes, one significant trend that repeatedly demands attention is the increase in electoral volatility. Electoral volatility, also referred to as vote switching, describes the phenomenon in which voters do not support the same party or leader in two consecutive elections, instead switching between them. It can be categorized into two types: switching votes among established parties (within-system volatility) and voting for new parties (extra-system volatility) (Powell and Tucker 2014; Mainwaring et al. 2017; Emanuele and Chiaramonte 2018; Mainwaring and Su 2021). This differentiation is important because a shift in votes between established parties could reflect temporary shifts within the existing system without a change in the system, while high extra-system volatility signals a change in the system (Mainwaring et al. 2017, 632).

Since Przeworski (1975) and Pedersen (1979), scholars have investigated the measures, causes, and consequences of vote switching. Examining vote switching over time, many studies have shown a consistent increase in the levels of electoral volatility (Mair 2008; Gallagher et al. 2011, 304; Bischoff 2013, 547; Dassonneville and Hooghe 2017; Dassonneville 2018; Spoon and Klüver 2019), while noting significant variation in volatility between countries and regions. While African and Eastern European systems have stabilized in the past (Powell and Tucker 2014; Weghorst and Bernhard 2014), volatility in Western Europe has risen over time (Dalton and Wattenberg 2002; Mair 2008; Chiaramonte and Emanuele 2017; Dassonneville and Hooghe 2017; Emanuele and Chiaramonte 2018). For instance, Chiaramonte and Emanuele (2017) created a database of volatility spanning 70 years, covering Western European elections between 1945 and 2015. By analyzing these elections across time and space, they identify what they call a "fundamental bias towards stability" (Chiaramonte and Emanuele 2017, 380) indicating less volatility. Looking at the most recent electoral period (1992–2015), they observe a clear increase in volatility during, with a further acceleration since 2010, indicating a "general shift towards instability" (Chiaramonte and Emanuele 2017, 381) in recent years. When comparing all periods, they find a total volatility of 8.3% between 1946 and 1968, 9.5% between 1969 and 1991, and 12.8% between 1992 and 2015. Focusing on elections since 2010, they find an average volatility of 18%. In 17 out of 19 countries, the total volatility in elections held since 2010 exceeds the country's average across the entire period. This indicates that volatility has particularly increased in the most recent elections included in their dataset. Bischoff (2013) similarly examines lower house elections in 21 Western European countries

(including the USA) between 1950 and 2005. The findings (2013, 547) reveal an increase in volatility from 7.2% in the 1950s to 13.1% in the 2000s, with an overall average of 9.5%, indicating that volatility has, on average, been higher in recent years than in the past. Research on Latin America shows a similar trend, with increased volatility in recent decades (Lupu 2014; Cohen et al. 2018; Mainwaring and Su 2021; Moraes and Béjar 2023). However, in Latin America, volatility has returned to the high levels observed in the decades prior to the 1980s for presidential elections and the 1960s for lower house elections (Mainwaring and Su 2021). Mainwaring et al. (2017) analyze 618 elections across 67 countries from all regions of the world (Western Europe, North America, Oceania, Latin America, Eastern Europe and the post-Soviet Union, Asia, Africa, and others) between 1945 and 2006. They find a total volatility of 25.2%, with an average within-system volatility of 14.7% and an average extra-system volatility of 10.5%. However, extra-system volatility is likely to rise even higher, considering the rise of new populist parties in many Western countries over the past two decades. This highlights the remarkable differences in volatility between new and established parties.

While the previous studies highlight important differences across types of elections and geographical regions, we also observe interesting differences among party systems, particularly between two-party (TPS) and multi-party systems (MPS). The number of electoral parties appears to play a role in explaining electoral volatility as well (Mainwaring and Su 2021). However, research on this topic shows that, as always, much depends on the context, such as the level of fragmentation within the party system or how new parties manage to overcome the barrier of underrepresentation (Mair 2008; Schamp 2014). The findings of various scholars indicate that the USA has the lowest electoral volatility, at around 3% (Bischoff 2013; Mainwaring et al. 2017). Extra-system volatility is virtually non-existent, as the U.S. persists with a TPS that does not enable the entry of new parties (Mainwaring et al. 2017). This underscores the importance of considering key contextual factors in further analysis of electoral volatility within this dissertation.

Although some degree of electoral volatility has always existed, and many articles have been published on the topic, it remains a hotly debated and widely discussed issue that continues to attract significant scholarly attention (Chiaramonte and Emanuele 2017; Dassonneville 2018; Rekker 2022; Moraes and Béjar 2023; Cohen et al. 2024). Understanding volatility is crucial because it represents one form of political instability that impacts political systems, political parties, leaders, and voters worldwide (Chiaramonte and Emanuele 2017; Cohen et al. 2018). When instability prevails, political elites are more likely to make unexpected moves and deviate from established programs (Tavits 2008; Lupu and Riedl 2013). These unpredictable actions

undermine party brands, reducing the public's ability to rely on programmatic shortcuts and weakening party loyalty, which in turn fuels further electoral instability (Zechmeister and Corral 2013; Lupu 2016). While some fluctuation in voting behavior is healthy, excessive volatility suggests a lack of partisanship (Dalton and Wattenberg 2002).

To investigate the increase in electoral volatility, this dissertation begins by examining the causal path to vote (Dinas 2008, 507), also known as the funnel of causality, as presented in *The American Voter* (Campbell et al. 1960). This framework broadly argues that people's vote choice is influenced by the following factors in the following order: socio-demographic characteristics (e.g., social group characteristics), long-term predispositions (e.g., party identification), and short-term evaluations (e.g., evaluations of candidates, parties, and issues). The main assumption is that vote choice is best understood as the "cumulative consequences of temporally ordered sets of factors" (Miller and Shanks 1996, 192). While socio-demographic characteristics tend to be stable, the other two factors allow for more discussion. Long-term predispositions include the ongoing debate about the nature and functioning of mass partisanship.

The traditional view of partisanship (Campbell et al. 1960) argues that party identification is a long-term psychological attachment to a party, believed to be resistant to change throughout one's lifetime and, therefore, one of the most stable political predispositions. Strong evidence for the stability of party identification comes from various studies (Campbell et al. 1960; Converse 1964; Converse 1966; Green and Palmquist 1990; Goren 2005). The revisionist view (Page and Jones 1979; Fiorina 1981; MacKuen et al. 1989; Box-Steffensmeier and Smith 1996; Erikson et al. 2002) challenges this traditional perspective by arguing that partisanship is, in fact, unstable and influenced by factors such as party performance and policy agreement. More recent research supports the revisionist perspective, showing a decline in party identification over the past few decades (Dalton and Wattenberg 2002; Berglund et al. 2005, 109; Schmitt 2009; Dalton 2012; van Biezen et al. 2012; Heath 2017; Garzia et al. 2022). For example, Plischke (2014, 129) refers to the dealignment thesis, which argues that party identification has become weaker, rarer, and less influential in voting behavior (Beck 1984; Holmberg 1994; Clarke and Stewart 1998; Dalton 2000; Ohr and Quandt 2012, 185–188; Marsh and McElroy 2016; Garzia et al. 2022; Cameron and McAllister 2024). This points to another trend in addition to electoral volatility: declining partisanship. Both trends are somewhat interrelated. As party alignment decreases and voters have fewer stable identifications with parties, they are more likely to engage in vote switching (Dalton et al. 2000; Dalton and Wattenberg 2002; Mainwaring and Zoco 2007; Schoen et al. 2017). For instance, Schoen et al.

(2017) argue that, as a result of declining party identification, more voters are up for grabs, which contributes to an increasing electoral volatility.

Nevertheless, partisanship alone cannot fully explain electoral volatility, and the decline in partisanship is worthy of its own study. Therefore, this dissertation argues that we need to build on the previous debate but push the funnel of causality further (Campbell et al. 1960). This is precisely where this dissertation contributes by examining the significance of short-term evaluations in the voting decision process. Individuals are increasingly confronted with a constant flush of new information in the political realm. For these individuals, this mass of information should lead to a continuous re-evaluation and adjustment of existing opinions and political attitudes, potentially resulting in some internal conflicts. Therefore, this dissertation argues that, in addition to party identification, political ambivalent attitudes represent another important, yet under-researched factor that influences voting behavior, falling under short-term evaluations rather than long-term factors.

Ambivalence displays an attitude conflict characterized by competing positive and negative considerations regarding one or multiple objects of interest (Lavine 2001; Basinger and Lavine 2005). It describes the state of simultaneously holding positive and negative feelings or contradictory ideas about an object or person (Kaplan 1972; Zaller and Feldman 1992; Thompson et al. 1995). In this dissertation, ambivalence focuses on candidates and parties, excluding policy issues (Lavine 2001; McGraw et al. 2003; Basinger and Lavine 2005). It does not analyze individual politicians or parties in isolation but adopts a comparative perspective, focusing on the comparison between two politicians or two parties (Basinger and Lavine 2005).

Political ambivalence is classified as a short-term factor because it can be developed and changed more easily and frequently due to ongoing evaluations of parties or candidates and the constant availability of new information. It can have a strong impact on electoral behavior both directly and indirectly. While this will be addressed in the next subchapter, it is important to contextualize it already with respect to the funnel of causality. Notably, ambivalence can also influence long-term predispositions, such as partisanship. Lavine and colleagues (2012) show, for instance, that ambivalence affects and leads to changes in party identification or short-term evaluations of partisans. In their work, they take a dynamic view of partisanship, arguing that ambivalence drives variation in partisanship. They demonstrate that when party and issue positions are in conflict, and these issues are salient, univalent partisans adjust their policy preferences to align with their party identification, whereas ambivalent partisans may switch parties to achieve policy consistency. This dissertation argues that it is not entirely distinguishable whether ambivalence impacts partisanship or vice versa; both factors influence

each other to some degree. The same applies to their effects on vote switching. Lavine et al. (2012) demonstrate that holding a party identity does not prevent ambivalent individuals from engaging in vote switching, similar to what we expect for nonpartisans, who are still more likely to switch if they are ambivalent.

Ambivalence therefore appears to be an important factor when investigating vote switching, raising the question of how prevalent ambivalence is in the electorate and whether it is substantial enough to make a difference. Some early work by Basinger and Lavine (2005) examines five U.S. National Election Studies conducted between 1990 and 2000. They find (2005, 173) that more than 36% of voters had ambivalent party attitudes in 2000, and almost 30% of voters were ambivalent in 1990, 1992, and 1994. Only in 1996 was the portion of ambivalent voters relatively low, at 17%.[1] For example, in Germany, the proportion of ambivalent voters increased from 18.6% in 1998 to 23.5% in 2009 (Blumenstiel, 2014, 36).[2] Focusing on the subsequent 2013 German federal election, Blumenstiel and Gravas (2015, 425) examine the distribution of leader ambivalence and find that about 50% of voters reported ambivalent feelings toward Merkel, and even 60% felt ambivalent toward Steinbrück, the two leading chancellor candidates in this election.[3] In his more recent work, Çakır (2022, 717) focuses on MPS around the globe. Highlighting some important inter-country differences, his findings support the presence of ambivalence, although to a lesser extent, and show that, on average, about 12% of the electorate had ambivalent attitudes. 40% of the respondents can be considered non-ambivalent, while 47% fall somewhere in between.[4]

Overall, these findings show that ambivalence is a prevalent feature within the electorate, indicating the potential impact it might have. Based on this, the dissertation argues that ambivalence is an important factor that has not received enough attention in the debate on electoral volatility and electoral behavior more generally. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight the variety of different measures of ambivalence that these findings are based on. Although they all demonstrate the presence of ambivalence to some extent, they cannot be

[1] Ambivalence is measured by the comparative (two-party) ambivalence measure using positive and negative reactions towards parties.

[2] Voters are classified as being ambivalent if they show two party favorites meaning that they assign the highest value on the feeling thermometer to more than one party.

[3] Ambivalence is measured by the individual (one-leader) ambivalence measure using positive and negative reactions towards candidates.

[4] This is based on the comparative (two-party) ambivalence measure using party evaluations on the feeling thermometer. For the multi-party ambivalence measure, about 9% of the electorate can be described as ambivalent towards all parties which is still a very high number considering that this measure includes the ratings of **all** parties.

directly compared. The next section will first focus on the conceptualization of ambivalence before examining the literature dealing with ambivalence and its impact on individuals' behavior.

1.1 Political Ambivalence

1.1.1 The Conceptualization of Ambivalence

The concept of political ambivalence encompasses many facets and has many closely related concepts, which will be introduced shortly. The early work on ambivalence mainly referred to the term "cross-pressures" (Lazarsfeld et al. 1944; Berelson et al. 1954; Campbell et al. 1954; Campbell et al., 1960). Since the study by Mutz (2002), the term "cross-pressures" has been replaced by the term "ambivalence", which is commonly used in sociology and psychology. Another area of research on competing beliefs focuses on value conflicts (Tetlock 1986; Liberman and Chaiken 1991). The concept is similar to attitudinal ambivalence (Meffert et al. 2004) but is concerned with the clash of core beliefs that are important to a person. Attitudinal ambivalence, on the other hand, is concerned with the incongruence between positive and negative evaluations of an object. These evaluations are therefore not necessarily based on values or beliefs. However, value conflict research often shows similar results to ambivalence research (Tetlock 1986; Liberman and Chaiken 1991). Another closely related concept comes from the camp of consistency theories and is referred to as cognitive dissonance theory (Heider 1946; Festinger 1957). Cognitive dissonance is about psychologically uncomfortable ambivalence and the associated psychological stress (Newby-Clark et al. 2002; Song and Ewoldsen 2015). Sawicki et al. (2013) argue that ambivalence is closely linked to the theory of cognitive dissonance and describe ambivalence as the most common product of cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance is expected to lead to avoidance, procrastination or attempts to resolve the ambivalence (Van Harreveld et al. 2009). According to this concept, people rarely try to change feelings or ideas that are inconsistent until they become consistent (Festinger 1957; Festinger 1962; Steenbergen and Brewer 2004). Cacioppo and his colleagues (Cacioppo and Berntson 1994; Cacioppo et al. 1997) show that if ambivalence cannot be resolved, it can even manifest itself in people's attitudes. Therefore, if the cognitive dissonance cannot be resolved, the ambivalence remains and can influence people's behavior.

Another careful distinction is needed between ambivalence and indifference (Stoeckel 2013). Both concepts are sometimes confounded with each other, but both denote different mental states (Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller 2012). Whilst an ambivalent person shows strong but contradictory preferences, an indifferent one has a lack of preference. An indifferent

individual has the feeling that the existing electoral alternatives are not relevant or not of interest to him (Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller 2012). Although that both are clearly distinguishable from each other, both can lead to the same behavioral consequences. For instance, ambivalence and indifference can be seen as a reason for postponing electoral decisions (Gopoian and Hadjiharalambous 1994, 67–68).

In social psychology, ambivalence is understood as a characteristic of attitudes (Scott 1968; Jonas et al. 2000; Plischke 2014). However, the term "ambivalence" as it is used in literature at the time of the vote decision no longer has anything to do with this original meaning. Still though, due to the popularity of the ambivalence concept, the adjective ambivalent is used to describe various objects of investigation if there is something ambiguous about the object (Meffert et al. 2004; Plischke 2014, 61). According to Plischke (2014), ambivalence is not a characteristic of attitudes but can have three meanings: decision ambivalence, network ambivalence and media ambivalence. Decision ambivalence focuses on ambivalence as an attitude of decision constellations. It refers to the term that is used in most studies (Lavine 2001; Basinger and Lavine 2005). Network ambivalence can be described as a characteristic of the social environment of a person (Mutz 2002; Nir 2005; Plischke 2014; Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller 2016). Media ambivalence focuses on an attitude of political media contents. Blumenstiel and Plischke (2015) add the concept of motivational ambivalence. Another well-known ambivalence concept is partisan ambivalence (Lavine et al. 2012; Johnson 2014; Steenbergen 2020). Partisan ambivalence argues that partisanship as an identity needs to be incorporated into the conceptualization and measurement of ambivalence.

The above highlights a variety of ambivalence concepts. While they are all somewhat related, they can also differ significantly in meaning. The concept of ambivalence applied in this dissertation is based on decision ambivalence (Plischke 2014), as the research interest primarily focuses on vote decisions and, therefore, the decision options available to voters. Ambivalence is characterized by the absence of a clearly favored alternative, based on available information or attitudes (Basinger and Lavine 2005, 172; Plischke 2014). Thus, this form of ambivalence does not focus on attitudes toward a single party (or leader), but rather on the comparison between two of them. It examines the extent to which respondents' evaluations consistently favor one party over the other or, alternatively, are inconsistent, favoring one party in some respects and the other in others (Basinger and Lavine 2005).

1.1.2 The Impact of Ambivalence on Individuals' Behavior

Previous research shows that ambivalence impacts people's general behavior but also political views and actions. Regarding the former one, scholars show that attitudes are less strong (Conner and Armitage 2008), harder to retrieve from memory (Huckfeldt and Sprague 2000), more vulnerable of being persuaded (Bassili 1996), and less stable over time (Zaller and Feldman 1992). Ambivalent people consider information in ways different from those who have clear preferences (Basinger and Lavine 2005) and show a more systematic information processing (Maio et al. 1996; Jonas et al. 1997). Furthermore, they show a higher instability in their behavior (Keele and Wolak 2006). Further, ambivalence can also lead to attitudinal moderation and attitudinal uncertainty (Zaller and Feldman 1992; Meffert et al. 2004, 70; Schoen 2010; Blumenstiel and Gavras 2015). Attitudinal moderation means that if people have positive and negative reactions, averaging across those considerations should lead to attitude expressions whose mean evaluation falls near the middle of a unidimensional scale (Meffert et al. 2004, 70). Therefore, ambivalence people are expected to express their opinions toward the middle. Attitudinal uncertainty relates to the fact that people show less strong attitudes (Conner and Armitage 2008). Where Hochschild (1981) in earlier research finds that ambivalent people are more uncertain about their expressed attitudes. More recently, Schoen (2010) and Blumenstiel and Gavras (2015) show for the German context that ambivalence moderates and destabilizes evaluations of parties and chancellor candidates. Schoen (2010) also finds similar effects for the evaluations of actors of the same party. Ambivalence therefore has a major influence on people's behavior.

Regarding the latter one, ambivalence also affects people's political opinions and evaluations (Meffert et al. 2004). Where ambivalence influences individuals' evaluations of candidates (Guge 1999; Lavine 2001; Lavine 2004; Meffert et al. 2004; Schoen 2010; Blumenstiel and Gavras 2015). Similarly, ambivalence affects how strongly individuals approve or disapprove of the president (Meffert et al. 2004). Ambivalence also leads to having more balanced or even-handed judgments about political issues (Sniderman 1981; Guge and Meffert 1998). Ambivalence affects patterns of political participation (Lazarsfeld et al. 1944; Mutz 2002; Nir 2005; Yoo 2010; Lavine et al. 2012; Johnson 2014; Çakır 2022). Lavine et al. (2012, 158) demonstrate that ambivalent partisans are not less likely to vote than their univalent counterparts. So even though they face a more difficult decision, they are not less likely to participate in elections. Therefore, ambivalence does not decrease participation at elections among partisans. Further, ambivalent individuals are more likely to vote based on competence and valence issues (Thornton 2009). For example, Basinger and Lavine (2005) highlight that

ambivalent partisans lacking political knowledge are more likely to engage in economic voting. Whilst ambivalent partisans with a good political knowledge are more likely to engage in ideological voting. Lavine et al. (2012, 161) also show that while partisanship is the dominant influence on vote choice for univalent partisans, their ambivalent counterparts are more affected by political issues and less by partisanship. Therefore, they emphasize that ambivalence changes partisans' focus when performing decision-making tasks and impacts partisanship. For example, Blumenstiel (2014, 32) finds that ambivalent voters rely less on their party identification in their vote choice. Therefore, ambivalence has important implications for political judgments and outcomes (Lavine 2001, 915; Nir 2005, 424) by affecting political choice processes (Alvarez and Brehm 1995).

Regarding ambivalence's impact on vote choice, ambivalence leads to forming vote intentions later (during the campaigning period) (Mutz 2002; Lavine 2001; Lavine 2004, 100; Nir 2005; Plischke 2014; Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller 2016) and it weakens the relation between vote intention and vote choice (Lavine 2004, 106). Hence it makes vote choice of voters with ambivalent preferences less predictable (Lavine 2001; Blumenstiel 2014). One of the earliest studies on "cross-pressures" and the timing of electoral decisions (Campbell et al. 1960, 81–83) shows that attitudes speaking for the choice of two candidates similarly increase the likelihood of forming vote intentions later. Later, this finding was called into questions by scholars like Gopoian and Hadjiharalambous (1994, 61–62) who found no connection between ambivalence and the timing of electoral decisions. However, more recent studies (Mutz 2002; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008; Plischke 2014; Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller 2016) support the results of Campbell et al. (1960) with more current data. For example, Plischke (2014) shows that decision ambivalence, network ambivalence and media ambivalence lead to a delayed electoral decision making. Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller (2016) show that attitudinal ambivalence leads to electors postponing their vote choices in the German context.

As argued above, ambivalence weakens the relationship between vote intention and vote choice (Lavine 2004). With increasing levels of ambivalence, this leads to more unstable vote intentions (Plischke 2014). If the decision situation is clear and one alternative clearly preferred, a change in vote intention is not expected. If, however, two or more alternatives are similarly preferred, the processing of new information is more likely to lead to a change in vote intention. Ambivalence can thus also be seen as a prerequisite for the effectiveness of persuasive information (Plischke 2014, 205). However, if the influence of ambivalence is held constant, those conflicting attitudes should not contribute to explaining the instability of vote intentions (Plischke 2014, 213). According to Plischke's (2014, 212) findings, ambivalence does not

influence voters' intention to abstain in an election. He argues that ambivalence towards parties should only affect the decision-making if participation is considered. Çakır (2022) challenges this claim by empirically showing that ambivalence cross-nationally, on average, reduces turnout by about 4.5%. Nevertheless, he also finds that this is not the case for every country and depends on specific macro-level factors. Ambivalence decreases turnout in polarized contexts, parliamentary systems, voluntary voting countries, and less fragmented systems. To sum up, the literature in this section shows that political ambivalence influences voters' electoral behavior, such as instable voting intentions.

The objective of this dissertation is to investigate how these ambivalent political attitudes influence instable voting behavior, hence vote switching on election day. Whilst some literature has explored the influence of ambivalent political attitudes on vote choice (e.g., Lavine 2001; Haddock 2003; Basinger and Lavine 2005), few scholars have explored its impact concerning vote switching (exceptions Hillygus and Shields 2008; Thornton 2009; Lavine et al. 2012; Thornton 2014; Smidt 2017). Recent forays by Thornton (2009; 2014) have opened the ambivalence-vote switching strand of research. However, Thornton (2009; 2014), Hillygus and Shields (2008), Lavine et al. (2012) and Smidt (2017) have been the only scholars dealing with this topic so far. Their findings are mixed. Support comes from Smidt (2017, 375) demonstrating for the time-period from 1957 to 2004 that increasing ambivalence leads to a higher probability of switching. Whilst Thornton's (2014, 193) work showed either rarely significant effects for ambivalence on switching, or merely an influence on vote switching in 1980 and 2004 but rarely in between (Thornton 2009, 85). For the comparative ambivalence measure where he measured not only the ambivalence towards one candidate but the ambivalence between two candidates, he found no effects of ambivalence on switching at all (Thornton 2009, 103). Lavine et al. (2012) investigate the effect of partisan ambivalence on three types of electoral volatility: defection, ticket splitting and third-party voting. Defection is when a Republican votes for the Democratic Party and vice versa. Ticket splitting occurs when a person votes for different parties for the presidential and the House election. Third-party voting arises when a person who identifies with the Republican or Democratic Party but votes for a third-party candidate. In sum, they find that ambivalent partisanship facilitates all three types of electoral volatility. Similar, Hillygus and Shields (2008) find that defection strongly increases among ambivalent or cross-pressured partisans if they are exposed to campaign information on relevant issues to them. Besides the fact that in total only a few articles deal with the impact of ambivalence on vote switching, we see a mix of supportive and contradicting findings.

Up to this point, the current research on ambivalence and its impact on vote switching has focused on the United States. These mixed results from above may thus stem from the context in which ambivalence is studied and are more generally affected by the focus on the U.S. Extending the analysis to MPS is important and beneficial as presidential elections in the U.S. represent a less likely scenario in which ambivalence can be expected to influence voting behavior (Thornton 2009; Thornton 2014; Çakır 2022). For example, analyses on ticket splitting and third-party voting could be more fruitful in MPS than in TPS (Lavine et al. 2012) where both options are less prevalent. Thornton (2009) argues that it is worth considering comparative contexts such as MPS because these systems offer ambivalent voters a viable alternative to choose from (Keele and Wolak 2006; Johnson 2014; Çakır 2022). Possible reasons are, for example, the larger number of parties or electoral alternatives, the entry and strengthening of new parties and the existence of coalition formations. Further, the dissertation expects that ambivalence is more prevalent in MPS where a substantial portion of citizens is ambivalent, and hence ambivalence's impact is more likely in such political systems.

During the work on the empirical chapters[5], it emerged that political ambivalence in the multi-party context should not be considered in isolation, but that there are two additionally important short-term factors: party-leader disagreement[6] and coalition disagreement. Regarding the former one, political systems have become increasingly personalized over the last years, leading to a greater importance of leaders and political candidates (Söderlund 2018). Personalization is visible, whether it be institutional rules privileging individuals over the party, increasing media coverage of party leaders, swelling leader power within parties, or election campaigns centered on party leaders. Söderlund (2018) shows that an increasing importance of leaders stems from electoral campaigns and media coverage that increasingly place the emphasis on leaders and individual candidates and the growing focus on the competition between individuals in politics. Previous research also demonstrates its strong impact on people's voting behavior (Wattenberg 1991; Kaase 1994; McAllister 2007; Söderlund 2018). For example, Caprara et al. (2008) demonstrate for the Italian case that candidates' perceived personalities are critical to voter's political choice. Söderlund's (2018, 12) findings highlight that candidate evaluations are highly important when explaining vote switching and party

[5] This relates to the articles and the book chapter incorporated as chapters in this dissertation.

[6] The term *party-leader disagreement* has also changed over the course of the dissertation. While in Chapters 2 and 4, it is referred to as *party-leader ambivalence* (because this is how it was published), throughout the dissertation it is referred to as *party-leader disagreement*, which is more appropriate.

loyalty. Nevertheless, there also exist critical views on the personalization of politics (Sigelman and Bullock 1991; Adam and Maier 2010; Karvonen 2010; Kriesi 2012).

So far, the interplay between parties and their leaders has received scant attention in previous literature. Party-leader disagreement describes a situation in which voters can get into an internal conflict because they prefer a leader of a party other than their favorite party. For instance, the leader of party A may be preferred to the leader of party B, while party B is assigned a higher competence or more liked than party A. This dissertation argues that the inclusion of party-leader disagreement in addition to ambivalence is important and necessary when investigating vote switching. For instance, a voter that shows a clear party favorite, and hence no ambivalence between multiple parties, might still be ambivalent when the voter's favorite leader belongs to a different party. On the other side, ambivalence between multiple parties does not need to lead to vote switching if the voter has a clear leader favorite that solves the decision problem. Daoust et al. (2019) find that 17% of the voters typically prefer a leader from another party. In that group, 80% end up supporting their preferred party while 20% of the electorate support their preferred leader. Across six German federal elections, Dentler et al. (2024) similarly demonstrate that leaders have a significant impact on the vote where between 4% and 9% of the voters align their vote with their favorite leader's party. However, still substantially more voters report aligning their vote with their favorite party (between 15% and 24%). Supporting earlier findings, Quinlan and McAllister (2021) find a similar portion of 6% of voters who align their vote with their favorite leader and do not favor the party the leader leads. Interestingly, they also find that voters solely motivated by leaders are also most likely to switch their votes between elections. This underpins the dissertation's argument that party-leader disagreement—regardless of the specific terminology used—is an important factor that needs to be taken into account. Although parties are still highly important and probably the main driver of vote choice, previous research supports the claim that leaders can make a difference in individuals' voting behavior and that party-leader disagreement can lead to changes in vote choice.

Coalition disagreement is the second important factor observable when voters' favorite party is not part of their favorite coalition. It is closely related to the commonly known concept of strategic voting. Gschwend and Meffert (2017) nicely summarize four motivations why voters might defect from their preferred party and vote strategically in order to have an effect on the next government. Two motivations focus on general strategic voting and the other two explicitly on *strategic coalition voting* because they aim at the next coalition government. The first general motivation deals with *avoiding a wasted vote* for a party or candidate that has no

chance of being represented in the next parliament (Duverger 1954; Cox 1994). The second general one focuses on the *checks-and-balances logic* arguing that some voters might engage in strategic balancing and vote in a way that prevents a single party or coalition controlling all the major institutions (Gschwend and Leuffen 2005). Strategic coalition voting is another important scope as typical governments are coalitions of two or more parties. Even if voters usually cast only a single vote for one party, they might very well be aware of possible coalitions after the election and might take these expectations into account (Meffert and Gschwend 2010; Meffert and Gschwend 2011). The first motivation of strategic coalition voting refers to the *coalition composition*. The rental votes and threshold insurance strategy, for example, theorize that supporters of a major party cast their vote for a preferred smaller coalition partner to bring a certain coalition into power (Fredén 2016) or support a partner who is in danger of not getting into parliament because of the electoral threshold (Shikano et al. 2009; Meffert and Gschwend 2010; Gschwend et al. 2016). The second one deals with the *coalition portfolio*. Even if a coalition government is rather certain, a voter might still try to influence the coalition's portfolio by supporting one or the other coalition partner (Aldrich et al. 2005). At times when the electoral context does not provide incentives for strategic voting, for example, if the most preferred party is viable and competitive, there is no incentive to vote for a different party (Gschwend and Meffert 2017).

This is where *coalition disagreement* comes into play and may add to the current literature on strategic coalition voting. Whilst the favorite party might be viable and competitive, coalition disagreeing voters might face some conflict if their favorite party is not part of their favorite coalition. The dissertation therefore argues that it may be that individuals vote strategically not to bring about a particular coalition but, for example, to prevent one, thus favoring another coalition and voting for one of its parties. It therefore does not focus on voters who cast their vote for another party because their preferred party is too small and therefore not a viable alternative, as it is very unlikely to be in government. If voters' dislike a specific coalition or simply the wish for a different coalition is strong enough, voters may consider voting for a different party than their favorite party. This trade-off type is an exclusive MPS feature as it can only be observed in MPS where the formation of coalitions is an essential part of the government formation process. In a TPS, voters do not face such situations. In MPS, these disagreements become more likely with a higher number of (effective) parties as more coalition constellations become possible. With a higher number of parties, this means that more parties have an actual chance of becoming part of the governing coalition and that potential

coalitions become larger, which in turn makes coalitions with disliked parties more likely. Of course, all possibilities require a certain degree of sophistication on the part of voters.

While the dissertation still assumes that party ambivalence, albeit to a lesser extent leader ambivalence, are the predominant factors influencing voting decisions, it is important to also consider party-leader and coalition disagreement, especially when focusing on the multi-party context. In this context, the dissertation expects voters to reveal their internal conflicts regarding parties, leaders and coalitions much more frequently than in TPS. While working on the dissertation, it became clear that all three concepts can be summarized under the term *internal sources of conflict*.

1.2 Three Internal Sources of Conflict

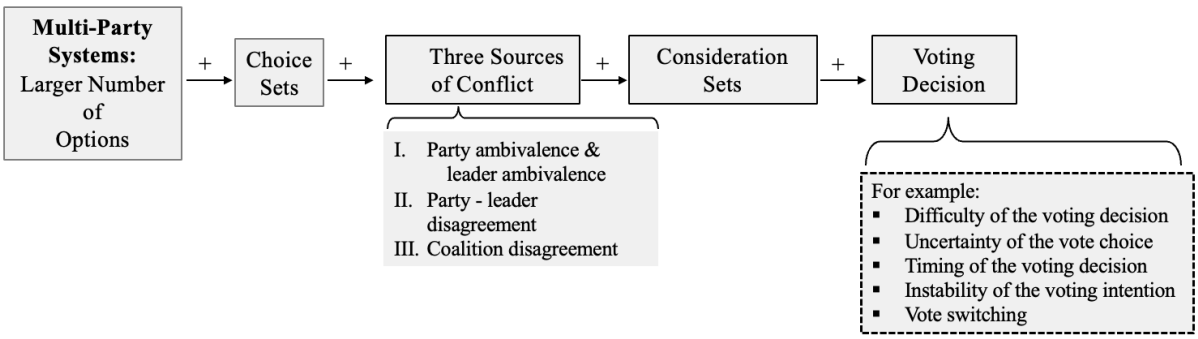
Before empirically testing the effects of the three sources of conflict on voting behavior, the dissertation examines the theoretical framework of how individuals develop conflicting attitudes, larger consideration sets, and an increased decision difficulty, which ultimately affect vote choice. In general, people can become conflicted due to a variety of cognitive processes triggered by internal and external factors. Internal factors are characteristics of the individual themselves that influence the development of ambivalent and disagreeing attitudes. They therefore vary from person to person. One internal source is party identity, i.e. voters with a stable party identification are more unlikely to be ambivalent or disagreeing. External factors are factors outside the individual, such as the electoral context or networks. The focus of this dissertation is on the party system, in particular on MPS compared to TPS. Since choice sets differ between party systems, the dissertation argues that voters who are confronted with more viable alternatives are also more likely to be conflicted between them. On this basis, the dissertation will investigate whether voters in MPS are more likely to show conflicting attitudes. In the following, the three internal sources of conflict are first explained with regard to the multi-party context, before their effects on cognitive processing in political judgment models are examined.

1.2.1 Internal Sources of Conflict in Multi-Party Systems

The first part of this section focuses on the explanation of how internal sources of conflict may lead to larger consideration sets, in turn affecting voting decisions. The theorized pathway leading from more parties to more internal conflicts impacting voting decision is roughly

sketched in Figure 1.1.[7] It shows how individuals' choice sets and consideration sets become larger with an increasing number of alternatives, whether parties or leaders (Wilson 2008; Johnson 2014, 509; Oscarsson and Rosema 2019). Choice sets refer to the viable alternatives that voters face when they vote and that they are aware of (Nedungadi 1991). Therefore, they usually include all the available parties or leaders. However, voters are unlikely to consider all viable alternatives, whether parties or leaders, but that they apply heuristics to reduce their choice set (Wilson 2008; Lavine et al. 2012; Plischke 2014; Oscarsson and Rosema 2019). In doing so, voters build consideration sets. A consideration set is a set of alternatives that voters reasonably consider in their decision-making process (Wilson 2008, 162). For some voters, applying heuristics might be highly effective resulting in a consideration set containing only one alternative. For instance, partisans can be expected to be more likely to reduce their choice set solely using heuristics (Lavine et al. 2012). Whilst the choice set in TPS includes a maximum of two parties, the choice set size of individuals in MPS is larger by default (Oscarsson and Rosema 2019, 257). The dissertation argues that the larger number of parties in MPS leading to larger choice sets affects individuals' consideration sets on the basis of three types of conflict. The first one deals with party ambivalent and leader ambivalent attitudes. Both are likely to become larger when more parties are available and ideological distances between parties are decreasing. The last two sources of conflict deal with two trade-offs between assessment dimensions that become increasingly complicated. One relates to party-leader disagreement and one to coalition disagreement. All three are expected to lead to larger consideration sets in MPS.

Figure 1.1: Graphical illustration of the mechanisms influencing the voting decision



[7] This figure is based on Figure 1 from Dentler (2024, 4). Some theoretical adjustments and editorial changes were made for inclusion in the dissertation.

Turning to the first and main source of conflict, party ambivalence and leader ambivalence are affected by the number of parties and the polarization of the party system. The dualism of parties in TPS likely leads to polarization and polarized attitudes. Polarization in turn should ease the identification of policy positions, and the evaluation and interpretation of political information. It follows from this that especially politically sophisticated voters in TPS are usually in clear-cut decision-making situations. In MPS, this is different. The situation is much more complex. The more parties compete, the ideologically closer they become, and the greater becomes their overlap in content (Plischke 2014, 125). The process of parties becoming increasingly more alike is additionally supported by party assimilation (Downs 1957). For instance, in TPS, two parties A and B might be placed at the ideological scale ranging from 0 to 10 at 3 and 7. This would yield a difference of 4. However, if there is one more party, this changes. It may be that parties A and B move more to the ideological extremes and party C positions itself in the ideological middle. This would, for example, result in party A being at 2, party B at 8 and party C at 5. We see that with only one additional party ideological distances between parties start to shrink. However, a high number of parties does not necessarily mean that distances between parties are smaller (Dalton 2008). If, however, ideological distances become smaller in MPS, the overlaps in content also mean that parties with similar programs can cooperate if they pursue common goals. They may even be forced to form coalitions to achieve government majorities (Schoen 2010). In coalition governments, parties cannot implement their pure programs but must make compromises that further reduce the discriminatory power of the two coalition partners' perceptions (Plischke 2014, 125). This makes certain parties appear more similar or even gives the impression of parties belonging to the same political camp (Plischke 2014, 125). For instance, it is conceivable that only "left" parties remain. The comparison of the positions of these parties would therefore not reveal too many differences, from whose evaluation a narrowing down or a decision could be derived. This may then cause a growing political ambivalence.

Party-leader and coalition disagreement are the two remaining sources of conflict that explain why consideration sets are likely to be larger in MPS. As elaborated earlier, party-leader disagreement deals with a favorite party and a diverging favorite leader from another party. While this is not a unique feature of MPS and also applies to TPS, a larger number of (effective) parties also means that more party leaders are available. While in TPS, party-leader disagreement must be based on the only two available parties, favoring one party and the leader of the other, more party-leader constellations are possible in MPS. It is also to be expected that the occurrence in MPS is more likely when the party systems are not as polarized as in TPS.

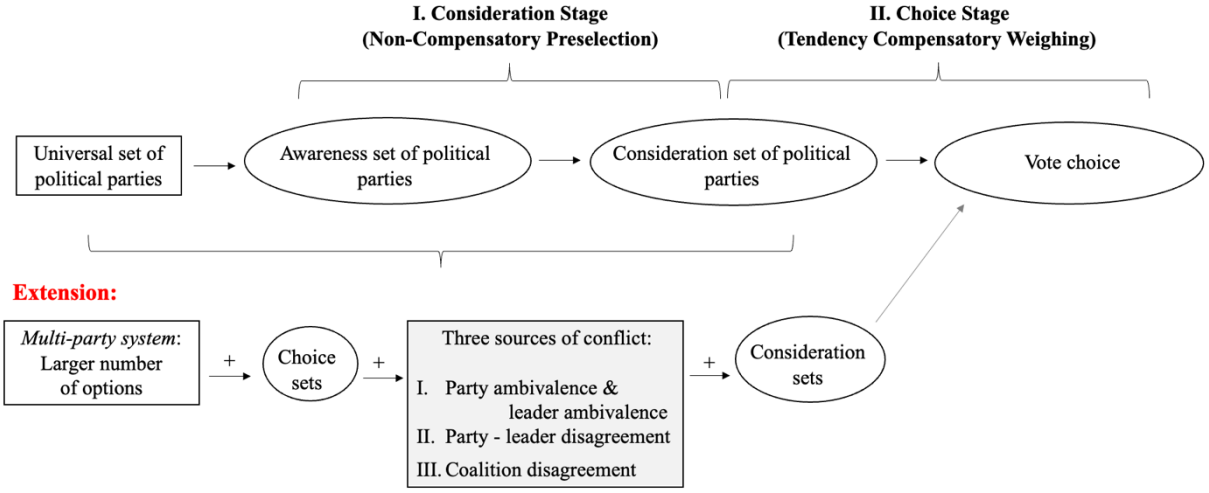
Coalition disagreement involves a favorite party but a diverging favorite coalition that does not include the favorite party. This can only be observed in MPS, where coalition building is an essential part of the government formation process. In the TPS, voters are not confronted with such situations. In MPS, these disagreements become more likely with a higher number of (effective) parties, as more coalition constellations become possible. With a higher number of parties, this means that more parties have an actual chance of becoming part of the governing coalition and that potential coalitions become larger, which in turn makes coalitions with unpopular parties more likely. Based on the reasons why the presence of these two trade-offs should be more likely in MPS, the logical consequence is that voters who are party-leader or coalition disagreeing are more likely to consider an additional party and thus have a larger consideration set. In summary, individuals in MPS can be expected to have larger consideration sets than individuals in TPS. Whilst the choice sets of individuals in TPS is two by default, individuals in MPS are offered more alternatives to choose from. Combined with the three internal sources of conflict—party and leader ambivalence as well as party-leader and coalition disagreement—, one can expect voters in MPS to be more likely to show conflicted attitudes and larger consideration sets.

The last piece of Figure 1.1 deals with the impact of consideration sets on different facets of voting decision. This dissertation argues that voters who are confronted with larger consideration sets are presented with a more difficult decision task regarding their electoral choice. Research shows, for instance, that consideration sets do have an influence on vote choice and voting behaviour (Wilson 2008; Sohlberg and Fredén 2020). Larger sets, for example, increase the cognitive complexity of the decision-making process (Lau 2003, 45; Plischke 2014). Sohlberg and Fredén (2020) show that larger consideration sets increase the perceived difficulty of vote choice. Lastly and rather straightforward, the dissertation expects voters who consider more than one party to be more likely to switch votes between two elections. If the empirical results support previous expectations, the dissertation demonstrates that internal sources of conflict, influenced by characteristics of party systems such as the number of parties, can have a decisive influence on the formation of attitudes towards voting behavior.

The second part of this section links the previously presented theoretical framework from Figure 1.1 with closely related work of other scholars. It thereby embeds the work of this dissertation in the current research and emphasizes its contribution. In addition, it offers an ideal possibility to intensify the investigation on differences among TPS and MPS. By looking at the information processes, this yields valuable insights in the underlying cognitive mechanisms that

demonstrate in more detail how individuals, who are confronted with more parties, are affecting in their electoral behavior. Figure 1.2 links the work from Figure 1.1 to the work from Oscarsson and Rosema (2019, 258) through the external factor: *Multi-party system*. It shows the congruence between the three factors in white and highlights the exclusive, newly added factor of sources of conflict with a gray background.

Figure 1.2: Two-stage model extended by the multi-party factor



In the two-party context, the cognitive processes underlying the formation of political judgments are well described by Lavine et al. (2012) (see also Meffert et al. 2004). For the multi-party context, relevant work has also been conducted (Plischke 2014; Oscarsson and Rosema 2019). In the following section, the two-stage decision models developed by Plischke (2014) and Oscarsson and Rosema (2019) are introduced and linked to the model presented by Lavine et al. (2012). The two-stage decision models proposed by Plischke (2014) and Oscarsson and Rosema (2019) take a different perspective compared to the models from the American context (Meffert et al. 2004; Lavine et al. 2012) to explain efficient decisions. These scholars propose adding an additional stage – called *non-compensatory preselection* (Plischke 2014, 110) or *consideration stage* (Oscarsson and Rosema 2019, 258) – to the established second stage which they name *tendency compensatory weighing* (Plischke 2014) or *choice stage* (Oscarsson and Rosema 2019). Although they name these stages differently, they mean the same thing. At the first stage of *non-compensatory preselection*, voters select a subsample from all available parties that they seriously consider voting for. For example, a right-wing voter might narrow down the options to three right-wing parties excluding all other parties from serious consideration. Plischke (2014) refers to this as strategies in which alternatives are dropped as soon as they are evaluated comparatively negatively in judgment processes. This

means that negative evaluations on one dimension cannot be compensated by positive evaluations on other dimensions (Simon 1957; Tversky 1969; Tversky 1972). The usage of non-compensatory decision strategies helps individuals to reduce the number of alternatives. Between the remaining alternatives, a more detailed compensatory decision can be made (Plischke 2014). For instance, when a voter has the choice between 15 different parties, the voter does not form a judgement on every party and then chooses the party with the highest overall rating. Rather, it is to be assumed that different parties are ignored from the beginning so that the final compensatory decision is made between a few parties which meet a certain subjective level of demand. If this way only one party is left with the most positive attitude, the decision is already made at this level. Plischke (2014) describes it as an automatically activated process without the need for an elaborate comparison of all parties. Additionally, he claims that since there is only a very small capacity for compensatory weighing, it can be assumed that the threshold value is higher for decisions with many alternatives than for decisions between only a few alternatives, so that only few alternatives are left in the second stage of weighing. This shows that this process may be more difficult for individuals offered a higher number of alternatives. Non-compensatory decision strategies are rarely discussed in the electoral research because most theoretical frameworks come from the U.S (Oscarsson and Rosema 2019, 256). In the U.S., the choice is usually between two leaders and the decision is therefore much less complex than in MPS. Research on multiple-stage selection processes come therefore mainly from countries with MPS (Oscarsson et al. 1997; Shikano 2003; Wilson 2008; de Vries and Rosema 2009; Plischke and Bergmann 2012).

At the second stage, named *choice stage* or *tendency compensatory weighing*, the actual process of consideration takes place between the remaining parties of the first stage. Since only those parties against which comparatively similar attitudes are held are left over, individuals can no longer resort to affect differentials. Therefore, if individuals are motivated to identify the best party for them, they will necessarily need to access information on these parties that will enable them to make a reasoned decision between the parties. This second stage may result in more conscious and effortful thinking. Hence, the second phase of the decision can be considered relatively difficult (Plischke 2014, 113). This leads over to the American model of political judgment developed by Lavine et al. (2012) which focuses on cognitive processing and the impact of partisanship.

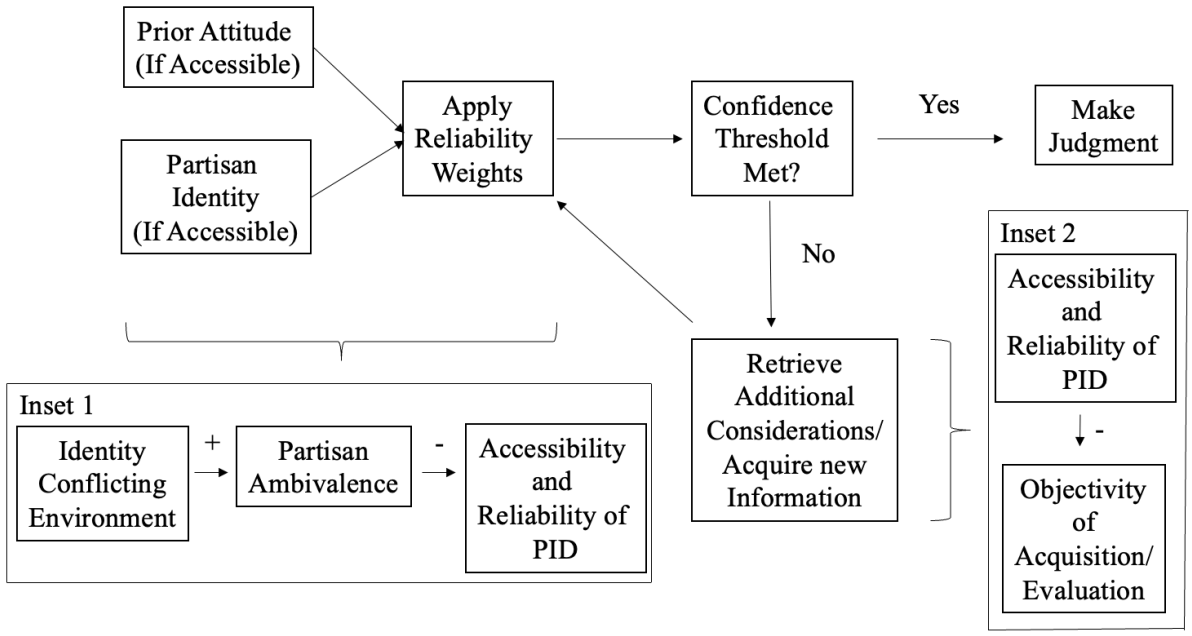
1.2.2 The Impact of Internal Sources of Conflict on Cognitive Processing

To examine how party and leader ambivalence, as well as party-leader and coalition disagreement impact political decisions (subconsciously), this work needs to elucidate the underlying information processing and political judgment processes of individuals. Although the model focuses on partisans, the theoretical framework of Lavine, Johnson and Steenbergen (2012) yields a very good starting point. However, before looking at their model, it is important to introduce two axioms of human thought to understand how the model is working. One of the most well-known axioms is the least effort principle which argues that humans are efficiency oriented and therefore try to avoid putting too much cognitive energy in their decision-making (Kahneman 2011; Lavine et al. 2012). Another axiom is the sufficiency principle which states that humans desire a certain threshold of confidence in the "correctness" of their judgments (Petty and Cacioppo 1986; Chaiken et al. 1989; Payne et al. 1993). Whilst the least effort principle can be described as the goal of efficiency, the sufficiency principle as the goal of accuracy. Both together imply a tradeoff between conflicting goals (Lavine et al. 2012). The goal of efficacy requires people not to put too much effort in the decision-making process, whereas the goal of accuracy demands people to make a "correct" judgment that requires more cognitive energy. Lavine et al. (2012) argue that people identify strategies which promise them to yield the most accurate decision without too much cognitive effort (Lau and Redlawsk 2006). Therefore, all political judgments should reflect some kind of compromise. According to this argument, people should rely on effortful judgment strategies when factors are present that undermine people's actual confidence. Now partisanship comes into play. Lavine et al. (2012) argue in their framework that partisan cues can raise partisans' judgment confidence. Psychological research shows that the use of partisan cues like other heuristics depends on two important constraints: The accessibility in memory and the reliability of the cue. Accessibility refers to the way that cues can be retrieved from the long-term memory and then be utilized in the information processing. Highly accessible concepts should come into mind automatically in relevant situations without conscious effort to retrieve (Fazio et al. 1986). Reliability means that people evaluate the way that cue is seen as an applicable guide in producing a "good" decision (Chaiken 1987; Eagly and Chaiken 1993; Lupia and McCubbins 1998). If a cue is perceived as reliable and thus increasing confidence, it is used as an argument in favor of or against a particular object of interest (Fabrigar et al. 2005, 107; Althaus and Kim 2006; Chong and Druckman 2007).

After describing the underlying concepts, the focus shifts to Lavine et al.'s (2012, 35) model of partisan ambivalence and political judgment. An overview of the model is presented

in Figure 1.3. The top-left corner indicates that a prior attitude or belief initiates the judgment process if it is automatically activated. For instance, this prior attitude may be based on past experiences or expectations. Once activated, the attitude or information is weighted according to its reliability, just like any other consideration. The reliability then influences the extent to which the attitude (1) moves the decision-maker toward a judgment option and (2) reduces the gap between the current level and the desired level of confidence. Greater reliability weights result in increased confidence, raising the likelihood that an individual's sufficiency threshold will be met. If the prior attitude is strong enough to close the confidence gap, a judgment is made (Downs 1957, 85; Lavine et al. 2012). This part of the model captures the top of the head judgment process described by Zaller (1992). Simultaneously with the activation of the prior attitude, an individual's partisanship may also be automatically activated. Again, it is expected that the weight given to partisanship depends on its subjective likelihood of increasing judgment confidence. Partisanship should lay the foundation for political judgments when party identity is highly accessible and seen as a reliable decision guide. In this case, judgments should reflect little deliberation and be biased by partisan expectations (Lavine et al. 2012). Depending on the strength of partisanship, this leads to either a strong or weak version of a partisan cue-taking heuristic strategy. In both cases, the judgment process is driven entirely by automatically activated information, such as prior beliefs or partisanship. Therefore, the process involves minimal deliberative reasoning or the acquisition of new information. In this context, partisanship should reduce the likelihood of developing conflicting political attitudes.

Figure 1.3: A model of political judgment



Source: Lavine et al. (2012, 36)

Focusing once again on the sufficiency threshold provides a mechanism for explaining why decision-makers transition from heuristic to deliberative decision-making, as well as an example of when partisanship is less effective in preventing conflicting attitudes. According to Lavine et al.'s (2012) framework, this occurs when partisan cues and prior beliefs fail to provide sufficient confidence on their own. It can also lead to undermining an individual's belief in the utility of party identity as a valid judgment cue. If an individual's contemporary partisan evaluations are inconsistent or incongruent with long-term expectations, Lavine and colleagues (2012) refer to this as the development of partisan ambivalence. For instance, this could occur if one's partisan opponent performs well while their own partisan evaluations become increasingly negative. Although this dissertation does not build on their concept of partisan ambivalence, it could be considered a fourth internal source of conflict worthy of further investigation in future research. Nevertheless, this dissertation argues that voters without a party affiliation can also experience ambivalence, or that party members may feel ambivalent between two parties unrelated to their party affiliation. Therefore, the dissertation adopts a broader perspective on political ambivalence to better understand individuals' electoral behavior in a more comprehensive manner.

Consistent with Lavine et al.'s (2012) interpretation of the partisan model, inset 1 (Figure 1.3) shows that as partisan ambivalence increases the accessibility and reliability of party identity decreases. Therefore, if partisan ambivalence occurs, this leads to the individual's need to supplement partisanship with or even replace it by alternative means for increasing judgment confidence (Lavine et al. 2012). When ambivalence blocks the activation of partisanship entirely, partisanship will not contribute to reduce the gap between actual and desired confidence levels. The same is the case when partisanship is activated but assigned a low reliability weight. In both cases, individuals are expected to turn to other information sources to reach their sufficiency threshold. Lavine et al. (2012) argue that people should not switch to other low-effort cues but that they should engage in a deeper, more thorough information search. They (2012, 152) find evidence for this showing that ambivalent partisans hold more accurate assessments of the economy, the candidates, and the behavior of their representatives. Additional support comes from Meffert et al. (2004) who find that ambivalence toward the candidates was associated with less confidence but greater accuracy in candidate perceptions[8]. However, the transition from heuristic to deliberative thinking does not mean that

[8] Support for several aspects of Lavine et al.'s (2012) political judgment model comes from experimental work in cognitive, social and political psychology (Bassili 1995; Lodge and Taber 2005). Laboratory

individuals engage in a representative information search or that they will evaluate that information in an unbiased manner. For instance, research shows that individuals desire a workable balance between getting it right and leaving their prior beliefs intact (Fiske 1992, 880). The degree to which effortful thinking is biased or objective depends on the extent to which partisanship reduces the gap in judgment confidence (Lavine et al. 2012, 38). Lavine et al. (2012) illustrate this in Inset 2 of Figure 1.3, if partisanship is accessible and provides some confidence, albeit not enough, partisanship is likely to guide how information is gathered, evaluated and combined with existing attitudes (Meffert et al. 2004; Lavine et al. 2012). Those partisans should follow a belief-confirming strategy (see also Campbell et al. 1960; Taber and Lodge 2006, 756). By contrast, if partisanship provides little additional confidence, following information processes should be more objective (Meffert et al. 2004; Lavine et al. 2012).

For nonpartisans, partisan identity as well as insets 1 and 2 (Figure 1.3) should drop out of their cognitive processing. There is no partisanship that can be activated. Therefore, individuals will not be able to increase their judgment confidence by applying heuristics of party cues. Nonpartisans are therefore expected to engage more strongly in deliberative reasoning and the acquisition of new information if their prior attitude or belief is not strong enough to meet their confidence threshold. At a first glance, this can be seen as a disadvantage as it could be more effortful. On the other side, nonpartisans do not risk being confronted with partisan ambivalence, hence running into struggles between their partisan identity and another party. Whilst they can still be ambivalent between two parties, prior beliefs related to party identity do not come under pressure. Furthermore, their information search and judgment should then not be biased by partisanship, but they could in turn be more likely to be affected by party persuasion because they are more manipulable than univalent partisans (Plischke 2014, 259).

In a final step, the model of Lavine et al. (2012) can be linked with the models of Oscarsson and Rosema (2019) and Plischke (2014). Figure 1.4 illustrates this graphically. It contains parts from Figure 1.2 (based on Oscarsson and Rosema 2019) and Figure 1.3 (Lavine et al. 2012). Its main purpose is to illustrate the link between all the models presented and the two stages of decision models. Even though the link is mainly related to the second stage, the consideration stage is still relevant to show that these three internal sources of conflict initially increase the likelihood of holding larger consideration sets and thus considering more alternatives compared to TPS and probably more polarized systems. If individuals are then more

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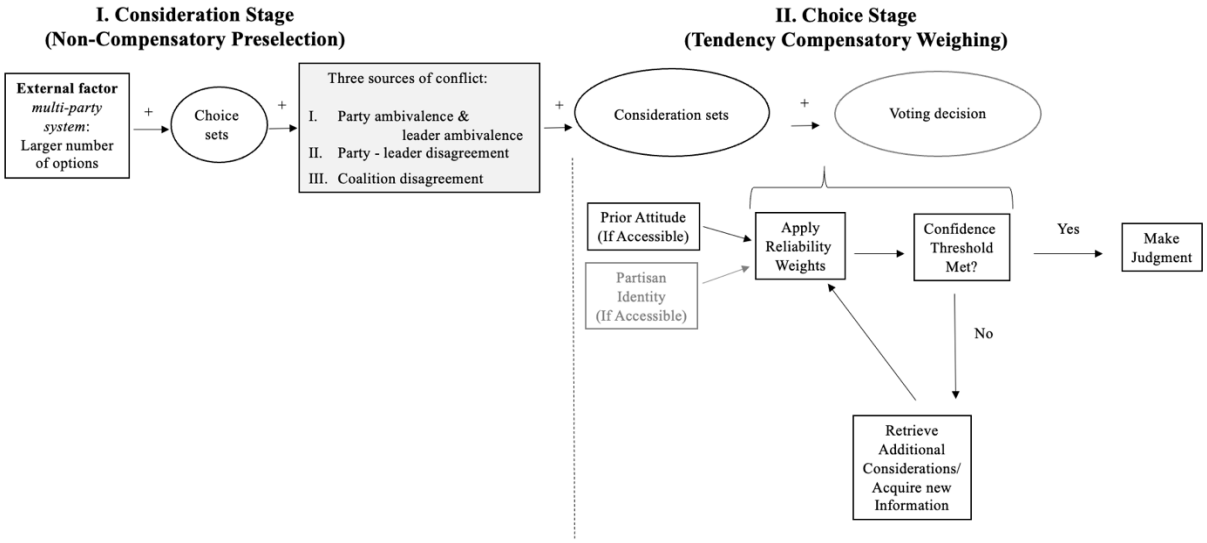
experiments demonstrate that ambivalence can erode initial judgment confidence and thus encourage more extensive thought (Maio and Olson 1996; Jonas et al. 1997).

likely to consider two or more parties in MPS in the second stage, this means that individuals are also more likely to be confronted with reliability weighting. The cognitive processes of reliability weighting may also be more difficult in MPS, as the confidence thresholds that individuals need to reach in order to make a judgment are likely to be higher than in TPS. For example, the confidence threshold could be higher because comparing several similar parties in terms of their ideological positioning could be more difficult than deciding between a party on the left and a party on the right (Plischke 2014, 124). Higher confidence thresholds require individuals to engage in a more extensive acquisition of information. However, this information gathering and evaluation can also be more complicated because, again, the reliability weights are probably insufficient, and the threshold is difficult to reach. It therefore becomes more difficult to reduce the gap between the actual and desired confidence levels. Therefore, the process has to be repeated for a while until the confidence thresholds are finally reached, voters can leave this "vicious circle" and a judgment can be made. If voters are unable to resolve their internal conflicts and limit their considerations to one party or leader, they find themselves in a difficult decision-making situation that they are constantly trying to resolve and may even lead to abstention. The above explanations therefore show that the second stage of the decision-making process is considerably more complex and takes longer, especially in MPS.

Overall, this subchapter embedded the theoretical framework of the dissertation in previous research and highlighted important connections that can be made between the different frameworks. In doing so, the significant impact of the three sources of conflict on voting behavior were demonstrated through a more general explanation (Figure 1.2) and a more in-depth explanation focusing on cognitive processes (Figure 1.3).

Figure 1.4: American model of political judgment extended by multi-party features



1.3 Contribution

This dissertation essentially makes the following contributions:

(a) Providing a theoretical framework for how party and leader ambivalence, party-leader disagreement and coalition disagreement influence electoral behavior in the multi-party context.
(b) Testing and validating an alternative measure of ambivalence for MPS.
(c) Theoretically discussing and empirically demonstrating which sources of conflict are particularly relevant for voting behavior, especially vote switching.

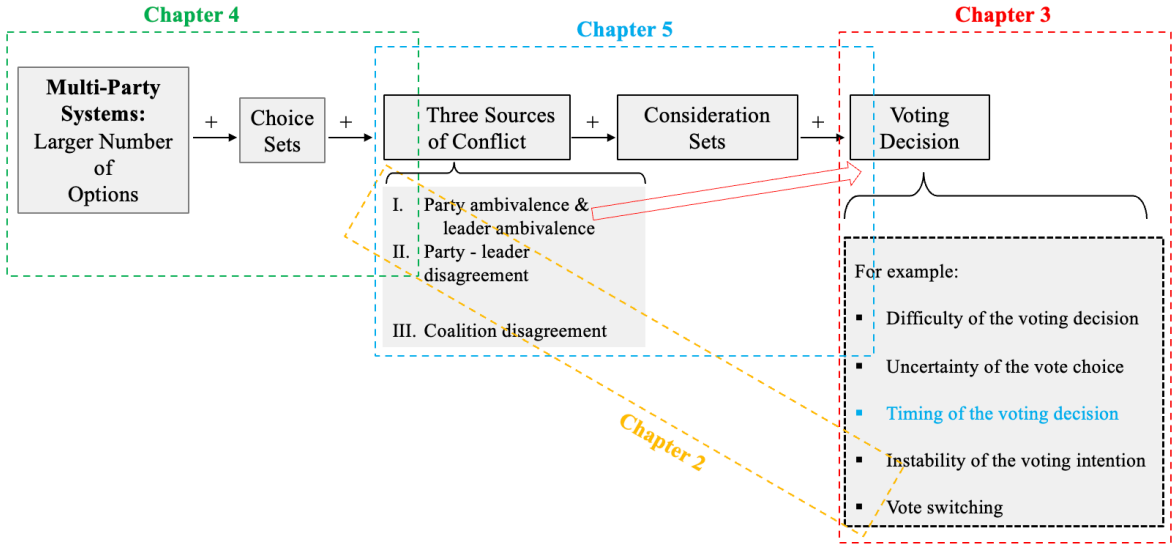
The second and third chapter aim to advance the concept of party ambivalence, leader ambivalence and party-leader disagreement in three MPS. Whilst the second chapter focuses on Germany and develops and uses an alternative measurement of ambivalence, the third chapter goes a step further by looking at three MPS to examine interesting differences between political systems. Moreover, it contributes with respect to the mechanism examining how ambivalence leads to vote switching. The fourth chapter generalizes earlier findings by using a comparative dataset that allows for an analysis of about 52 MPS. Further, it assesses why voters in MPSs are more likely to experience these sources of conflict, such as ambivalence, focusing on the number of parties that offer voters more viable alternatives. The final empirical chapter concludes the earlier work and focuses on the last two missing parts. It emphasizes the importance of coalition disagreement as the remaining source of conflict and the general impact of all sources of conflict on voting considerations. Finally, building on this, the importance of consideration sets in explaining important aspects of voting behavior is demonstrated.

These contributions are scientifically relevant by highlighting the importance of internal sources of conflict related to attitudes towards parties, leaders and coalitions for social scientists dealing with electoral behavior and by suggesting how comparative research on this topic can enrich empirical research in this field. These contributions are furthermore practically relevant by providing parties and their leadership with interesting empirical insights to assess the potential impact and gains that they can generate by acting and deciding strategically. More specific conclusions are drawn in the conclusion sections of Chapters 2 to 5 and in the final discussing and concluding Chapter 6.

1.4 Summary of Chapters

In the following, I provide extended summaries for the subsequent four chapters and contextualize them within the larger aims of this dissertation. Detailed information about theories, objectives, hypotheses, methods, and findings can be found in Chapters 2 to 5. Figure 1.5 provides an overview of the four chapters of the dissertation.[9] These chapters comprise two published journal papers, one published book chapter and one paper currently under review. The dissertation concludes with a chapter on the findings, limitations and avenues for future research, and a general conclusion.

Figure 1.5: Overview of the main chapters of this dissertation



Chapter 2: "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Testing the Influence of Ambivalence on Vote Switching in the German Multi-Party Context"

Chapter 2 deals with the question whether political ambivalence influences vote switching. Reviewing the literature in this field shows that this question was investigated to some extent in the American TPS, its application to systems with more than two parties had not been explored. Based on this finding, the aim of this chapter is to empirically test whether political ambivalence impacts voting behavior in MPS too. The chapter therefore serves as a general introduction to research on ambivalence and voting behavior in MPS. Before addressing this gap, new methodological challenges arise because of a different political environment, dealing with multiple instead of two parties, and need to be dealt with first. Chapter 2 therefore

[9] This figure is based on Figure 1 from Dentler (2024, 4). Some theoretical adjustments and editorial changes were made for inclusion in the dissertation.

discusses in more detail the challenges of the TPS ambivalence measurement with regard to the survey instrument used and the coding decisions made. The development of the alternative measurement builds on work of other scholars with the aim of building on survey items that can be taken from various international surveys and hence, enabling a comparative analysis of ambivalence as well. Although the new measure uses the ratings from the feeling thermometer, it still relies on the original formula to calculate the index.

For this research purpose, the chapter uses the 2013 and 2017 Short-Term Campaign Panels (Rattinger et al. 2016; Roßteutscher et al. 2019), as well as the 2021 Rolling Cross-Section (GLES 2022), from the German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES). It focuses on Germany based on several reasons. Germany features a well-established MPS that offers the party menu needed to investigate the impact of ambivalence in MPS. Similarly to other European countries, Germany has experienced high electoral volatility in recent elections. Furthermore, the ambivalence measure that this chapter intends to compare to the American studies is rarely included in any other election study besides the GLES. These datasets provide all the items needed for the main analyses and for the required robustness checks validating and comparing the results of the new ambivalence measure to the previously established ambivalence measure of Basinger and Lavine (2005).

Testing the influence of party ambivalence, leader ambivalence and party-leader disagreement on vote switching between two consecutive elections shows support for two of the three factors. Voters with increasing levels of party ambivalence or being party-leader disagreeing, are more likely to vote for a different party on election day compared to the previous election. Whilst we find these significant effects for party ambivalence and party-leader disagreement, we do not find any effects for leader ambivalence.

In addition to vote switching, the chapter also looks at switches in *voting intentions* over the pre-election campaigning period. This enables a deeper investigation of the issue of interest and provides a dynamic component as *changes* in ambivalence and disagreement can be examined as well. First, we find again significant effects for party ambivalence and party-leader disagreement on switching voting intentions between survey waves. Second, the analysis of *changes* in sources of conflict shows that respondents who either become more party ambivalent between two survey waves or become party-leader disagreeing, while they were not before, are also more likely to change their voting intention in the pre-election period. Leader ambivalence once again shows no significant impact on any of the elections, demonstrating that in these three German federal elections, party ambivalence seems to be the more valuable predictor.

The chapter makes two key contributions. First, it provides a good first test for an alternative but strongly needed measurement of ambivalence in MPS that is well supported by various robustness checks. Using this measurement, the second contribution is to show the value of investigating the link between internal sources of conflict and voters' electoral behavior, and explicitly vote switching between two national elections, in the MPS of Germany. Chapter 2 thereby builds the ground of the following chapters of the dissertation that build on these initial findings.

Chapter 3: "From Ambivalence to Vote Switching: Investigating the Underlying Mechanisms in Three European Multi-Party Systems"

Chapter 3 contributes to research in respect of mechanism and context. Regarding the mechanism, it does not exclusively focus on the direct link between ambivalence and vote switching but focuses on the underlying mechanism through which (party and leader) ambivalence, hence one source of conflict, is expected to lead to vote switching.[10] This is examined by looking at vote decision difficulty and vote choice uncertainty, vote intention instability and vote switching at the end. Regarding the context, it extends the investigation of ambivalence to the MPS Great Britain and Austria, building on the previous work on Germany. Comparing the electoral systems of the three countries reveals that their systems' differences have important implications for the countries' party systems and hence the expected impact of ambivalence on voters' electoral behavior, explicitly vote switching. Whilst proportional representational systems build a feasible foundation for the entrance of new parties and the growth of established ones, first-past-the-post systems, in contrast, encourage the development of two strong parties similar to TPS. These conditions may not only affect the likelihood of engaging in vote switching but the development of ambivalent attitudes as well. Voters in the UK compared to those in Austria and Germany may be less likely to engage in vote switching as most decide between the two largest parties due to strategic voting. Furthermore, if there are less parties and weaker small parties in systems like the UK, voters can also be expected to be less likely to become ambivalent as they face less options to become ambivalent.

For this research purpose, the chapter uses data from the Austrian National Election Study (AUTNES), the British Election Study (BES) and the German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES). From the AUTNES, the chapter uses the Online Panel Study 2017-2019 (Aichholzer et al. 2020) covering the 2017 and 2019 Austrian Legislative elections. From the

[10] This chapter focuses on party ambivalence for Germany and Great Britain, and leader ambivalence for Austria because of data availability. More information can be found in Chapter 3.

BES, the chapter uses the British Election Study Combined Wave 1-20 Internet Panel open-ended response data (Fieldhouse et al. 2020) covering the 2015, 2017 and 2019 United Kingdom General elections. From the GLES, the chapter uses the Short-term Campaign Panel 2013 (Rattinger et al. 2016) and 2017 (Roßteutscher et al. 2019) covering the 2013 and 2017 German Federal elections. Data from these studies is used because the research agenda needs panel data from the pre-election campaigning period to investigate respondents' decision-making processes. Looking at multiple countries enables the study to make more substantial claims about the external validity. The AUTNES, BES and GLES were the only panel studies that include nearly all variables of interest. Further, Austria, Great Britain and Germany do not only fit in terms of data but also because all three experience varying degrees of electoral volatility (Dassonneville and Hooghe 2017) and build on different electoral systems that provide an interesting insight. Unfortunately, the three surveys do not include the same indicator of vote choice difficulty. Whilst vote decision difficulty is available in the GLES, vote choice uncertainty is used for the AUTNES and BES.[11]

Looking at the path leading from ambivalence to vote switching, the empirical analysis shows first that with increasing levels of ambivalence, German voters are more likely to perceive the voting decision as more difficult. Austrian and British voters are more likely to state an uncertain vote decision with increasing levels of ambivalence. Following the previous analysis, German voters, whose vote decision is more difficult, are more likely to engage in vote intention switching during the pre-election campaigning period. Austrian and British voters who are more uncertain about their vote choice are more likely to switch in their vote intention during the pre-election campaigning period. Last, if voters switched more often in their voting intention during the pre-election period, they are also significantly more likely to engage in vote switching between elections. For the direct impact of ambivalence on switching, the results show for all three polities that respondents with a higher political ambivalence are more likely to engage in vote switching at the election. Whilst we see very similar effects of ambivalence on vote switching in all three countries, the impact of ambivalence is slightly stronger in Germany than in Austria and Great Britain. As expected, the effects are thus the lowest in Great Britain.

Descriptive results support the previous assumptions about substantial differences between Austria and Germany (proportional representation systems) compared to Great Britain (first-past-the-post system). For instance, ambivalence was lowest over the pre-election

[11] More information can be found in Chapter 3.

campaigning waves for the British sample compared to the Austrian and German one. The frequencies of vote choice uncertainty and difficulty showed that 60% of the German voters perceived the voting decision was rather easy, similar to 65% of Austrian voters who said they were certain about their vote choice, compared to 95% of UK voters who said they were certain about their vote choice. Similarly, the number of vote switchers is highest in the two German elections and lowest in the three British elections. The empirical analysis supports these findings by demonstrating that the effects of ambivalence on vote switching are also lowest in Britain. Altogether, the statistics showed that voters in Great Britain are less ambivalent, more certain about their vote choice, and less likely to engage in vote switching at elections. These findings support the previous discussion on the British party and electoral system. While proportional representation in Austria and Germany provides a workable basis for the two MPS, the British first-past-the-post system encourages the development of two strong parties. These conditions affect the development of ambivalent attitudes as well as the likelihood of engaging in vote switching. Even if a voter is highly ambivalent between two parties in the UK, as long as the two most liked parties do not represent the two largest parties of the constituency the voter's vote choice is most likely unaffected by ambivalence in his vote choice because the voter probably votes for the party that has the highest chance of winning the constituency majority. All of this suggests that a closer examination of the differences between party and electoral systems in the research of ambivalence and voting is needed to draw more informed conclusions.

The chapter contains two important contributions. First, the chapter shows that ambivalent voters face a higher decision difficulty and a higher vote decision uncertainty leading to more unstable voting intentions. Those unstable voting intentions increase the likelihood of engaging in vote switching between elections. This is shown for national elections between 2013 and 2019 in Austria, Great Britain and Germany. Second, whilst these results provide some more generalization to a more diverse set of countries, they highlight some important differences in the impact of ambivalence related to countries' party and electoral systems.

Chapter 4: "Ambivalence Across the Globe: Investigating Political Ambivalence and Its Impact on Vote Switching in 52 Multi-Party Systems"

Chapter 4 contributes to the research community and this dissertation in two ways. First, it generalizes the earlier results on the impact of political ambivalence on vote switching. Whilst we find a positive significant impact for some internal sources of conflict indicating that with

increasing ambivalence voters are more likely to engage in vote switching, we only have looked at this at national elections in Austria, Great Britain and Germany between 2013 and 2021. Hence generalizability was limited so far. Second, the chapter investigates how the main feature of MPS, namely the number of parties, might affect the presence and probability of holding party and leader ambivalent, as well as party-leader disagreeing attitudes. For example, internal conflicts, such as ambivalence, might be more pronounced in MPS because the range of parties in these systems offers voters more viable alternatives at election times (Johnson, 2014; Steenbergen, 2020). If the number of parties is larger, parties are likely to be closer ideologically as they place themselves on the ideological scale, which then provides less space for each party. When parties are closer together on the ideological scale, there is a greater likelihood that policy proposals and opinions will overlap. This, in turn, increases the likelihood of developing similar positive attitudes toward multiple parties. This can lead to an increased likelihood of becoming conflicted to some extent.

For this research purpose, the chapter uses data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES). It focuses on the Integrated Module Dataset (IMD 2020) and the fourth advance release of Module 5 (CSES 2022). The CSES includes a variety of democratic countries with stable and well-established MPS. The party systems of those countries offer the party menu that is of interest for investigating the impact of internal sources of conflict. Both datasets together cover 195 elections in 52 MPS between 1996 and 2020.

Regarding the development of ambivalence, the results show that with an increase in the number of parties, a) the distance between a respondent's two closest parties decreases and b) voters are more likely to show party-leader disagreeing attitudes. Further, if the distance between the two closest parties decreases, party ambivalence tends to increase. This supports the earlier argument that the existence of more parties, hence MPS, does increase the probability of voters being party and leader ambivalent, or party-leader disagreeing. The results also demonstrate that a respondent who is party-leader disagreeing is also more likely to show higher values of party ambivalence, as well as leader ambivalence.[12] Party and leader ambivalence reveal positive significant effects on vote switching supporting earlier findings that voters who are more ambivalent are in fact more likely to engage in vote switching on election day. This generalizes earlier findings in a more comparative perspective not only looking at a small subsample of MPS but at elections in 52 polities between 1996 and 2020.

[12] In the original draft of the dissertation, it was assumed that party-leader disagreement were another factor leading to party and leader ambivalence. However, this idea was rejected and it was decided that it did not make sense and should be investigated as a separate source of conflict.

Chapter 5: "The Conflicted Voter: The Impact of Parties, Leaders and Coalitions on Individuals' Voting Decisions in Multi-Party Systems"

In the bigger picture, this dissertation builds on the observation that voters have found it increasingly difficult to choose a party. In most cases, voters who experience these difficulties also have greater consideration sets, which means that they consider multiple parties to vote for. For understanding the broadening of voters' consideration sets and subsequent struggles with vote choices, this chapter focuses on three internal sources of conflict: (1) Ambivalent party and ambivalent leader attitudes, (2) party-leader disagreement and (3) coalition disagreement. Whilst the first empirical section deals with the impact of these sources on considering another party, the second section looks at the impact of such consideration sets on voters' decision difficulty, decision timing, and vote switching. The last empirical chapter hence adds the last two missing pieces to this dissertation: Coalition disagreement and consideration sets. Both are mostly relevant in MPS as coalition governments are not needed in TPS where only two parties compete, and consideration sets can also only consist of two parties at maximum.

The analysis uses data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) and the German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES). From the CSES, the chapter relies on Module 3 (CSES 2015) because it includes questions on respondents' consideration sets that are of main interest for this research purpose. Module 3 contains 38 countries with MPS and 47 national elections between 2005 and 2011. From the GLES, the chapter uses again the 2013 (Rattinger et al. 2016) and 2017 (Roßteutscher et al. 2019) GLES Short-Term Campaign Panels, as well as the GLES 2021 Rolling Cross-Section (GLES 2022). These datasets allow for a more detailed analysis of the underlying effects leading to larger consideration sets, such as the impact of coalition disagreement on consideration sets. Especially the latter could not be measured using the CSES due to missing coalition popularity measures. Furthermore, the GLES data allows to look in more detail at the inclusion of specific parties into voters' consideration sets instead of a vaguer dummy whether or not another party was considered.

The first empirical section deals with the impact of the three sources of conflict on consider voting for another party. In a first step, the chapter looks at a variety of lower house and presidential elections from the CSES. The results show significant effects for leader ambivalence and party-leader disagreement on considering an additional party to vote for. Party ambivalence is only significant for lower house elections, where it has a stronger impact than leader ambivalence, but not for presidential elections. This highlights interesting differences between lower house and presidential systems. In a second step, similar regressions are run for

each election survey of the GLES, now adding coalition disagreement to the models. The results show that party ambivalence and party-leader disagreement have the strongest and most consistently significant effects for all three German elections. Leader ambivalence has a positive impact on voting considerations for 2017 and 2021, but not 2013. Whereas coalition disagreement is not significant at all. This leads to the idea that we might need to incorporate party (and election) differences into the analysis. Therefore in a third step, the chapter runs party specific regressions for each party and each election to isolate the effects and be able to take a more thorough perspective. The findings can be reviewed and evaluated in two ways. One could either focus on elections (2013, 2017, 2021) or parties (Union, SPD, FDP, Greens), and both yield interesting insights that are explained in detail in Chapter 5. Overall, the results show that the three internal sources of conflict matter for explaining considering voting for an additional party. Contrary to previous results, coalition disagreement does influence voters' considerations. The findings hence demonstrate that the impact of each source can vary greatly from party to party, and from election to election, which underlines the importance of always keeping an eye on country-, election year- and party-specific circumstances.

In the second empirical section, the chapter uses first GLES data and shows for the election years 2013, 2017 and 2021 that voters considering voting for another party find the decision for which party to vote for more difficult and take longer to decide. Second, data from the GLES and CSES to illustrate that consideration sets have a significant effect on vote switching in both, presidential and lower house elections. The impact was much stronger in lower house elections, as voters were about 20 percentage points more likely to engage in vote switching, while in presidential systems voters were only about four percentage points more likely to switch votes if they considered another party.

More broadly, this chapter highlights once more the crucial role that parties, leaders and potential coalitions can play in influencing voters' electoral behavior and decisions. It initiates an interesting discussion and valuable insights for intra-party strategies and politics. However, the results, especially from the GLES, also demonstrated that it is not reasonable to lump all parties together, as we neglect important inter-party differences that need to be considered. Lastly, one of the robustness checks shows that a combined measure of internal conflicts might be a valuable research avenue as well.

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2. Should I Stay or Should I Go? Testing the Influence of Ambivalence on Vote Switching in the German Multi-Party Context[13]

Abstract

Does political ambivalence increase vote switching? While the effects of ambivalence on vote switching have been investigated in the American political system, its application to multi-party systems has not been explored. To address this gap, this article investigates the effects of ambivalence on vote intention switching and vote switching in Germany's multi-party system, which has recently experienced electoral instability. Using the German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES), the article teases out the mechanics of party ambivalence, leader ambivalence, and party-leader ambivalence[14]. The results suggest that ambivalence increases the probability of voters switching parties during the pre-election campaigning period and between two consecutive elections. Ambivalence therefore has important implications for vote switching and for understanding the underlying determinants of electoral volatility in twenty-first-century politics.

2.1 Introduction

In the decades after World War II, advanced democratic systems were traditionally characterized by low electoral volatility. Arguably this has been changing over the last two decades since volatility and vote switching are increasing (Dassonneville and Hooghe 2017; Dassonneville 2018; Jae-Jae and Klüver 2019). A heretofore under-researched dimension of vote switching is ambivalence, that is, the impact of ambivalent political attitudes. Ambivalence displays an attitude conflict that is characterized by competing positive and negative considerations regarding one or multiple objects of interest (Lavine 2001; Basinger and Lavine

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Only small formal edits (such as the formatting of references, font, labeling of tables and figures) were made in comparison to the published article. The Appendix for this chapter is available in Chapter 7.1. References to the Appendix begin with the letter "A".

[14] The term *party-leader disagreement* has changed over the course of the dissertation. While in this chapter it is referred to as *party-leader ambivalence* (because that is how it was published), throughout the dissertation it is referred to as *party-leader disagreement*, which is more appropriate.

2005). While some literature has explored the influence of ambivalence on vote choice (Lavine 2001; Basinger and Lavine 2005), few scholars have examined its impact concerning vote switching (exceptions Hillygus and Shields 2008; Thornton 2009; Thornton 2014; Lavine et al. 2012; Smidt 2017). Up to this point, the current research on ambivalence and its impact on vote switching has been stymied by its focus on the United States.

This article therefore contributes to research regarding context. It argues that extending the focus on the effects of political ambivalence on vote switching to "multi-party contexts" is important and beneficial because presidential elections in the U.S. represent a less likely scenario in which ambivalence might be expected to influence voting behavior (Thornton 2009; Thornton 2014; Çakır 2022). The effects of ambivalence might, however, be stronger and more present in multi-party systems. Potential reasons include the larger number of parties or electoral alternatives, the presence of coalition formation, and the entrance of new parties. Furthermore, multi-party parliamentary systems have become increasingly personalized over the past 50 years, leading to a greater importance of the interplay between parties and their leaders, which could further complicate decision-making. Personalization is in vogue, whether it be institutional rules privileging individuals over the party, increasing media coverage of party leaders, swelling leader power within parties, or election campaigns centered on party leaders. All of this increases attention to the leaders and thus the likelihood that voters will develop not only party ambivalent or leader ambivalent attitudes, but also party-leader ambivalent attitudes in multi-party systems. Thornton (2009) argues that it is worth considering comparative contexts such as multi-party systems because these systems offer ambivalent voters a viable alternative to choose from (Keele and Wolak 2006; Johnson 2014; Çakır 2022). The research question of this article is whether ambivalent political attitudes influence vote intention switching during the campaigning period and vote switching between the German federal elections in 2013, 2017, and 2021.

To get to the bottom of this research question, the article uses three data sets of the German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES): the short-term campaign panels for 2013 (Rattinger et al. 2016) and 2017 (Roßteutscher et al. 2019), and the rolling cross-section analysis for 2021 (GLES 2022). They enable the investigation of the impact of party, leader, and party-leader ambivalence on vote intention switching and vote switching for the German federal elections of 2013, 2017, and 2021. The reasons why the analyses focus on Germany are elaborated in the research design. The three German federal elections of interest were held on 22 September 2013, 24 September 2017, and 26 September 2021. In 2013, the Union, that is, the alliance between the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Christian Social Union

(CSU) led by the incumbent chancellor, Angela Merkel, won 41.5 percent of the second vote. In 2017, the Union gained a vote share of 32.9 percent. Despite remaining the strongest party, the Union experienced a significant loss of votes, scoring its worst results since 1949. Even the change of leadership from Angela Merkel to Armin Laschet in 2021 could not prevent a further decline to 24.1 percent. The Social Democratic Party (SPD) gained a vote share of 25.7 percent in 2013. In 2017, they suffered their worst electoral performance in the post-war period, gaining 20.5 percent of the vote. In 2021, the SPD benefited from big personal mistakes made by the other two chancellor candidates, regained its 2013 vote share, became the strongest party for the first time since 2002, and provided Germany's new chancellor, Olaf Scholz. The Free Democrats (FDP) lost three-quarters of its vote share in 2013 and failed to surpass the 5 percent threshold for the first time in history. In 2017, the FDP, under Christian Lindner, won 10.7 percent and made a return to the Bundestag. In 2021, they made small gains and received 11.5 percent. The Left Party and the Green Party suffered minor losses in 2013, winning 8.6 percent and 8.4 percent of the vote respectively. In 2017, both parties gained about 0.5 percentage points, leading to 9.2 percent for the Left Party and 8.9 percent for the Green Party. In 2021, the Greens put forward a chancellor candidate for the first time. However, after several blunders in the election campaign, they ended up as the third strongest party with 14.8 percent. The Left Party lost around 4.3 percent in 2021 and thus failed to reach the 5 percent electoral threshold. By winning three direct constituencies, the Left was nonetheless able to enter parliament. While the right-wing populist party Alternative for Germany (AfD) failed to gain parliamentary representation in 2013 with 4.7 percent of the vote, they entered the Bundestag in 2017 with a vote share of 12.6 percent, scoring third place. In 2021, they fell to fifth place with 10.3 percent of the vote.

Those election results highlight the extent and impact of vote switching on all three German elections. According to the migration model of Infratest dimap, a German polling institute that specializes in political opinion and electoral research, approximately 33.6 percent of the voters switched parties in 2013, compared to approximately 34.3 percent in 2017 and 41.4 percent in 2021.[15] According to Blumenstiel and Wiegand (2014) and Schoen (2019),

[15] The Infratest dimap migration model maps the extent of migration flows between two elections. The voter migration flows between the parties and the re-election rates for identical parties are estimated. It is based on official statistics, representative polls before the election and on election day, and the final election results. Voter migration takes into account current and former non-voters, as well as changes in the composition of the electorate (voters who have moved in and moved out, as well as new first-time voters and deceased former voters). For the calculation of the vote switching rate for the two federal

almost half of the voters changed votes between the 2009/2013 and the 2013/2017 elections. The entrance of the AfD in 2013 and the change in leadership in the CDU/CSU in 2021 illustrate how changes in party systems can affect political ambivalence and thereby election outcomes. The birth of the AfD had a significant impact on the German party system and led to losses for almost all parties represented in the Bundestag in 2013 and 2017 (Wurthmann etl al. 2021). The Left, the Union, and the small parties lost the most votes in both elections. While in 2013 around 19 percent of voters who defected from the Left switched to the AfD, in 2017 around 33 percent of left-wing defectors did so. From the Union, 16 percent of the defectors switched to the AfD in 2013 and 25 percent in 2017. Of the losses of all small parties combined, about 35 percent of voters switched to the AfD in 2013 and about 49 percent in 2017. The birth and growth of this new party might have built a good basis for the development of ambivalent political attitudes translating into large-scale vote switching (Mayer and Schultze 2019). While the entry of a new party is rather rare, changes in the leadership of parties occurs quite regularly. The 2021 election in Germany saw a decisive change at the top of the CDU/CSU party when Angela Merkel stepped down after 16 years as chancellor and Armin Laschet took over. While Angela Merkel was a very popular leader even among non-Union partisans, her successor Armin Laschet alienated many voters. After the change in leadership, the CDU/CSU lost many votes among partisans and non-partisans. Although this is an extreme case, leadership changes can affect political ambivalence and thus election outcomes in different ways by altering party and leader preferences and constellations of favorability.

2.2 State of the Art: Vote Switching and Ambivalence

2.2.1 Political Ambivalence

The early work on ambivalence mainly referred to the term "cross-pressures" (Lazarsfeld et al. 1968; Campbell et al. 1980). Since Mutz's (2002) study in 2002, this term has been partly replaced by the common sociological psychology term "ambivalence." Ambivalence is an attitude conflict that is characterized by competing considerations and describes the state of

elections in this article, the data on voter migration are taken from three online media sources, as the data were not directly available on Infratest dimap's website (https://www.infratest-dimap.de/): "Wählerwanderung bei der Bundestagswahl 2013," *Zeit Online*, https://www.zeit.de/static/projekte/waehle- rwanderung-2013/index.html?utm_referrer=https percent3A percent2F percent2F- www.google.com percent2F; "Bundestagswahl 2017: Wählerwanderung," *Tagesschau*, https://www.tagesschau.de/wahl/archiv/2017-09-24-BT-DE/analyse-wanderung. shtml; "Election 2021: Die Abwanderung von der CDU in Zahlen," *Tagesspiegel*, https://interaktiv.tagesspiegel.de/lab/waehlerwanderung-bundestagswahl-2021/.

having simultaneously positive and negative feelings or contradictory ideas about an object or a person (Zaller and Feldman 1992; Thompson et al. 1995; Lavine 2001). So far, the current work on ambivalence has mostly focused on policy issues, candidates, or parties (Lavine 2001; Basinger and Lavine 2005). People can be ambivalent toward one or multiple objects. For example, persons are ambivalent toward one object if they have similar negative and positive feelings or considerations toward one party. Ambivalence toward multiple objects can then be found if voters have negative and positive feelings toward two or more parties. The balance between these positive and negative feelings is expected to lead to the strength of ambivalence. For example, voters who have equally strong positive and negative feelings toward a party (e.g., a 50:50 ratio) are expected to be highly ambivalent, while voters who have significantly more positive than negative feelings or more negative than positive feelings toward the party (e.g., a 70:30 ratio) should be less ambivalent.

This article captures ambivalence in three different ways: party ambivalence, leader ambivalence, and party-leader ambivalence. Whereas the previous literature focuses on either party or leader ambivalence, this article considers both types of ambivalence at the same time. While party ambivalence examines ambivalence between two parties, leader ambivalence is based on ambivalence between two leaders. In addition, this article introduces party-leader ambivalence, a new ambivalence measure. Party-leader ambivalence describes a situation in which voters prefer a leader of a party other than their favorite party. Party-leader ambivalent voters thus face a greater decision difficulty and are trapped between voting for their favorite party or their favorite leader (Wagner and Weßels 2012; Daoust et al. 2021; Quinlan and McAllister 2022). As pointed out by the previous literature (Wagner and Weßels 2012), we should not only look at party and leader evaluations separately but also pay more attention to the interplay between them. For the German federal elections between 1998 and 2009, Wagner and Weßels's (2012) findings strengthen this argument by showing that leader and party evaluations reinforce each other, and that the match between a party and its leader is what matters most for vote choice. Daoust et al. (2021) found in their research that 17 percent of the voters preferred a leader from another party. Party-leader ambivalence is thus not rare and could be an important driver in explaining switching.

People can become ambivalent based on a variety of cognitive processes provoked by internal and external sources. Internal sources are characteristics of individuals that influence the development of ambivalent attitudes, and these can vary across all individuals. One internal source is the information affinity: people who enjoy systematically processing information are more likely to be ambivalent (Rudolph and Popp 2007). External sources are factors beyond

the individual, such as electoral contexts or changes in the political environment. With its focus on the party system, this article looks solely at an external source of ambivalence. The following examples deal with possible changes in the political environment that could potentially lead to ambivalent attitudes. The first change relates to the entry of a new party, which is most likely to affect voters who are ideologically close to that party. With the appearance of a new party, the existing parties are likely to converge ideologically. This could make certain parties appear more similar, and a comparison of their ideological positions would not reveal too many differences (Plischke 2014). All this could lead to a less clear perception of these parties and possibly initiate a reassessment of the other parties as well. Second, changes in party leadership affect voters' evaluations of parties and leaders. If the new leader is as popular as the old one, not much should change. However, if the leader is more popular but does not belong to the voters' favorite party, voters might become party-leader ambivalent. If voters' favorite party elects a new leader that is liked less than a leader from another party, this could also lead to party-leader ambivalent attitudes. Lastly, and especially during the campaigning period when parties start talking about potential coalition partners, voters may become conflicted if they have a clear party favorite but strongly disagree with a potential coalition partner. This may decrease the likeability of the favorite party and increase that of another party, leading to different vote choice considerations. Obviously, the first and third example can only be observed in multi-party systems.

2.2.2 Ambivalence and Voting Behavior

But does ambivalence substantially affect electoral behavior? Research, particularly in the United States, shows that it does. Ambivalence impacts people's political opinions and evaluations. It influences individuals' evaluations of candidates (Guge 1999; Lavine 2001; Basinger and Lavine 2005; Meffert et al. 2004; Schoen 2010) and how strongly they approve or disapprove of the president (Meffert et al. 2004). Ambivalence also affects people's decisions in different facets of their voting behavior. Ambivalent individuals are more likely to vote based on competence and valence issues (Thornton 2009). Basinger and Lavine (2005) show that ambivalent partisans lacking political knowledge are more likely to engage in economic voting, while ambivalent partisans who show a high political knowledge are more likely to engage in ideological voting. Recent work from Çakır (2022) demonstrates that party ambivalence also affects turnout. Using data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), the author shows for several multi-party systems that party ambivalent voters are less likely to vote and more likely to intentionally abstain from voting.

The objective of this article is to investigate how ambivalence influences vote switching. Support for the impact of ambivalence in U.S. elections comes from Smidt (2017), who demonstrates that ambivalence led to a higher probability of switching for the time period between 1957 and 2004, and from Lavine et al. (2012), who find that ambivalent partisanship facilitates three types of electoral volatility: defection, ticket-splitting, and third-party voting. Defection refers to situations in which a Democratic partisan votes for the Republican candidate and vice versa. Ticket- splitting occurs when an individual votes for two different parties in the presidential and Senate elections. Third-party voting takes place if a Democratic or Republican partisan votes for a third-party candidate. Hillygus and Shields (2008) found that defection strongly increases among ambivalent partisans if they are exposed to campaign information on issues relevant to them, yet Thornton's (2009; 2014) results rarely show significant effects for ambivalence on switching. All of these studies use data from the American National Election Studies (ANES). The main difference seems to be the time of investigation. While the studies that found significant effects of ambivalence mostly look at elections in longer time periods between 1980 and 2004, Thornton's studies focus on three individual presidential elections: in 1980, 1992, and 2004. For the elections in 1980 and 2004, he does not find effects of ambivalence on switching. In 1980, this might be explained by the fact that Ronald Reagan (Republican Party) clearly dominated Jimmy Carter (Democratic Party) in the election, and voters rarely have been ambivalent between two candidates. In summary, there has been a limited amount of work done on ambivalence and vote switching, and it has focused only on the United States.

2.3 Theory and Hypotheses

2.3.1 Ambivalence and Vote Intention Switching during the Campaigning Period

Having identified three different types of ambivalence, this section examines how these different types affect changes in voting intention during the pre-election campaigning period (Fournier, 2005). The first hypotheses deal with ambivalence's impact on the stability of voting intentions. If a voter is ambivalent, the vote choice is likely to be delayed (Lavine 2001; Mutz 2002; Lavine 2004; Nir 2005; Plischke 2014; Blumenstiel and Plischke 2015; Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller 2016; He 2016), destabilizing the relation between vote intention and vote choice (Lavine 2004) and making the voting intention less stable and less predictable (Lavine 2001; Thornton 2009; Blumenstiel 2014). In contrast, less ambivalent voters are expected to show an early vote choice and stable voting intentions.

H1a: The more party ambivalent voters are, the more likely it is that they switch in their voting intentions at least once over the pre-election campaigning period.

H1b: The more leader ambivalent voters are, the more likely it is that they switch in their voting intentions at least once over the pre-election campaigning period.

Similar for party-leader ambivalence, we can expect that voters who prefer a leader from a different party than their favorite party should also be more likely to engage in intention switching than voters who are not party-leader ambivalent.

H1c: If voters are party-leader ambivalent, it is more likely that they switch in their voting intentions at least once over the pre-election campaigning period.

The next three hypotheses deal with voters' individual changes in ambivalence over time. Voters who become more ambivalent between two points in time should be more likely to change their voting intention, while voters who become less ambivalent should be less likely to change their voting intention.

H2a: If voters' party ambivalence increases, they become more likely to switch voting intentions over the pre-election campaigning period.

H2b: If voters' leader ambivalence increases, they become more likely to switch voting intentions over the pre-election campaigning period.

The same can be expected for party-leader ambivalence. Voters who were not party-leader ambivalent in the first place but became so at a later point in time should also be more likely to engage in intention switching.

H2c: If voters become party-leader ambivalent, they become more likely to switch voting intentions over the pre-election campaigning period.

2.3.2 Ambivalence and Vote Switching between Elections

This section deals with the effects of ambivalence on vote switching between two consecutive elections. If ambivalent voters are not able to resolve their ambivalent decision situation until the election, the likelihood that they will engage in vote switching increases (Thornton 2009), whereas non-ambivalent voters should be less likely to switch parties. Besides the earlier argument that voters are more likely to be ambivalent in multi-party systems, the psychological threshold of switching is lower in multi-party systems: the closer two parties are to each other ideologically, the more likely it is for a supporter of one party to consider switching to the other (Schoen 2004). In contrast, parties in two-party systems tend to be more polarized and distinct, implying that voters must make "larger steps" in order to switch from one party to the other (Schoen 2004). This increases the likelihood that the impact of ambivalence kicks in in multi-

party systems. H3a and H3b test the impact of ambivalence on vote switching as likewise done in the American context.

H3a: Voters with a higher party ambivalence are more likely to switch parties between two consecutive elections than voters with a lower party ambivalence.

H3b: Voters with a higher leader ambivalence are more likely to switch parties between two consecutive elections than voters with a lower leader ambivalence.

In addition to the previous two hypotheses, H3c displays a more novel hypothesis. It investigates whether voters who prefer a different leader than their party's favorite are more likely to engage in vote switching between two national elections.

H3c: Voters who are party-leader ambivalent are more likely to switch parties between two consecutive elections than voters who are not party-leader ambivalent.

2.4 Research Design

For this research agenda, the article focuses on Germany based on four reasons. First, Germany features a well-established multi-party system that offers the party menu needed to investigate the impact of ambivalence in multi-party systems. It also provides a valuable example for examining the interplay between parties and their leaders, as the media incessantly focus on the race for chancellor. Second, Germany, similarly to other European countries, has experienced high electoral volatility in recent elections. Third, the design of the GLES allows for the investigation of changes in voters' behavior over the campaigning period and between consecutive elections. Fourth, the ambivalence measure that this article intends to compare to the American studies is rarely included in any other election study besides the GLES.

As just indicated, the article uses data from the GLES, a central survey program for the continuous collection and provision of high-quality data for the analysis of federal elections in Germany. One of the main objectives of the GLES is to assess the political attitudes, preferences, and voting behavior of German voters. For this reason, the GLES uses a panel design and regularly conducts surveys before, between, and after elections. Questions of electoral research can thus be examined from a cross-sectional and a longitudinal perspective. The GLES data can be used, for example, to analyze both short-term dynamics during the federal election campaign and long-term social change processes between individual elections.

In detail, the article uses data from the GLES short-term campaign panels for 2013 and 2017, and from the rolling cross-section (RCS) for 2021.[16] The two campaign panels allow for

[16] Unfortunately, nothing comparable to the 2013 and 2017 campaign panels was available for the 2021 election at the time of this writing. The only alternative to examine changes during the election campaign

an analysis of individuals' behavior over the course of the two election campaigns. In the 2013 campaign panel, respondents are interviewed up to seven times at short intervals during the campaign: six times before and one time after the election. In the 2017 campaign panel, respondents are interviewed up to nine times: seven times before and two times after the election. Sampling quotas are based on sex, age, and education. As the panels are online studies, it is not possible to draw a random sample. One could argue that the two panels mostly represent young and internet-oriented people as they are more present in online panels. The sample characteristics, however, show that the sampling quotas worked well and that characteristics such as age are equally distributed. One still needs to acknowledge that generalizability is limited. In the 2021 RCS, respondents are interviewed twice: Once before and once after the election. Since respondents were interviewed only once before the election, the hypotheses on voting intentions were not tested with the RCS. It consists of a random sample based on landline and mobile phone numbers. All Germans with a telephone number within the Federal Republic of Germany were thus included in the sample. The target population for all three surveys was German citizens who were eligible to vote in the German federal election. The sample of the 2013 campaign panel includes about 5,300 observations. In 2017, significantly more voters were interviewed, resulting in a sample of about 22,500 observations. The RCS 2021 includes about 7,000 observations.

The coding of the dependent variables is based on the second vote. Members of the German Bundestag are elected with two votes. The first vote is used to elect a direct candidate, who must receive the majority of votes in his or her constituency, and the second vote is used to elect a party list in each federal state, which is drawn up by the respective party faction. The dependent variables of this article are based on the second vote because this vote counts directly for the German Bundestag; it is more important for the distribution of seats in the Bundestag and thus for determining the power of the parties in parliament. On the basis of the second vote, about 600 mandates are distributed to the parties that have reached the 5 percent hurdle, while there are about 300 constituency mandates. Moreover, the article is interested in electoral choices related to national parties rather than constituency candidates, particularly since voters tend to be more strategic about the first vote because they are often aware that only one

was to use the GLES panel, but the most recent data published was wave 17, which was collected in July 2021. Therefore, using this data set was not possible because the data on the surveys immediately before and after the election (waves 19 and 20) had not yet been published and made available to users. The article therefore uses the GLES rolling cross-section, which allows the use of pre-election feeling thermometer ratings and post-election vote choice information.

candidate can win the constituency vote. Therefore, they are less likely to vote for the party they prefer and more likely to vote for the party they prefer from the subset of parties that have a realistic chance of winning the constituency. In addition, one needs to acknowledge that the second vote in the federal election decides not only the parties in parliament but also the chancellor. Again, this shows how closely party choice and leaders can be connected. The dependent variable "vote switching" is a dummy variable indicating whether respondents voted in the German federal election in 2009/2013, 2013/2017, or 2017/2021 for the same party, coded as 0, or whether they voted for two different parties, coded as 1. The information on respondents' previous election vote choice is based on a recall question. The accuracy of this recall question is probably lower as a contemporary measure would be, and the article acknowledges the pitfalls of using recall vote questions to measure switching (Waldahl and Aardal 2000). More reliable and accurate is the dependent dummy variable "intention switching": it is coded as 1 if voters switched in their voting intention between two parties between two waves during the campaigning period, and coded as 0 if they did not switch.

In the wide format, the data set includes six equally coded "intention switching" dummies for each pre-election wave. "Vote switching" and "intention switching," therefore, focus exclusively on switches between parties, and not between abstaining and voting. For the panel analysis, the data are reshaped into the long format containing only one variable capturing intention switching. As all the models show binary dependent variables, the article uses logistic regressions in order to estimate the impact on the respective vote or intention switching dummies. For the panel analysis, the article applies a random effects logistic regression. All models include robust standard errors. Even though some of the work is based on panel surveys, each respondent counts as one and not multiple observations, and the independence of the data has been adequately verified. The assumptions of logistic regressions, such as the absence of multicollinearity or the presence of outliers, were checked and verified to be correct. Information on model fit statistics can be found at the end of Appendix 7.1.1.

Turning to the independent variables, the focus of this article is to capture ambivalence between multiple actors. Ambivalence is measured by three variables: party ambivalence, leader ambivalence, and party-leader ambivalence. While all measures are presented in the main text, a more detailed description is provided in Appendix 7.1.1. To calculate ambivalence, the article uses feeling thermometer ratings of a respondent's two highest-rated parties or leaders (Johnson 2014). Measuring ambivalence with feeling thermometer ratings is not new and has been done in the multi-party context by other scholars (Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller 2012; Blumenstiel 2014; Plischke 2014; Çakır 2022). On the feeling thermometer, respondents rate

parties and leaders on an 11-point scale from 0 (strongly dislike) to 10 (strongly like).[17] Based on the rating of the two most-liked parties and leaders, two indexes are calculated, demonstrating respondents' degree of party ambivalence and leader ambivalence. The indexes range from -5 to 10, with 10 being the value of respondents who are most ambivalent and -5 being the value of respondents who are least ambivalent. For example, respondents who rate two parties on the feeling thermometer with the highest possible score of 10 (strongly like) would yield a score of 10 (party ambivalence = (10+10)/ 2–(|10–10|)). The lowest value of ambivalence is achieved by respondents who have a clear favorite and rate one party with a 10 (strongly like) and the other with a 0 (strongly dislike). Applying the formula, these respondents obtain the lowest ambivalence value of -5 (party ambivalence = (10+0)/ 2–(10–0|)). "Party-leader ambivalence" is a dummy variable that builds on the feeling thermometer as well; it is coded as 1 if respondents prefer a leader from a party other than their favorite party, and coded 0 if respondents' leader favorite belongs to their favorite party. For example, respondents who rate party A with a value of 9 highest ($Party_A = 9$, $Party_B = 8$, $Party_C = 7$) but leader of party B with a value of 9 highest ($Leader_A = 8$, $Leader_B = 9$, $Leader_C = 7$) on the feeling thermometer would be classified as being party-leader ambivalent. Respondents who rate party A highest ($Party_A = 9$, $Party_B = 8$, $Party_C = 7$) and the leader of party A highest ($Leader_A = 9$, $Leader_B = 8$, $Leader_C = 7$) would *not* be classified as party-leader ambivalent. The article always uses the feeling thermometer ratings of the previous wave *t-1* to ensure a clear causal order. For the 2021 election, thermometer ratings of the pre-election wave were used.

Besides the core ambivalence variables, three additional variables are included for testing the impact of changes in ambivalence on intention switching: "change party ambivalence," "change leader ambivalence," and "change party-leader ambivalence." Change party (leader) ambivalence is calculated as the difference between party (leader) ambivalence index in *t* minus the index value in *t-1*. Positive values of the new variable indicate an increase in respondents' ambivalence, negative ones indicate a decrease in ambivalence, and zero values

[17] The wording of the feeling thermometer question reads: "How do you feel about the political parties in general? Please use a scale ranging from -5 to +5." Respondents were asked about the following parties: (A) CDU, (B) CSU, (C) SPD, (D) FDP, (E) Greens, (F) Left, (I) AfD. This question was followed by another feeling thermometer item: "Please state what you think of some leading politicians." Respondents were asked for the above-listed parties' leaders at that point in time. For further information, please see the studies' questionnaires. Please note that leader ambivalence in 2013 was calculated without the AfD's leader, Bernd Lucke, because he was largely unknown, resulting in a strong decrease in the number of observations.

indicate no difference in ambivalence between the two waves. "Change party-leader ambivalence" is a dummy variable designed to capture whether respondents have become party-leader ambivalent between the two waves. It is therefore coded as 0 if respondents are classified as party-leader ambivalent in both waves, classified as not party-leader ambivalent in both waves, or were party-leader ambivalent in *t-1* but are no longer so in *t*. It is coded as 1 if respondents were classified as not party-leader ambivalent in *t-1* but are in *t*. Finally, the article includes several control variables that are described in Appendix 7.1.2.

To assess the robustness of the findings, the article follows three steps. First, it looks not only at the 2013 German federal election but also at the 2017 and 2021 elections to confirm that the results are not an artifact of just one election. Second, it compares the feeling thermometer measurement of Johnson (2014) to the established like-dislike open-ended measure of Basinger and Lavine (2005, 173). To do so, it replicates Model 5 from Table 3 with an item from the GLES 2013 campaign panel that is comparable to the item used for the ambivalence measure of Basinger and Lavine. Using this item, the article calculates the continuous ambivalence index *B and L (2005) amb. (continuous)* and the dummy ambivalence measure *B and L (2005) amb. (dummy)*, both based on Basinger and Lavine's approach. The article also replicates the dummy measurement as it is used in most previous studies, although the article argues that the use of the continuous measurement is more appropriate because it allows for the inclusion of greater detail. Third, the article compares and therefore replicates the results from the feeling thermometer measurement of Johnson (2014) with the multi-party system measurement of Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller (2012) (*SB and P (2012) party amb.* and *SB and P (2012) leader amb.*). However, if at all, smaller effects can be expected since we are not looking at decisional ambivalence between the two highest-evaluated parties but at ambivalence toward the general party system, as the measurement includes all parties.

2.5 Results

2.5.1 Descriptive Statistics

This first section presents visualizations and descriptive statistics of the core variables. The statistics on vote switching show that 40.7 percent of the respondents switched parties between 2009 and 2013, 45.7 percent between 2013 and 2017, and 38.6 percent between 2017 and 2021 (Appendix 7.1.3). With some smaller deviations, these numbers support the election outcomes presented earlier that show large-scale vote switching in Germany. Figure 2.1 shows the percentage of vote intention switchers and Figure 2.2 the percentage of party-leader ambivalent voters over the campaigning periods for 2013 and 2017. The graphs do not include information

about the 2021 election because no data on pre-election waves was available at the time of writing. For 2013 and 2017, we see a very similar trend in both graphs. The percentage of intention switcher and of party-leader ambivalent voters is decreasing toward the election. This observation is in line with the "self-discrepancy" theory (Higgins 1987) and the "cognitive dissonance" theory (Festinger 1962). Both argue that when people are conflicted by competing feelings or evaluations, they want to minimize the discomfort and hence to reduce the uncertainty. Following this logic, voters will try to reduce their ambivalence and come up with a vote choice closer to an election. Following the previous explanation, the decline could also be a result of the election campaigns and the greater attention paid to them by a wider audience. Thus, if more information is available to more people during the election campaign, they may return to their original preference. The two explanations are not necessarily mutually exclusive. One could argue that voters who are confronted with an increasing amount of information during the election campaign unconsciously decide to avoid a potential internal conflict between different vote choice alternatives and stick to their original preference. Both lines in Figure 2.1 show an increase of intention switcher in the fifth wave for 2013 and the sixth wave for 2017. While we cannot be sure about the underlying reasons, one potential explanation is the televised debates that were taking place between the leading chancellor candidates. The debates were conducted directly before the wave of the increase, and a large number of German voters watched them or at least were informed about the performance of the candidates via the media. However, we must keep in mind that these televised debates took place only between the chancellor candidates of the CDU/CSU (Angela Merkel) and the SPD (Steinbrück in 2013 and Schulz in 2017), and not between all leaders. Moreover, the results of the literature on the effects of televised debates are rather mixed. While the studies show that televised debates have a real effect on voters' preferences and on voting behavior (Senior 2008; Blais and Perrella 2008; Maier and Faas 2011; Baboš and Világi 2018), the effects tend to be small (Shaw 1999; Erikson and Wlezien 2012; Le Pennec and Pons 2019) or not long-lasting and do not carry over to voting intention shortly before the election (Lindemann and Stoetzer 2021).

Table 2.1 shows the mean, the standard deviation, and the number of respondents for party and leader ambivalence in the pre-election waves for 2013 and 2017. While we could see a decreasing trend in party-leader ambivalence in Figure 2.2, this trend is not observable for party and leader ambivalence. The mean values and the standard deviation remain relatively stable across all pre-election and even post-election waves. If we compare both types of ambivalence, party ambivalence on average tends to be slightly higher than leader ambivalence, but both are present in the German electorate. This is also supported in Figures 2.3a, 2.3b, and

2.3c, which show the distribution of party and leader ambivalence in the last pre-election wave for 2013, 2017, and 2021. Additionally, the figures highlight the relevance of ambivalence by demonstrating that many German voters held high ambivalent attitudes. Whether both types of ambivalence exert the same influence on switching is investigated in the next section. Descriptive statistics on the remaining variables can be found in Tables A2.6, A2.7, and A2.8 in Appendix 7.1.3.

Figure 2.1: Percentage of vote intention switchers over the campaigning periods 2013 and 2017

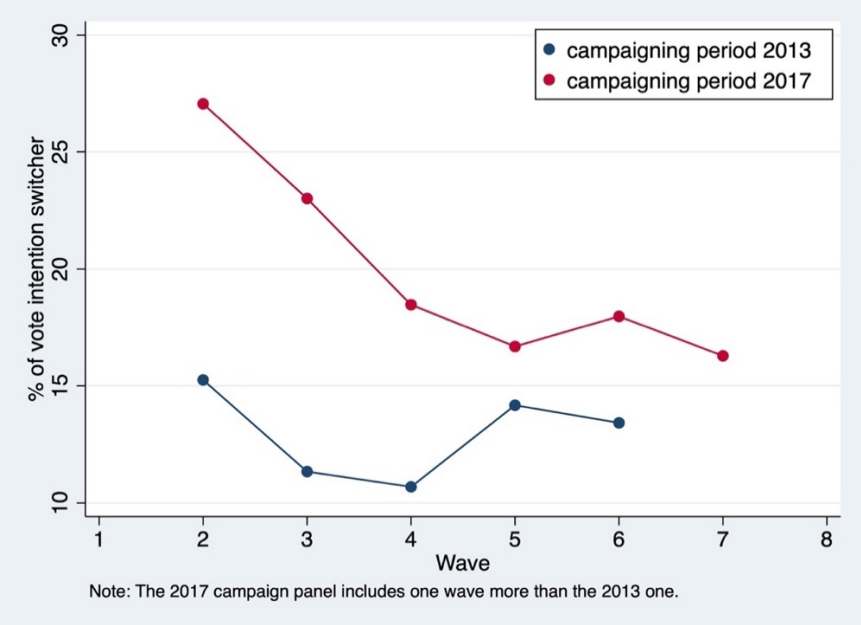


Figure 2.2: Frequency of party-leader ambivalent voters over the campaigning periods 2013 and 2017

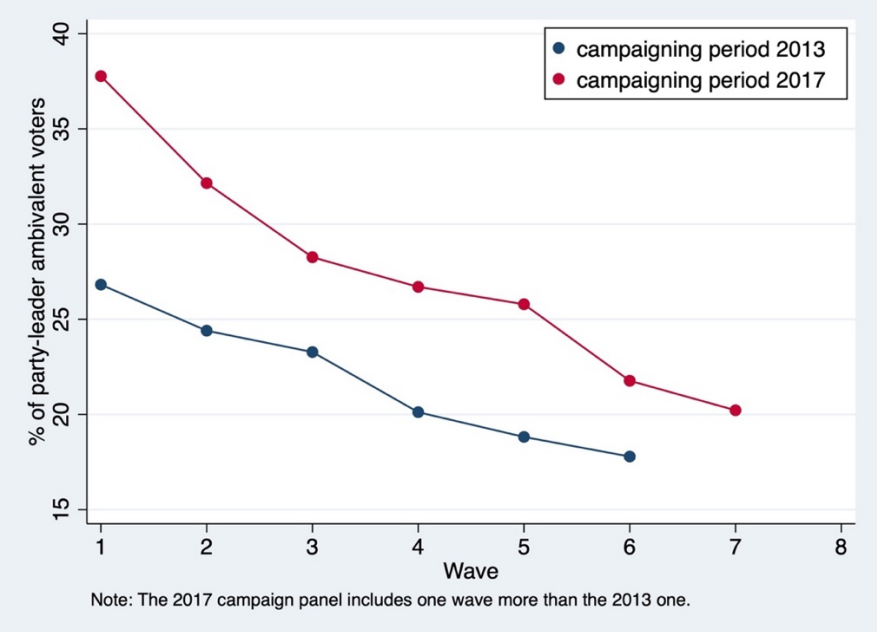


Table 2.1: Descriptive statistics of party ambivalence and leader ambivalence over the campaigning waves

Wave	W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	W6	W7	W8
2013							post-election	
Party ambivalence								
N	3,491	3,010	2,922	2,833	2,840	2,736	2,797	/
Mean	5.19	5.23	5.35	4.99	5.13	5.13	5.13	/
St. dev.	2.93	2.70	2.72	2.75	2.70	2.75	2.71	/
Leader ambivalence								
N	4,073	3,637	3,447	3,437	3,462	3,341	1,804	/
Mean	4.32	4.28	4.57	4.33	4.55	4.32	4.42	/
St. dev.	2.98	2.90	2.86	2.96	2.88	2.96	3.01	/
2017								post-election
Party ambivalence								
N	14,620	11,168	9,739	9,140	11,618	11,169	10,414	11,214
Mean	4.79	5.15	5.01	4.77	4.79	4.97	4.88	5.05
St. dev.	3.26	2.98	3.14	3.15	3.13	3.04	3.10	2.96
Leader ambivalence								
N	9,440	8,730	8,104	7,685	9,854	9,936	9,423	10,092
Mean	4.17	5.12	4.76	4.86	4.70	4.73	4.67	4.82
St. dev.	3.22	2.94	3.10	3.03	3.08	3.06	3.08	3.01

Note: The minimum of each variable is -5 and the maximum is 10. Data on the 2021 election are not included because the GLES Rolling Cross-Section only asked respondents once before and once after the election, rather than in multiple waves.

Figure 2.3a: Frequency of party and leader ambivalence based on the feeling thermometer, German federal election 2013

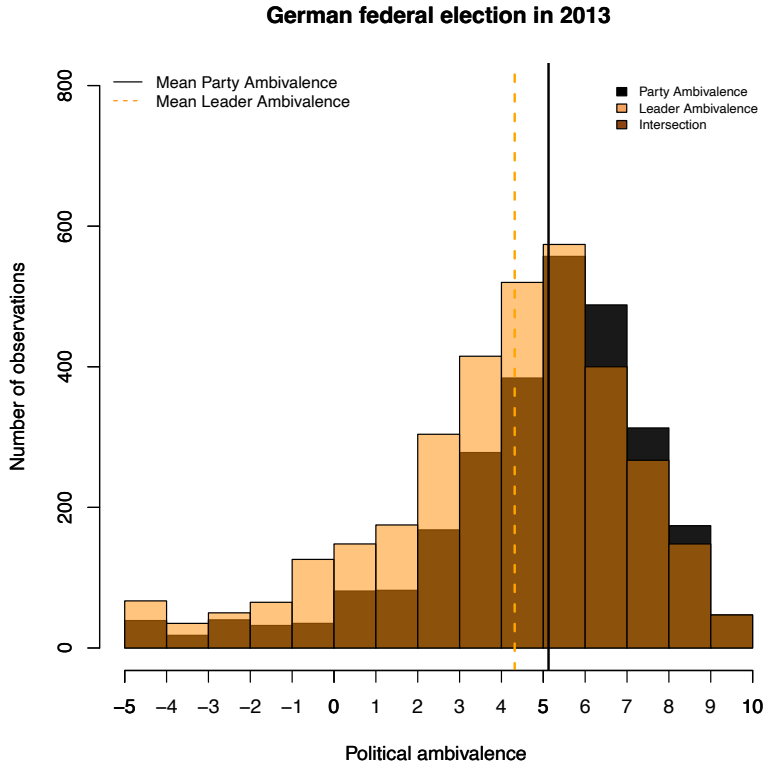


Figure 2.3b: Frequency of party and leader ambivalence based on the feeling thermometer, German federal election in 2017

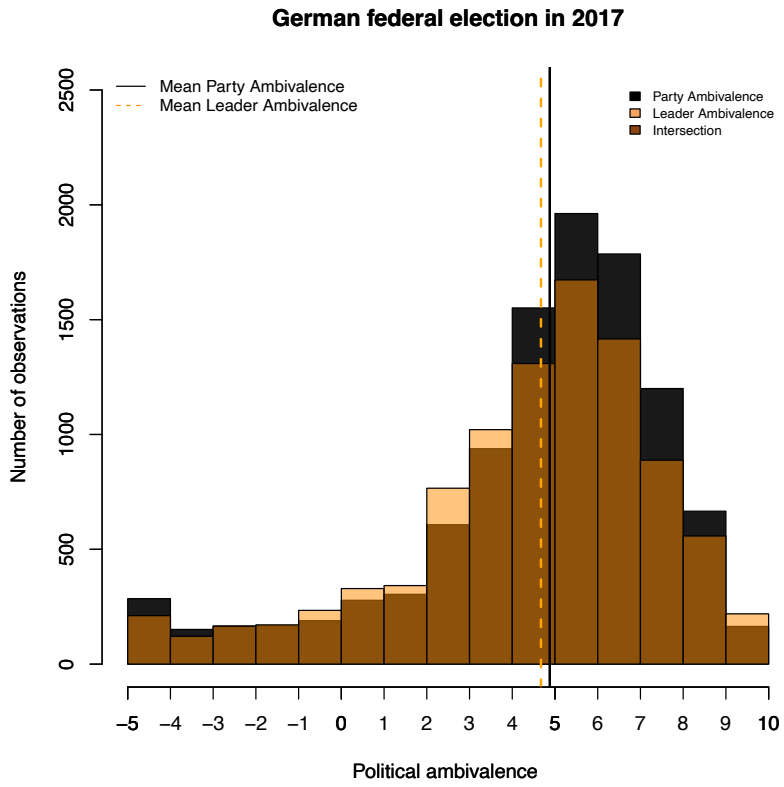
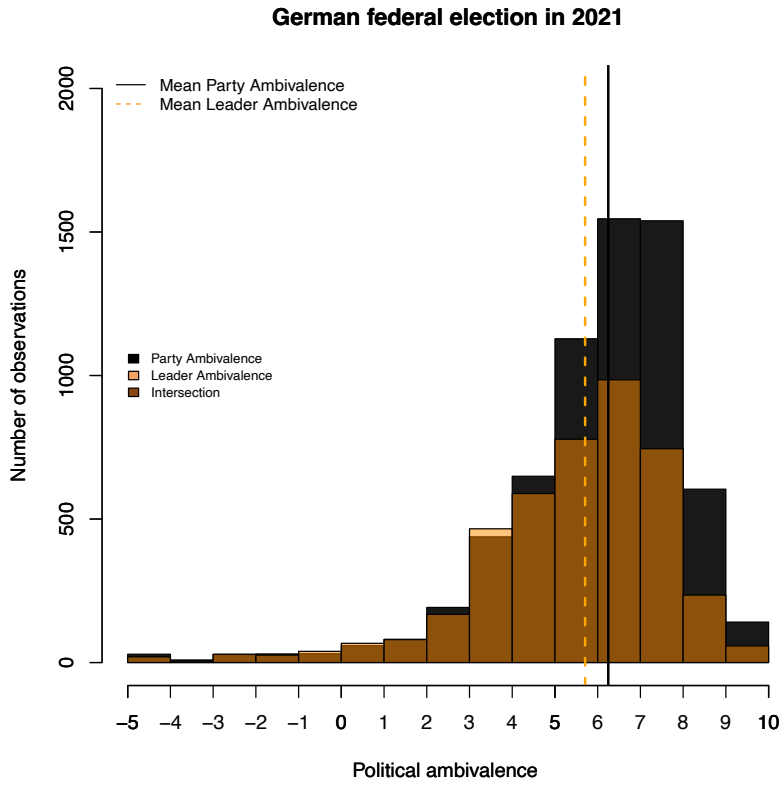


Figure 2.3c: Frequency of party and leader ambivalence based on the feeling thermometer, German federal election in 2021



2.5.2 Voting Intention Switching during the Election Campaign

This second section deals with the empirical analysis of the impact of ambivalence on the stability of voting intentions over the pre-election campaigning period. Models 1 and 2 in Table 2.2 test whether leader, party, or party-leader ambivalent voters are more likely to switch in their voting intentions in 2013 and 2017. In both models, we find significant effects for party and party-leader ambivalence but not for leader ambivalence. The results thus provide support for hypotheses H1a and H1c, but not for H1b. This is an interesting result because it suggests that while leaders play some role in the significant effects of party-leader ambivalence, they have less influence on voting intentions in isolation than is the case with party ambivalence. The results somewhat contradict the debate effects discussed above, which suggest that an increase in switching (Figure 2.1) could be due to the television debates and the importance of leaders. Again, it is important to keep in mind that the literature on this topic is inconsistent and that the effects may be steadily declining after the televised debate (Lindemann and Stoetzer 2021), so a more detailed investigation may be needed. Most of the control variables perform as expected. Partisans and voters with higher political knowledge are significantly less likely to switch in their voting intention in 2013 and 2017. For 2017, the same applies to voters with

higher age and income. Females show an increased likelihood of engaging in vote intention switching. Overall, the findings show that voters who are more ambivalent are more likely to switch in their voting intentions over the pre-election period compared to less ambivalent voters.

Table 2.2: Regression table analyzing the impact of ambivalence on vote intention switching over the pre-election campaigning period of the German 2013 and 2017 federal elections

	(1) Intention Switching	(2) Intention Switching	(3) Intention Switching	(4) Intention Switching
	Testing the effects of party, leader and party-leader ambivalence on vote intention switching		*Testing the effects of **changes** in party, leader and party-leader ambivalence on vote intention switching*	
	2013	2017	2013	2017
Party ambivalence	**0.175*****	**0.164*****	**0.310*****	**0.241*****
	(0.028)	(0.012)	(0.04)	(0.017)
Leader ambivalence	0.015	0.004	-0.026	-0.009
	(0.023)	(0.011)	(0.031)	(0.016)
Party-leader ambivalence	**0.407*****	**0.693*****	**0.507*****	**0.837*****
	(0.117)	(0.06)	(0.143)	(0.073)
Change party ambivalence	-	-	**0.221*****	**0.136*****
			(0.039)	(0.015)
Change leader ambivalence	-	-	0.026	0.011
			(0.03)	(0.013)
Change party-leader amb.	-	-	**0.955*****	**0.894*****
			(0.198)	(0.095)
Partisan	**-0.559*****	**-0.521*****	**-0.693*****	**-0.548*****
	(0.167)	(0.098)	(0.189)	(0.115)
Gender	0.123	**0.178****	0.074	**0.152***
	(0.125)	(0.064)	(0.142)	(0.071)
Age	-0.003	**-0.01*****	-0.003	**-0.01*****
	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.005)	(0.003)
Education	0.008	-0.053	0.039	**-0.076***
	(0.056)	(0.029)	(0.065)	(0.032)
Income	-0.006	**-0.026***	-0.011	**-0.032***
	(0.024)	(0.013)	(0.027)	(0.014)
Political interest	-0.086	-0.003	-0.125	0.001
	(0.07)	(0.04)	(0.079)	(0.045)
Political knowledge	**-1.197*****	**-0.562*****	**-1.275*****	**-0.451****
	(0.288)	(0.133)	(0.330)	(0.150)
Constant	**-2.112*****	**-1.545*****	**-2.644*****	**-2.000*****
	(0.394)	(0.227)	(0.469)	(0.264)
lnsig2u	**0.948*****	**0.932*****	**1.040*****	**0.964*****
	(0.108)	(0.054)	(0.119)	(0.06)
N	7256	24163	6196	20882

Robust standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Models 3 and 4 in Table 2.2 look at the changes of respondents' ambivalence values between two waves and their impact on intention switching. The results support the previous findings as party ambivalence and party-leader ambivalence are again highly significant and the effect size is even larger. "Change party ambivalence" and "change party-leader ambivalence" are both highly significant, showing that respondents who become either more party ambivalent or party-leader ambivalent between two waves are more likely to switch in their voting intention over the pre-election campaigning period. These findings support hypotheses H2a and H2c. "Change leader ambivalence" does not show significant effects; thus, H2b is not supported. Partisans and politically knowledgeable voters are again less likely to switch voting intentions over the campaigning period in 2013 and 2017. The socio-demographic control variables show that better-educated, higher-income, older, and male respondents are also less likely to engage in vote intention switching in 2017. Overall, Models 3 and 4 show that changes in voters' ambivalent attitudes over time affect the likelihood of a change in voting intention.

2.5.3 Vote Switching between Elections

This third section deals with the effects of ambivalence on vote switching between elections. Models 5, 6, and 7 in Table 2.3 reveal the impact of party, leader, and party-leader ambivalence on vote switching in 2013, 2017, and 2021. Party ambivalence and party-leader ambivalence show positive highly significant effects in all three models. This indicates that with increasing levels of party ambivalence or being party-leader ambivalent, voters are more likely to vote for a different party on election day compared to the previous election. Figure 2.4 shows that voters with the highest value on party ambivalence in 2013 compared to voters with the lowest value are about 30 percentage points more likely to switch parties between elections. In 2017, these voters were 15 percentage points more likely to switch parties, and in 2021, they were 25 percentage points more likely. Leader ambivalence once again shows no significant impact on any of the elections, demonstrating that in these three German elections, party ambivalence remains the better predictor. However, we still observe some kind of leader effect as highlighted by the strong impact of party-leader ambivalence in nearly all models. Furthermore, the results could be different in other countries where leaders play a more important role as, for example, in presidential elections. The control variables behave as expected. Older voters and partisans are less likely to engage in vote switching in all three elections, whereas voters who voted for a party that did not become a governing party in the last election or who are dissatisfied with the current economic situation are more likely to engage in vote switching in

2017 and 2021. Overall, the results of Models 5, 6, and 7 support hypotheses H3a and H3c, but not H3b. This article thus successfully shows that political ambivalence affects vote switching between two national elections in the multi-party system of Germany.

Table 2.3: Regression table analyzing the influence of ambivalence on vote switching in the 2013, 2017, and 2021 German federal elections

	(5) Vote Switching	(6) Vote Switching	(7) Vote Switching
	Testing the impact of party, leader and party-leader ambivalence on vote switching		
	2013	2017	2021
Party ambivalence	**0.130*****	**0.043***	**0.104*****
	(0.034)	(0.019)	(0.029)
Leader ambivalence	-0.012	0.028	-0.028
	(0.028)	(0.018)	(0.025)
Party-leader ambivalence	**0.711*****	**0.248***	**0.317****
	(0.157)	(0.116)	(0.106)
Partisan	**-1.551*****	**-1.001*****	**-0.977*****
	(0.206)	(0.127)	(0.110)
Gender	0.099	0.034	0.073
	(0.140)	(0.076)	(0.095)
Age	**-0.011***	**-0.006***	**-0.014*****
	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Education	-0.081	-0.0189	0.012
	(0.06)	(0.034)	(0.046)
Income	-0.037	-0.005	-
	(0.028)	(0.016)	
Political interest	0.129	**0.123***	-0.047
	(0.08)	(0.049)	(0.06)
Political knowledge	-0.557	-0.274	-
	(0.343)	(0.167)	
Bad economy	0.362	**0.379*****	**0.267***
	(0.287)	(0.113)	(0.123)
Election loser	-0.346	**0.320*****	0.086
	(0.237)	(0.081)	(0.112)
Constant	**1.385****	0.098	0.408
	(0.513)	(0.297)	(0.410)
N	1174	3331	2227

Note: *Income* and *political knowledge* measures were not included in the RCS 2021.
Robust standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Figure 2.4: Predicted probabilities of vote switching for party ambivalence

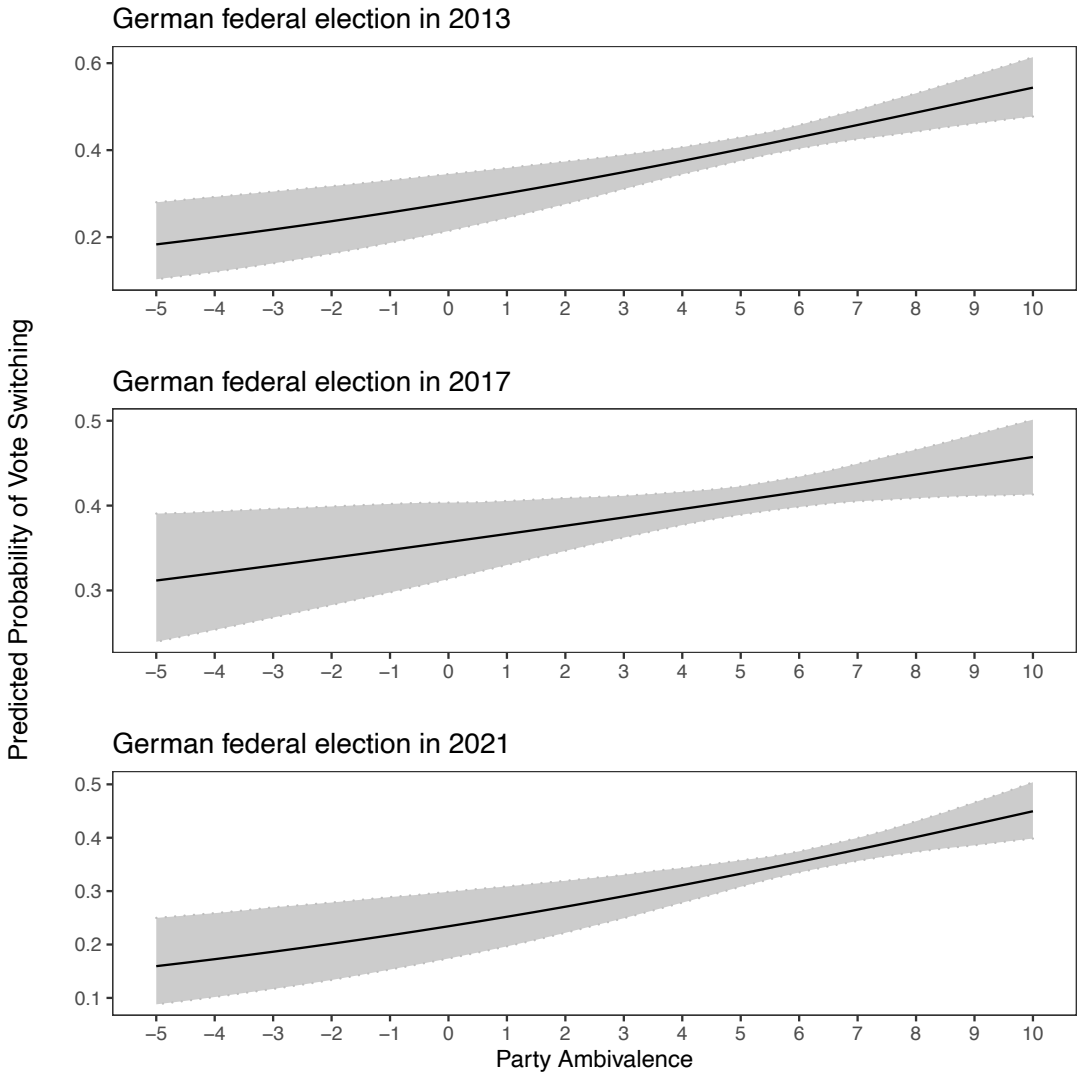


Table 2.4 presents the results of the robustness checks related to the measurement of ambivalence. Models 8 and 9 replicate Model 5 from Table 2.3 using the two well-established ambivalence measures of Basinger and Lavine (2005). Model 8 demonstrates that we find similar strong and highly significant effects of ambivalence on vote switching if we use the continuous measurement of ambivalence. This means that with increasing ambivalence, voters are more likely to vote for a different party in 2013 compared to the previous election in 2009. Model 9 shows that if we use a dummy variable, as mainly applied in previous literature, we find those significant and positive effects as well. Models 10, 11, and 12 replicate the original Models 5, 6, and 7 (Table 2.3) using the multi-party system ambivalence measure from Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller (2012). The effects of leader ambivalence and party-leader ambivalence are very similar to the original models. While leader ambivalence does not show significant effects in any model, party-leader ambivalence shows a strong and significant effect

on the probability of vote switching between elections in all three. In contrast, the effects and significance of party ambivalence are much smaller, being only significant for the 2021 election. These results are not surprising, however, since the ambivalence measure used in this article is hardly comparable to the one used by Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller (2012), as shown in Appendix 7.1.1. It is therefore much more surprising that significant results for one election could be found at all. In sum, the article concludes that Table 2.4 provides robustness for the previous findings.

Table 2.4: Robustness checks

	(8) Vote Switching 2013	(9) Vote Switching 2013	(10) Vote Switching 2013	(11) Vote Switching 2017	(12) Vote Switching 2021
B and L (2005) amb. (continuous)	**0.298***** (0.08)	-	-	-	-
B and L (2005) amb. (dummy)	-	**0.534***** (0.126)	**-**	-	-
SB and P (2012) party amb.	-	-	0.029 (0.037)	0.015 (0.025)	**0.094***** (0.024)
SB and P (2012) leader amb.	-	-	0.04 (0.031)	0.043 (0.023)	-0.015 (0.02)
Party-leader amb.	-	-	**0.733***** (0.151)	**0.296**** (0.099)	**0.188*** (0.078)
Partisan	**-1.315***** (0.204)	**-1.320***** (0.205)	**-1.391***** (0.179)	**-0.887***** (0.122)	**-0.987***** (0.089)
Gender	0.103 (0.138)	0.112 (0.138)	0.101 (0.121)	0.06 (0.074)	0.143 (0.077)
Age	**-0.01*** (0.005)	**-0.01*** (0.005)	**-0.01*** (0.004)	-0.005 (0.003)	**-0.015***** (0.003)
Education	-0.056 (0.059)	-0.057 (0.059)	-0.049 (0.052)	-0.01 (0.033)	0.02 (0.038)
Income	**-0.071**** (0.027)	**-0.073**** (0.027)	-0.044 (0.024)	-0.007 (0.015)	-
Political interest	**0.177*** (0.08)	**0.173*** (0.079)	0.122 (0.069)	**0.140**** (0.047)	-0.033 (0.048)
Political knowledge	-0.608 (0.330)	-0.578 (0.327)	-0.236 (0.291)	-0.241 (0.161)	-
Bad economy	0.466 (0.289)	0.439 (0.289)	0.240 (0.186)	**0.321**** (0.108)	0.119 (0.1)
Election loser	**-0.460*** (0.226)	**-0.491*** (0.226)	**0.173** (0.157)	**0.260***** (0.077)	-0.09 (0.092)
Constant	**1.414**** (0.504)	**1.770***** (0.487)	**1.289**** (0.419)	**0.335** (0.279)	**1.116***** (0.297)
N	1185	1185	1520	3545	3227

Note: *Income* and *political knowledge* measures were not included in the RCS 2021.
Robust standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

2.6 Conclusion

This article has investigated the impact of political ambivalence on vote intention and vote switching for the German federal elections in 2013, 2017, and 2021. Using data from the GLES, three hypotheses were tested for each type of ambivalence. While party ambivalence and party-leader ambivalence displayed significant positive effects in all four models, leader ambivalence did not impact switching in any model. First, party and party-leader ambivalent voters are more likely to show unstable voting intentions over the pre-election campaigning period than non-am- bivalent voters (H1a, H1c). Second, voters who become party-leader ambivalent or more party ambivalent between campaigning waves are also more likely to engage in intention switching between these waves (H2a, H2c). This demonstrates that higher values of ambivalence affect not only voting intentions but individual changes in these values as well. Third, party and party-leader ambivalent voters are more likely to engage in vote switching between elections (H3a, H3c). Highly party ambivalent voters in 2013 were about 30 percentage points more likely to switch parties compared to the least ambivalent voters. In 2017, these voters were 15 percentage points more likely to switch parties, and in 2021, they were 25 percentage points more likely.

The insignificant findings for leader ambivalence in all models are puzzling. While leaders show some importance in the significant effects of party-leader ambivalence, they have less influence on voting behavior in isolation than is the case with party ambivalence. This could be caused by the fact that party and leader ambivalence cover similar concepts, with both showing a high and significant correlation of 0.7. Or it could demonstrate that parties, at least in Germany, are still the dominant force and that leaders are not as influential as is often emphasized by the media. Either way, it might be an interesting avenue for future research. Nevertheless and in sum, this article concludes that political ambivalence exerts strong effects on vote switching and is thus useful to explain electoral volatility, at least in the multi-party system of Germany. This supports the core argument that investigating ambivalence in multi-party systems is highly relevant and should receive more attention in future research.

The analysis offers new and important insights into the impact of political ambivalence, yet the article also acknowledges some limitations. First, compared to other multi-party systems, Germany may not be an ideal case for studying vote switching. Its electoral rule, which allows voters to split their vote if they are attracted to two parties at the same time, makes it difficult to operationalize vote switching. Second, and related to the previous point, this is the first study in which the relation between political ambivalence and vote switching has been explored in a multi-party system, but the investigation of more multi-party contexts is needed

to validly generalize these findings. Future articles should take a more comparative perspective. Moreover, generalizability is limited because the article examined only three federal elections in which a new but rapidly successful party entered the German party system. This strong competitor to the established parties may have had an impact on the observed effects, and the study of more elections is therefore necessary. In addition, both the 2013 and 2017 campaign panels may not build on the most representative samples due to their focus on Internet users.

Third, the insignificant findings for leader ambivalence highlight another interesting path to follow for future studies as it was rarely looked at in this article. When doing so, it might be valuable to focus more intensively on the respective campaigns where the influence of leaders, especially before and after televised debates, could be better investigated. Using election campaign panels may, for example, offer the opportunity to test whether leader ambivalence and party-leader ambivalence perform more strongly on intention switching after the televised debates, but have a diminished effect over the following weeks until the election (Lindemann and Stoetzer 2021). Fourth, the article acknowledges a potential relationship between ambivalent political attitudes and vote switching—and hence the independent and dependent variables—which means that the statistical results may be largely unremarkable.

In the end, the question remains as to what the results mean substantially. The article argues that these findings have significant implications for research on dealignment, demonstrating that increasing ambivalence may speed up the process of dealignment. With regard to politics, we see that increasing ambivalence has key consequences for electoral stability, showing once more the importance of recognizing coalition signals, party-leader evaluations, and trends such as party convergence.

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3. From Ambivalence to Vote Switching: Investigating the Underlying Mechanisms in Three European Multi-Party Systems[18]

Abstract

Since the past two decades, vote switching has been on the rise. An under-researched dimension of this phenomenon is the impact of ambivalent political attitudes. Whilst the effects of ambivalence on vote switching have been investigated in the American political system, its application to multi-party systems has not been explored. This chapter contributes to research in respect of context and mechanism. Regarding the former, it extends the investigation of ambivalence to the multi-party systems Germany, Great Britain and Austria. Regarding the latter, it does not solely focus on the direct link between ambivalence and switching, but as well on the underlying mechanism through which ambivalence is expected to lead to vote switching. For this research purpose, the chapter uses data from the *German Longitudinal Election Study,* the *British Election Study* and the *Austrian National Election Study.* The results provide empirical support for the hypotheses and show that respondents with a higher ambivalence are more likely to engage in vote switching at the election. The results also demonstrate support for the theorized underlying causal mechanism leading from ambivalence to vote switching. Overall, political ambivalence shows strong effects on vote switching in the multi-party systems Germany, Great Britain and Austria. Therefore, this chapter highlights once more the importance of ambivalence on understanding the underlying determinants of electoral volatility in 21st century politics.

3.1 Introduction

In the decades after World War II, advanced democratic systems have been traditionally characterized by low electoral volatility. Arguably this has been changing over the last two decades since volatility and vote switching are increasing (e.g., Dassonneville and Hooghe

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Only small formal edits (such as the formatting of references, font, labeling of tables and figures) were made in comparison to the published book chapter. The Appendix for this chapter is available in Chapter 7.2. References to the Appendix begin with the letter "A".

2017; Dassonneville 2018; Spoon and Klüver 2019). A hereto under-researched dimension of vote switching is the impact of ambivalent political attitudes – mainly named ambivalence. Ambivalence displays an attitude conflict that is characterized by competing positive and negative considerations regarding one or multiple objects of interest (Lavine 2001, 915; Basinger and Lavine 2005). Whilst some literature has explored the influence of ambivalence on vote choice (e.g., Lavine 2001, Haddock 2003; Basinge and Lavine 2005), few scholars have studied its impact on vote switching (exceptions Hillygus and Shields 2008; Thornton 2009; Thornton 2014; Lavine et al. 2012; Smidt 2017). However, the research that has been conducted on ambivalence and its impact on vote switching has been stymied by its focus on the United States.

Survey studies of citizens' attitudes and intentions are plentiful and garner significant column inches in newspapers, reports, and academic papers. Such endeavors have an implicit assumption that citizens have clear and unambiguous sentiments about what they are being asked. But in reality, there is often equivocation – people have mixed feelings. From a voting perspective, how might such ambivalence play into the electoral arena if it all, a question even more important considering that elections are becoming ever more volatile. This work takes a closer look at ambivalent attitudes in three diverse multi-party systems and demonstrates the influence of ambivalence on electoral volatility and respondents' behavior during the pre-election campaigning period.

This chapter contributes to research in two respects: context and mechanism. Regarding the context, it extends the focus on political ambivalence's impact on switching to *multi-party systems,* arguing that this is important and beneficial as presidential elections in the US might be the least likely scenario in which one could expect ambivalence to influence voting behavior (Thornton 2009, 125; Thornton 2014, 196; Çakır 2021). The effects of ambivalence might, however, be stronger and more present in multi-party systems. Potential reasons are the larger number of parties or rather electoral alternatives, the presence of coalition formation, the entrance of new parties, and a higher importance of the interplay of parties and their leaders. Thornton himself (2009, 126) argues that looking at multi-party systems is worthwhile as those systems provide ambivalent voters with a viable alternative to choose from (see also Pappi 1996, 256; Keele and Wolak 2008; Johnson 2014; Çakır 2021). In terms of mechanism, the chapter does not solely focus on the direct link between ambivalence and switching, but in more detail on the underlying mechanisms through which it expects ambivalence to lead to vote switching. The chapter theorizes that ambivalent voters face a higher decision difficulty and vote decision uncertainty leading to more unstable voting intentions over the pre-election

campaigning period. These unstable voting intentions then increase the likelihood of engaging in vote switching. The research question is "Whether and how political ambivalence influences vote switching in multi-party systems?"

For this research agenda, data from the *Austrian National Election Study*, the *British Election Study* and the *German Longitudinal Election Study* is used. The empirical analyses cover the 2017 and 2019 Austrian Legislative elections, the 2015, 2017, and 2019 British General elections, and the 2013 and 2017 German Federal elections. For models with a binary dependent variable, the chapter uses logistic regressions. Linear regressions are used for the models with a dependent count variable and ordered logistic regressions for categorical dependent variables. If applicable, the models apply a panel analysis. Because structural equation modeling with panel data would be very complicated, a series of separate regression models are estimated in this work to test the individual paths and the corresponding hypotheses. The robustness of the chapter's findings is assessed in two ways and described in the research design.

3.2 State of the Art: Political Ambivalence

The early work on ambivalence mainly referred to the term "cross-pressures" (Lazarsfeld et al. 1944; Berelson et al. 1954; Campbell et al. 1954; Campbell et al. 1960). Since Mutz's (2002) study, the term "cross-pressures" was partly replaced by the common sociological-psychology term "ambivalence". Ambivalence is an attitude conflict that is characterized by competing considerations regarding one or multiple objects of interest (Lavine 2001, 915). It describes the state of simultaneously having positive and negative feelings or contradictory ideas about an object or a person (Kaplan 1972; Zaller and Feldman 1992; Thompson et al. 1995). So far, the work on ambivalence has mainly focused on policy issues, candidates or parties (Lavine 2001; McGraw et al. 2003; Basinger and Lavine 2005) where a person can be ambivalent towards *one* or *multiple* objects. A person is ambivalent towards *one* object, for example, if he has similar negative and positive feelings or considerations towards a party (Lavine 2001). Ambivalence towards *multiple* objects can then be found if a voter has negative and positive feelings towards two parties (Lavine 2001). This chapter is about ambivalence towards the two parties or the two leaders the respondent likes most (Johnson 2014).

But does ambivalence substantially affect people's political behaviour? Research shows that it does. First, ambivalence impacts people's political opinions and evaluations. It influences individuals' assessments of candidates (Guge 1999; Lavine 2001; Lavine 2004; Meffert et al. 2004; Schoen 2010; Blumenstiel and Gavras 2015) and how strongly individuals approve or

disapprove of the president (Meffert et al. 2004). Ambivalence also leads to having more balanced or even-handed judgments about political issues (Sniderman 1981; Guge and Meffert 1998). Second, ambivalence affects people's decisions in different facets of their voting behaviour. Ambivalent individuals are more likely to vote based on competence and valence issues (Thornton 2009). Basinger and Lavine (2005) show that ambivalent partisans lacking political knowledge are more likely to engage in economic voting. Whilst ambivalent partisans that show a high political knowledge are more likely to engage in ideological voting. Lavine et al. (2012, 161) and Blumenstiel (2014, 32) demonstrate that while partisanship is the dominant influence on vote choice for univalent partisans, their ambivalent counterparts are more affected by political issues and less by partisanship. Therefore, they show that ambivalence changes partisans' focus when performing decision-making tasks and impacts partisanship. Thus, ambivalence has important implications for political judgments and outcomes (Lavine 2001, 915; Nir 2005, 424) by affecting political choice processes (Alvarez and Brehm 1995).

The objective of this chapter is to investigate how ambivalence influences vote switching between elections. Literature on ambivalence and vote switching is rare as only Thornton (2009; 2014), Hillygus and Shields (2008), Lavine et al. (2012) and Smidt (2017) have dealt with this topic so far. Support for the impact of ambivalence comes from Smidt (2017, 375), who demonstrates that ambivalence leads to a higher probability of switching. Lavine et al. (2012) find that ambivalent partisanship facilitates three types of electoral volatility: defection, ticket-splitting and third-party voting. Hillygus and Shields (2008) find that defection strongly increases among ambivalent partisans if exposed to campaign information on relevant issues. Conversely, Thornton's (2009, 103; 2014, 193) results rarely show significant effects for ambivalence on switching.

3.3 Ambivalence and Vote Switching in the Multi-Party Context

The influence of ambivalence on vote switching is mainly investigated in the US context (Thornton 2009; Thornton 2014; Hillygus and Shields 2008; Lavine et al. 2012; Smidt 2017). However, presidential elections in the US might be the least likely scenario in which one could expect ambivalence to influence voting behavior (Thornton 2009, 125; Thornton 2014, 196; Çakır 2021). Thornton (2009, 126) suggests pushing the frontiers and exploring ambivalent voting in more contexts (see also Pappi 1996, 256; Keele and Wolak 2008; Johnson 2014). Keele and Wolak (2008) show that the electoral context matters in determining ambivalence. Johnson (2014) demonstrates that the effects of partisan ambivalence on turnout differ among two-party and multi-party systems. Based on this, the chapter aims to investigate the impact of

ambivalence on vote switching in the multi-party context where we see a larger number of parties, the presence of coalition formation processes, and the entrance of new parties.

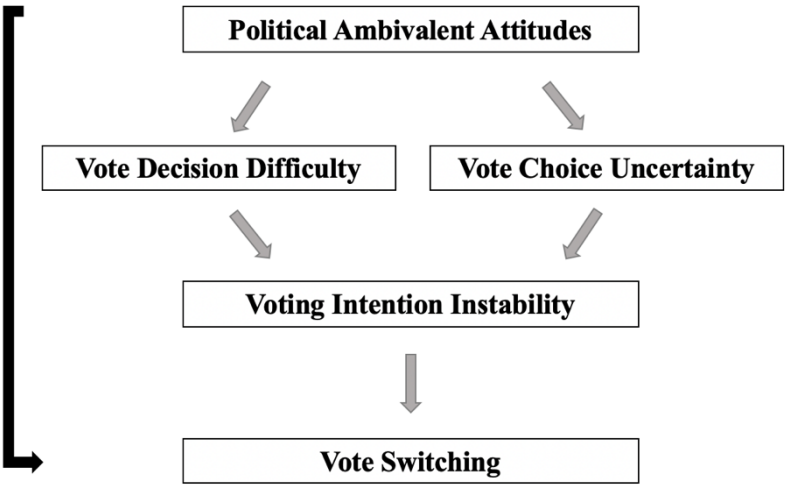
In this section, the chapter discusses the direct link between ambivalent attitudes and vote switching (black arrow in Figure 3.1) as well as the underlying mechanism through which it expects ambivalence to lead to vote switching in multi-party systems in more detail (grey arrows in Figure 3.1**)**. Starting with the direct link following the black arrow, the first part focuses on how ambivalent political attitudes directly influence vote switching. Whilst some literature has explored the influence of ambivalence on vote choice (e.g., Lavine 2001; Haddock 2003; Basinger and Lavine 2005), few scholars have examined its impact on vote switching. Recent forays by Thornton (2009; 2014) have opened the ambivalence-vote switching strand of research. However, Thornton (2009; 2014), Hillygus and Shields (2008), Lavine et al. (2012) and Smidt (2017) are, to my knowledge, the only scholars dealing with this topic so far. Support comes from Smidt (2017), Lavine et al. (2012) and Hillygus and Shields (2008) who demonstrate that an increasing ambivalence leads to a higher probability of switching. Whereas Thornton's (2014, 193; 2009, 85–103) results rarely showed significant effects for ambivalence on switching. The chapter derives hypothesis *H1* to test the impact of ambivalence on vote switching as likewise done in the American two-party context.

H1: The more ambivalent a voter is, the more likely the voter is to engage in vote switching at the election.

In the following, the underlying mechanisms that follow the grey arrows will be discussed (Figure 3.1). The first part focuses on the two alternative paths between either ambivalent attitudes and vote decision difficulty, or ambivalent attitudes and vote choice uncertainty. In multi-party systems, the chapter expects ambivalence to affect the vote decision difficulty and vote choice uncertainty in two ways: (1) the ideological distance between parties likely decreases, and (2) trade-offs between assessment dimensions become increasingly complicated. First, the ideological distance between parties is affected by the number of parties and the party system's polarization. It is likely that the more parties compete, the ideologically closer they become, and the more similar their content becomes (Plischke 2014, 125). However, this claim is not without controversy (Dalton 2008). If ideological distances become smaller in multi-party systems, the overlap in content also means that parties with similar programs can cooperate to pursue common goals. They may even be forced to form coalitions to achieve government majorities (Schoen 2010). In coalition governments, parties cannot implement their pure programs but must make compromises that further reduce the discriminatory power of the two coalition partners' perceptions (Plischke 2014, 125). This makes certain parties appear

more similar (Plischke 2014, 125). Therefore, the comparison of positions of the parties would not reveal too many differences from whose evaluation a decision could be derived. This could then cause ambivalent attitudes and thereby a more serious decision difficulty and vote choice uncertainty.

Figure 3.1: Graphical illustration of the mechanisms leading from ambivalence to vote switching



Second, two kinds of trade-offs between assessment dimensions become increasingly complicated, leading to a higher ambivalence, thereby affecting decision difficulty and uncertainty. The first one relates to the trade-off between a favourite party and a potential coalition partner, and the second one between a party and its leader. Starting with the first one, a voter may become conflicted if he shows a clear party favourite but strongly disagrees with a potential coalition partner. The voter may then consider voting for the second most preferred party. If the voter's dislike is strong enough, it may even lead to an actual vote for this party. The second trade-off type deals with party-leader ambivalence. For instance, the leader of party A might be preferred to the leader of party B, while party B is assigned a higher competence or is more popular than party A. This voter is likely to find himself in an ambivalent decision situation with increased difficulty in deciding and greater uncertainty in making a vote choice. In summary, the chapter expects that voters holding more ambivalent attitudes comes along with a greater decision difficulty and a higher vote choice uncertainty. Based on this, the chapter tests the following observable implications.

H2a: The more ambivalent a voter is, the higher the voter's vote decision difficulty is.

H2b: The more ambivalent a voter is, the higher the voter's uncertainty of vote choice is.

In the second part, the chapter investigates how an increased decision difficulty and vote choice uncertainty affect the stability of voting intentions. The chapter's expectation is that an increased decision difficulty and uncertainty of vote choice should come along with a more unstable voting intention over the campaigning period. In the opposite case, if the decision situation is clear and one alternative preferred, a difficult vote decision or an uncertain vote choice and a change in vote intention are not expected. Previous literature shows that ambivalence leads to a later formation of vote intentions during the campaigning period (Mutz 2002; Lavine 2001; Lavine 2004, 100; Nir 2005; Plischke 2014; Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller 2016) and that it weakens the relation between vote intention and vote choice (Lavine 2004, 106). Thus, it makes voters' vote choice with ambivalent preferences less predictable (Lavine 2001; Blumenstiel 2014). In hypotheses *H3a* and *H3b*, the chapter examines the effects of vote decision difficulty and vote choice uncertainty on the stability of voting intentions throughout the pre-election campaigning period.

H3a: The more difficult a voter's vote decision is, the more unstable the voter's voting intentions over the pre-election campaigning period are.

H3b: The more uncertain a voter is about his vote choice, the more unstable the voter's voting intentions over the pre-election campaigning period are.

The last part focuses on the impact of unstable voting intentions on vote switching at elections. More unstable voting intentions over the campaigning period likely indicate that the individual finds himself in an ambivalent decision situation, potentially resulting in vote switching on the election day. Therefore, the chapter expects that voters, who showed multiple unstable voting intentions before an election, are more likely to switch parties at the election. Furthermore, in multi-party systems, the psychological threshold of switching is lower. Voters must do smaller steps as switching to another party that is relatively (ideologically) close to the other similarly liked party might include only making 'half steps' (Schoen 2004, 11). Whereas parties in two-party systems are more polarized and distinct, implying that voters must make 'larger steps' (Schoen 2004, 11). In this last hypothesis, the chapter tests whether unstable voting intentions affect the probability of vote switching at the election (*H4*).

H4: Voters who switch in their voting intentions over the pre-election campaigning period more often, are more likely to engage in vote switching at the election.

3.4 Research Design

3.4.1 Data and Case Selection

This research agenda needs panel data from the pre-election campaigning period to investigate respondents' decision-making processes. The intention is to look at multiple countries to make more substantial claims about the external validity. The only panel studies that include nearly all variables of interest are the *Austrian National Election Study* (*AUTNES)*, the *British Election Study* (*BES)* and the *German Longitudinal Election Study* (*GLES)*. Austria (AUT), Great Britain (GBR) and Germany (DEU) do not only fit in terms of data but also because all three experience varying degrees of electoral volatility (Dassonneville and Hooghe 2017, 930). The data used cover the 2017 and 2019 Austrian Legislative elections, the 2015, 2017, and 2019 British General elections, and the 2013 and 2017 German Federal elections.

The Austrian Legislative elections were held on 15 October 2017 and on 29 September 2019 to elect 183 members of the National Council (*Nationalrat*). Similar to Germany, Austria's electoral system builds on the proportional representation. The parliamentary threshold is slightly lower with 4% compared to Germany with 5%. In Austria, voters cast one vote for one party list. Within the chosen party list, voters can, if they like, express their preference for one individual candidate. A candidate receiving sufficiently many personal votes can reach a better rank on the district party list and hence increase the likelihood of gaining a parliamentary seat.

The British General elections were held on 7 May 2015, 8 June 2017 and 12 December 2019 to elect 650 members of the parliament. Different to Germany and Austria, the electoral system in the United Kingdom builds on the first-past-the-post electoral system meaning that each constituency's candidate that receives most of the votes wins a seat in the parliament. This candidate does not necessarily need more than 50% of the votes. Candidates who lost their constituency are not able to enter parliament in contrast to Germany. Due to this system, it is most likely that solely candidates from the larger parties are successful in winning a seat. With the two largest parties winning more than 80% of the popular vote together in 2017, the media described the election outcome as a return to two-party politics. In 2019, this trend was, however, not affirmed.

The German Federal elections were held on 22 September 2013 and 24 September 2017. Germany's electoral system includes components of both previous countries' electoral systems. Similar to the UK, the first vote in Germany elects the constituency candidate. The candidate with most of the votes gains a seat in the parliament. Like Austria, the German system is based

on proportional representation. With the second vote, voters can choose one of the party lists. Based on the German state's vote shares, the candidates of those party lists can gain a seat. This means that those party lists enable candidates to enter the parliament even if they were not elected in their constituency.

Comparing the electoral systems of the three countries reveals that their systems' differences have important implications for the countries' party systems and hence the expected impact of ambivalence on vote switching. Whilst proportional representational systems build a feasible foundation for the entrance of new parties and the growth of established ones, first-past-the-post systems, in contrast, encourage the development of two strong parties. It is hence discussible whether the UK is a real multi-party system. These conditions affect not only the likelihood of engaging in vote switching but the development of ambivalent attitudes as well. We should expect that voters in the UK compared to those in Austria and Germany are less likely to engage in vote switching as most decide between the two largest parties due to strategic voting. Regarding strategic voting, it can be expected that voters cast a vote for one of the two largest parties in their constituencies not to waste their vote for a candidate who is highly unlikely to receive enough votes. Furthermore, if there are less parties and weaker small parties in systems like the UK, voters can also be expected to be less likely to become ambivalent as they face less options to become ambivalent.

From the *AUTNES*, the chapter uses the Online Panel Study 2017-2019 (Aichholzer et al. 2020). The 13 waves of the panel cover the Austrian Legislative elections held on 15 October 2017 and 29 September 2019. From the *BES*, the chapter uses the British Election Study Combined Wave 1-20 Internet Panel open-ended response data (Fieldhouse et al. 2020). The British twenty-wave panel covers the United Kingdom General elections held on 7 May 2015, 8 June 2017 and 12 December 2019. From the *GLES*, the chapter uses the Short-term Campaign Panel 2013 (Rattinger et al. 2016) and 2017 (Roßteutscher et al. 2019). The 2013 German seven-wave panel covers the German Federal election held on 22 September 2013. The 2017 German nine-wave panel covers the German Federal election held on 24 September 2017.

The target population were all citizens who were eligible to vote in those national elections. As those panels are online studies, it was not possible to draw a random sample. One could argue that the panel mostly represents young and internet-oriented people as those are more present in online panels. The samples' characteristics, however, show that the sampling quotas worked well and that characteristics like age are equally distributed. One still needs to acknowledge that generalizability is limited. The datasets used in the analyses include only observations that show no missing data on at least one dependent variable. Based on this

condition, the *AUTNES* includes approximately 1,300 respondents. The *BES* maintains about 10,000 respondents, and the *GLES* about 3,300 respondents in the Short-term Campaign Panel 2013 and 10,200 respondents in the Short-term Campaign Panel 2017.

3.4.2 Operationalization of the Variables

The central dependent variable *vote switching* is a dummy variable indicating whether a respondent voted for the same party in two consecutive elections, coded as 0, or whether the respondent voted for two different parties, coded as 1. For Germany, this variable is based on the second vote. *Vote Intention Switcher* is another dummy variable coded as 1, if the respondents switched in his voting intention between two parties between two panel waves, and coded as 0, if the respondents did not switch. *Number intention switches* is a count variable that contains a respondents' number of switches in voting intention during the pre-election campaigning period. For the *BES*, *vote choice uncertainty* is a categorical variable ranging from 1, completely certain, to 7, not at all certain. In the *AUTNES*, *vote choice uncertainty* is a dummy variable coded 1 if a respondent stated that he is uncertain about his vote decision and coded as 0 if he is certain. *Vote decision difficulty* is a categorical variable ranging from 5 describing a very difficult voting decision to 1 being a voting decision that is not difficult at all.

Ambivalence is the only variable solely serving as an independent variable. As stated earlier, this chapter captures ambivalence between *multiple* actors. To measure *ambivalence*, the chapter uses feeling thermometer ratings of a respondent's two highest-rated *parties* or *leaders* (Johnson 2014)[19]. On the feeling thermometer, respondents evaluate parties and leaders on an 11-point scale from strongly dislike to strongly like. Based on the rating of the two most liked parties or leaders, an index[20] is calculated demonstrating the respondents' degree of ambivalence. Consequently, the chapter does not follow the well-established ambivalence measurement of previous studies. Those earlier studies used respondents' answers of like and dislike open-ended questions about parties or leaders (Lavine 2001; Basinger and Lavine 2005; Thornton 2009; Thornton 2014; Blumenstiel and Plischke 2014; Smidt 2017). In those questions, respondents can indicate up to five positive and negative considerations about the

[19] Whilst we have party like-dislike ratings for Germany and Great Britain, we solely have leader like-dislike ratings for Austria.

[20] Ambivalence = $(Party_A + Party_B) / 2 - (|Party_A - Party_B|)$. For the calculation of ambivalence, the chapter solely considers respondents whose first highest-rated party or leader is rated equal or higher than five on the thermometer. This ensures a general positive attitude to at least one of the two because the author assumes that someone assessing all parties or leaders extremely positively is more likely to switch parties at an election whilst someone assessing all parties or leaders extremely negatively is in turn more likely to abstain in an election

same object. Based on the established Griffin formula (Thompson et al. 1995), their answers are then used to calculate an index[21] accordingly to which respondents are classified as being ambivalent or not.

The use of the feeling thermometer is motivated by two key aspects. First, the feeling thermometer allows conclusions about a respondent's overall evaluation of a party or leader. The valence of positive and negative considerations should automatically be incorporated in the thermometer ratings. In contrast, the pure number of positive and negative reactions used in previous work reveals nothing about the salience of those answers and may lead to the wrong estimation of ambivalence (Lavine 2001, 917–918; Steenbergen 2020, 160). Second, feeling thermometer ratings are included in a lot of surveys across the globe. In contrast, questions asking for positive and negative evaluations are rarely included in any election study besides the *American National Election Study,* hindering scholars from investigating the impact of ambivalence in other electoral contexts.

Based on both aspects, the chapter argues that we should use the ratings of the feeling thermometer. Measuring ambivalence with ratings of the feeling thermometer is not new and has been done in the multi-party context by other scholars (Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller 2012; Blumenstiel 2014; Johnson 2014; Plischke 2014). Whilst the Griffin formula (Thompson et al. 1995) is mainly calculated using the number of positive and negative reactions, the formula provides an appropriate comparative measure of ambivalence for the feeling thermometer as well (Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller 2012, 315; Johnson 2014, 509).

Instead of taking all available parties (Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller 2012) or the two major parties (Johnson 2014), the chapter takes respondents' ratings of their *two highest*-evaluated parties or leaders (Blumenstiel 2014, 30). The chapter focuses on the *two highest*-rated parties or leaders because the chapter relies on the concept of decision ambivalence and investigate the effects of ambivalence on vote choice – more detailed vote switching. Although the chapter looks at ambivalence in the multi-party context, it is not reasonable to include all parties into the ambivalence index calculations. The chapter does not want to estimate respondents' ambivalence towards the party system or the range of available parties. Instead, the goal is to include respondents' ambivalence between the best-rated parties relevant for their vote decision and exclude irrelevant alternatives that may distort the actual effect on vote switching. The chapter considers the two highest and not the three highest-rated parties or

[21] Ambivalence = $((P_R + N_D)/2 + (P_D + N_R)/2)/2 - |(P_R + N_D)/2 - (P_D + N_R)/2|$

leaders as done by Plischke (2014) because the vote choice is most likely primarily determined by one of the two highest-rated alternatives (see Table A3.1 in Appendix 7.2.1).

Finally, the chapter includes several control variables such as the socio-demographic measures *age, gender, education* and *income* (Johnson 2014). For the *BES* and the *GLES*, *age* is a continuous variable. For the *AUTNES*, *age* is a categorical variable ranging from 1, younger than 20, to 7, older than 69. *Gender* is a dummy coded as 1, if the respondent is a female, and coded as 0 for males. *Education* is an ordinal variable coded from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest) education in the *GLES*. In the *BES*, *education* ranges from 1 (lowest) to 6 (highest) and from 1 (lowest) to 15 (highest) in the *AUTNES*. *Income* is coded from 1 (lowest) to 13 (highest) in the *GLES*, from 1 (lowest) to 14 (highest) in the *BES*, and from 1 (lowest) to 20 (highest) in the *AUTNES*. Furthermore, the chapter adds the dummy variable *partisan* as voters with a party identification should be less likely to switch votes or voting intentions, and less likely to show a difficult voting intention or increased decision difficulty even if they hold ambivalent attitudes (Thornton 2014). *Partisan* is coded as 1, if a respondent holds a party identification and coded as 0, if the respondent does not. *Bad economy* controls for voters who voted for the incumbent government in the last election but are dissatisfied with the country's current economic situation. It is an important control variable as we should expect that those voters are less likely to vote for the incumbent government in the current election and hence are more likely to engage in vote switching (Fiorina 1981). *Bad economy* is a dummy coded as 1, if a respondent voted for the incumbent government in the last election and evaluates the economy as neither "good nor bad", "bad", or "very bad". It is coded as 0, if a respondent did not vote for the incumbent government in the last election or if he voted for it but evaluates the economy as good or very good. Political sophistication is measured by respondents' *political interest* and *political knowledge* (Johnson 2014; Thornton 2014). These two variables capture how likely it is that voters receive political information, how interested they are in learning about politics and how able they are to assimilate and organize this information (Luskin 1990). In the *GLES*, *political interest* is coded from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest) political interest. In the *BES* and *AUTNES*, it is coded from 1 (lowest) to 4 (highest). *Political knowledge* is an index based on the average of correctly answered questions and ranges from 1, the respondent answered all political knowledge questions correctly to 0, the respondents answered all incorrectly. Depending on the respective election study, *political knowledge* is constructed on six to nine questions. Finally, the chapter adds a dummy *election loser* that captures whether the respondent belongs to the losing side at the previous election, meaning that the party that he voted for did not become a part of the government. This might influence whether he thinks

about switching to another party because he wants to be on the winning side, and it might also make him more ambivalent.

Table A3.2, Table A3.3 and Table A3.4 in the Appendix 7.2.2 provide descriptive statistics by country for all variables apart from *ambivalence*. The tables include the number of cases, frequencies for the dependent variables, mean, standard deviation, and minimum and maximum. Looking at them shows that *vote switching* is highest in the two German elections and lowest in the three British elections. This finding supports the previous expectation that the first-past-the-post electoral system of the UK promotes voting for one of the two largest parties and hence decreases the likelihood of engaging in vote switching as the number of viable alternatives is reduced. For variables *Vote Choice Uncertainty* and *Vote Decision Difficulty*, we find similar tendencies. In the German sample, 20% of the voters state that the vote decision is rather difficult whilst 60% state that the decision is rather easy. Related to the two Austrian elections, 35% of the voters are uncertain about their vote choice whilst 65% state to be certain. In Great Britain, about 95% of the voters state to be certain about their vote choice and less than 3% state that they are uncertain. Whilst we need to keep in mind that those variables among other things are differently coded, it demonstrates again that voters in the UK seem to be less affected by uncertainties compared to Austrian and German voters. In contrast, if we look at *Vote Intention Switcher* and *Number Intention Switches*, we cannot observe the same trend. Comparing all three countries, German voters show the lowest number of intention switches. British and Austrian frequencies are relative similar.

An overview of changes in respondents' aggregated ambivalence scores over the campaigning period can be found in Table A3.5 in the Appendix 7.2.2. The table demonstrates that ambivalence scores are on average higher in the multi-party systems of Austria and Germany compared to the United Kingdom. This adds to the previous discussion about the British multi-party system. Furthermore, Table A3.5 shows that the mean and standard deviation of the aggregated ambivalence scores in each country are relative stable over the election campaigning waves. We can hence not observe any specific trend during the election campaigning period.

3.4.3 Modelling

For models with a binary dependent variable, the chapter uses logistic regressions. Linear regressions are used for the models with a dependent count variable and ordered logistic regressions for categorical dependent variables. All models include robust standard errors. Apart from the German *vote switching* models (*M3, M12, M15, M18*), all other models apply a

panel analysis. For those five German models, it is not possible to use panel analyses as the two campaigning panels of the *GLES* consist of two different samples and hence are independent. The investigation of changes in respondents' behavior across elections is thus not possible. For the long-term panels of the *BES* and the *AUTNES*, it is possible to investigate changes in respondents' voting behavior across elections and hence to implement panel analyses in the *vote switching* models (*M1, M2, M10, M11, M13, M14, M16, M17*). Testing the theoretical model shown in Figure 3.1 is difficult because of the panel data used. Structural equation modeling with panel data would be very complicated. Therefore, a series of separate regression models are estimated in this chapter to test the individual paths and the corresponding hypotheses. Because data on *vote decision difficulty* are available only for the *GLES*, while data on *vote choice uncertainly* are available only for the *BES* and *AUTNES*, the underlying mechanisms that follow the left-hand path (Figure 3.1) are assessed using data from *GLES* and the right-hand path using data from *AUTNES* and *BES*.

3.4.4 Robustness Checks

The book chapter assesses the robustness of its findings in two ways. First, it replicates the vote switching models with the alternative multi-party ambivalence measurement of Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller (2012)[22] to demonstrate additional reliability of the findings. However, smaller effects can be expected as we are not looking at decisional ambivalence between the two highest-evaluated parties or leaders but at ambivalence towards the general party system as the measurement includes all parties. Second, the chapter looks at a vote switching model per country including all available, and as theorized, underlying factors leading from ambivalence to vote switching. This offers the possibility to see whether those factors behave as expected in a larger model as well. Revisiting Figure 3.1, the chapter expects the effects of farther away factors to be weaker and those of closer factors to be stronger. Therefore, the impact of ambivalence should be smaller whilst the impact of unstable voting intentions should remain or be especially stronger in direct comparison.

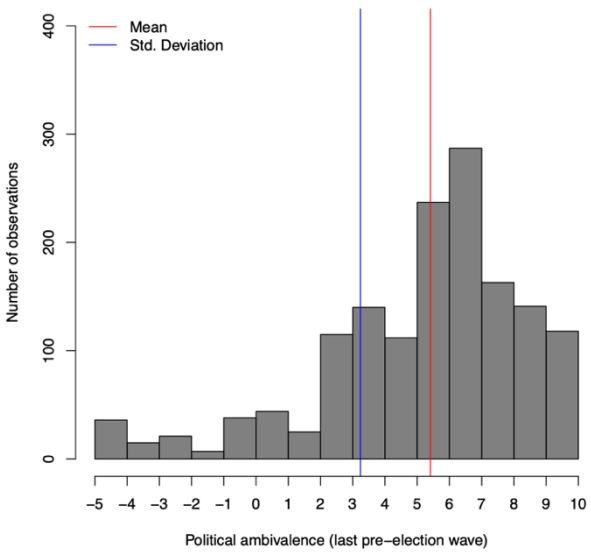
3.5 Results

Figure 3.2 displays the distributions of party and leader ambivalence of the last pre-election waves across Austria, Great Britain and Germany. It shows that Austrian and German voters hold predominantly ambivalent attitudes, falling into the last third of the ambivalence range with a mean above five. British voters also hold ambivalent attitudes although with a mean

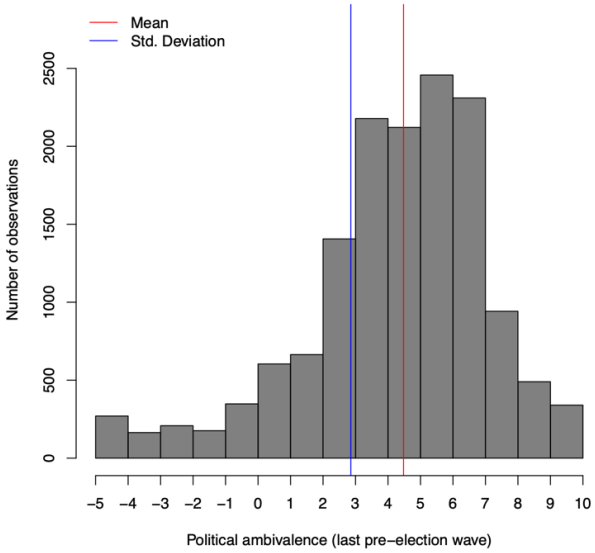
[22] Ambivalence = Mean ($Party_A$, …, $Party_N$) – 2*SD ($Party_A$, …, $Party_N$)

below five less than Austrian and German voters. This finding is also supported in Table A3.5 in the Appendix 7.7.2 that demonstrates that British voters are on average less ambivalent compared to German and Austrian ones. Overall, Figure 3.2 supports the point that investigating the impact of ambivalence is highly relevant and beneficial by revealing the large number of ambivalent Austrian, British and German voters.

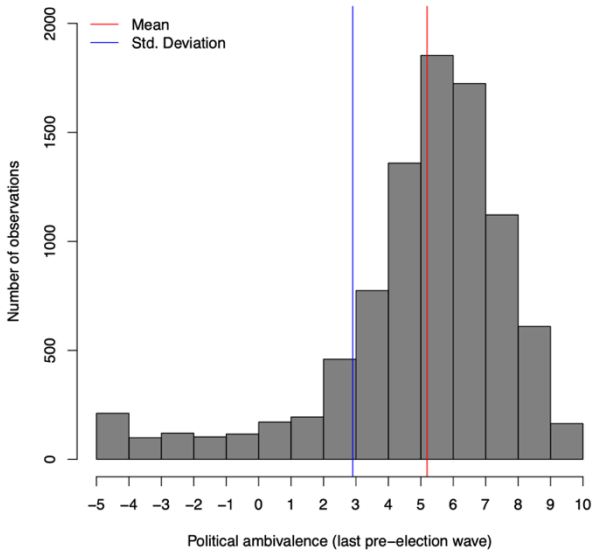
Figure 3.2: Frequency of ambivalence values for Austria, Great Britain and Germany



(a) Austria



(b) Great Britain



(c) Germany

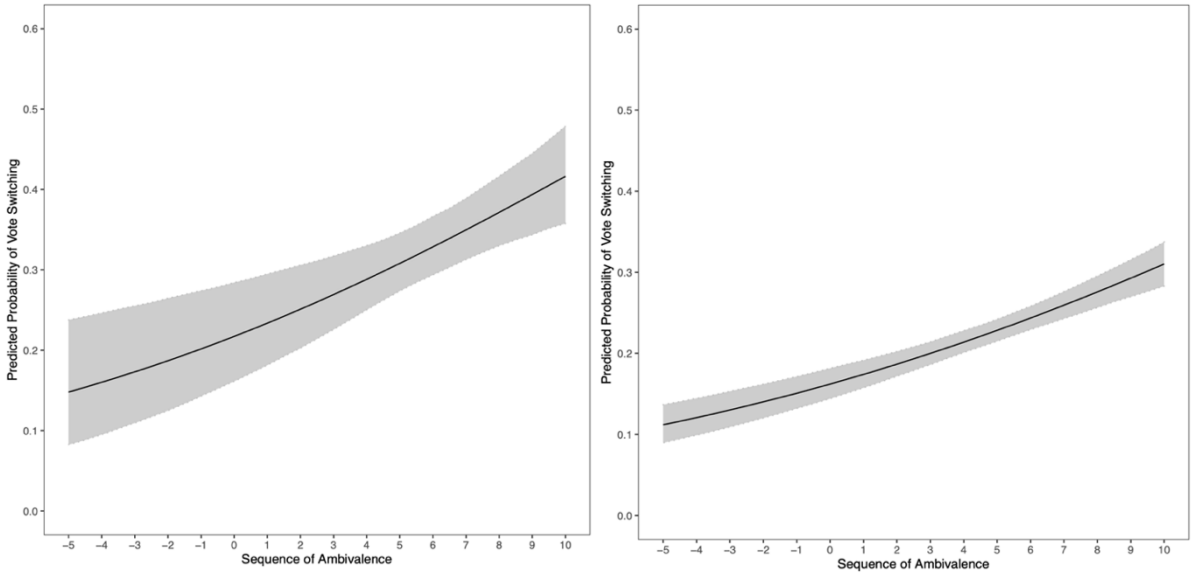
Table 3.1 investigates the direct link between ambivalence and vote switching. Models 1, 2 and 3 show positive significant effects of *ambivalence,* indicating that respondents with a higher political ambivalence are more likely to engage in vote switching at the election. Because coefficients of logistic models are challenging to interpret, the simulation approach is convenient to get meaningful quantities of interest. Figure 3.3 includes one such quantity of interest for each country based on models 1, 2 and 3. All three show the predicted probabilities of vote switching given different levels of either party or leader ambivalence. The graphs build on scenarios based on the observed value approach. Whilst we see very similar effects of ambivalence on vote switching in all three countries, the impact of ambivalence is slightly stronger in Germany than in Austria and Great Britain. In Germany, voters with the highest value on *party* ambivalence compared to voters with the lowest value are nearly about 30 percent more likely to switch parties. In Austria, voters with the highest value on *leader* ambivalence compared to voters with the lowest value are about 25 percent more likely to switch parties. In Great Britain, the difference is about 20 percent. As expected, the effects are thus the lowest in Great Britain. One potential explanation again relates to the electoral systems of the UK. Even if a voter is highly ambivalent between two parties in the UK, as long as the two most liked parties do not represent the two largest parties of the constituency the voter is most likely not affected by ambivalence in his vote choice because the voter will most likely vote for the party that has the highest chance of winning the constituency majority. Overall, the three models support hypothesis *H1* and demonstrate that ambivalence impacts vote switching in multi-party systems. Although a more comparative investigation with more countries is needed to make even stronger claims, this is a good start highlighting the potential of this research area.

Table 3.1: Regression table testing *H1*

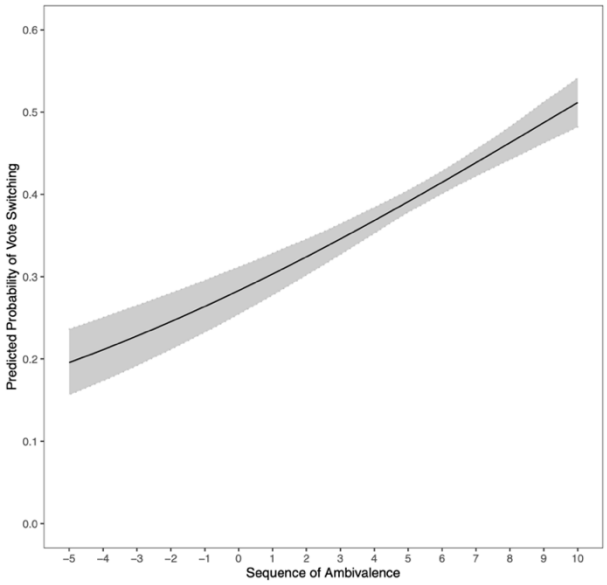
	(1) Vote Switching *AUT*	(2) Vote Switching *GBR*	(3) Vote Switching *DEU*
	H1	*H1*	*H1*
Ambivalence	**0.108*****	**0.091*****	**0.102*****
	(0.029)	(0.011)	(0.013)
Partisan	**-0.805*****	**-0.893*****	**-1.149*****
	(0.169)	(0.086)	(0.106)
Gender	0.067	**-0.245*****	0.022
	(0.181)	(0.069)	(0.065)
Age	-0.099	**0.007****	**-0.008****
	(0.072)	(0.003)	(0.002)
Education	**0.088****	**-0.091*****	-0.014
	(0.033)	(0.025)	(0.029)
Income	-0.006	**0.03****	-0.021
	(0.019)	(0.012)	(0.013)
Political Interest	0.057	-0.012	**0.116****
	(0.132)	(0.046)	(0.039)
Political Knowledge	-0.072	-0.141	**-0.478*****
	(0.376)	(0.084)	(0.139)
Bad Economy	**-0.825*****	**0.291***	**0.403*****
	(0.190)	(0.146)	(0.100)
Election Loser	**0.666*****	**1.638*****	**0.223****
	(0.169)	(0.142)	(0.069)
Constant	**-1.521***	**-1.956*****	0.420
	(0.712)	(0.301)	(0.241)
$\ln(\sigma^2\mu)$	0.191	**0.568*****	–
	(0.409)	(0.138)	
N	1151	10366	4742

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Figure 3.3: Predicted probabilities of vote switching for party and leader ambivalence



(a) Austria (b) Great Britain



(c) Germany

Table 3.2 deals with the first part of the expected underlying mechanism leading from ambivalence to vote switching. Model 4 tests the impact of political *ambivalence* on the *vote decision difficulty* for Germany. The results show that *ambivalence* has a positive and highly significant effect. This indicates that with increasing levels of ambivalence, German voters are more likely to perceive the voting decision as more difficult. The finding thus supports the expected first underlying mechanism and hypothesis *H2a* stating that the more ambivalent a voter is, the higher the voter's decision difficulty is. Models 5 and 6 focus on the impact of *ambivalence* on the *uncertainty of vote choice* in Austria and Great Britain. In both models, *ambivalence* shows strong significant positive effects. Austrian and British voters are hence more likely to state an uncertain vote decision with increasing levels of ambivalence. Those results support hypothesis *H2b*.

Table 3.3 focuses on the second part of the underlying mechanism and investigates how an increased decision difficulty or vote choice uncertainty affect the stability of voting intentions. Model 7 looks at the impact of *vote decision difficulty* on *vote intention switching* in Germany. The results present strong significant effects of *vote decision difficulty* on *vote intention switching*. German voters, whose vote decision is more difficult, are more likely to engage in vote intention switching during the pre-election campaigning period. Models 8 and 9 examine the effects of *vote decision uncertainty* on *vote intention switching* in Austria and Great Britain. The results demonstrate strong significant effects of *vote choice uncertainty* on *vote intention switching*. If Austrian and British voters are more uncertain about their vote choice, they are more likely to switch in their vote intention during the pre-election campaigning period.

All together the three models confirm hypotheses *H3a* and *H3b,* and the second part of the underlying mechanism disentangling the effects of ambivalence on vote switching.

Table 3.2: Regression table testing *H2a* and *H2b*

	(4) Vote Decision Difficulty *DEU*	(5) Vote Choice Uncertainty *AUT*	(6) Vote Choice Uncertainty *GBR*
	H2a	*H2b*	*H2b*
Ambivalence	**0.116*****	**0.229*****	**0.154*****
	(0.008)	(0.028)	(0.007)
Partisan	**-0.863*****	**-1.147*****	**-0.748*****
	(0.056)	(0.173)	(0.056)
Gender	**0.094*****	-0.028	**0.136****
	(0.018)	(0.178)	(0.05)
Age	0.007	**-0.210****	**-0.022*****
	(0.008)	(0.066)	(0.002)
Education	**0.298*****	**0.087****	**0.170*****
	(0.042)	(0.034)	(0.019)
Income	**-0.012*****	0.031	0.008
	(0.001)	(0.017)	(0.005)
Political Interest	**-0.123*****	-0.066	**-0.538*****
	(0.025)	(0.113)	(0.035)
Political Knowledge	**0.241****	0.308	**0.156****
	(0.087)	(0.346)	(0.06)
Election 2013	**-0.271*****	–	–
	(0.048)		
Election 2015	–	–	**0.938*****
			(0.064)
Election 2017	–	**0.469****	**0.374*****
		(0.174)	(0.057)
$\sigma^2\mu$	**5.00e-31*****	**3.275*****	**3.176*****
	(7.26e-32)	(0.597)	(0.109)
N	8699	2220	34230

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 3.3: Regression table testing *H3a* and *H3b*

	(7) Vote Intention Switching *DEU*	(8) Vote Intention Switching *AUT*	(9) Vote Intention Switching *GBR*
	H3a	*H3b*	*H3b*
Vote Decision Difficulty	**0.907*****	–	–
	(0.048)		
Vote Choice Uncertainty	–	**1.195*****	**0.719*****
		(0.103)	(0.015)
Partisan	-0.176	-0.042	**-0.175*****
	(0.173)	(0.103)	(0.043)
Gender	0.130	-0.077	-0.005
	(0.125)	(0.106)	(0.034)
Age	-0.003	0.003	**0.004****
	(0.005)	(0.039)	(0.001)
Education	**-0.239*****	0.017	**-0.045*****
	(0.056)	(0.02)	(0.013)
Income	-0.026	**-0.033*****	-0.001
	(0.024)	(0.01)	(0.004)
Political Interest	-0.081	-0.130	-0.009
	(0.071)	(0.072)	(0.025)
Political Knowledge	**-1.663*****	-0.290	-0.083
	(0.261)	(0.212)	(0.044)
Election 2013	**0.439****	–	–
	(0.144)		
Election 2015	–	–	**-0.332*****
			(0.058)
Election 2017	–	**-0.339*****	**0.113***
		(0.098)	(0.057)
Constant	**-2.800*****	–	–
	(0.417)		
$\ln(\sigma^2\mu)$	1.911	–	–
$\sigma^2\mu$	–	**0.411***	**0.673*****
		(0.160)	(0.041)
N	7279	3365	50847

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 3.4 deals with the impact of *unstable voting intentions* on the likelihood of engaging in *vote switching* and hence, the last part of the underlying mechanism. Models 10, 11 and 12 show highly significant positive effects of the *number of vote intention switches* on *vote switching*. The results thus demonstrate that if voters switched more often in their voting intention during the pre-election period, they are also significantly more likely to engage in vote switching during the election. This supports the fourth hypothesis *H4* and the last part of the underlying mechanism. In summary, the chapter demonstrated that ambivalent voters face a

higher decision difficulty and a higher vote decision uncertainty leading to more unstable voting intentions. Those unstable voting intentions increase the likelihood of engaging in vote switching.

Table 3.4: Regression table testing *H4*

	(10) Vote Switching *AUT*	(11) Vote Switching *GBR*	(12) Vote Switching *DEU*
	H4	*H4*	*H4*
Number Intention Switches	**0.765*****	**0.816*****	**0.629*****
	(0.142)	(0.052)	(0.035)
Partisan	**-0.832*****	**-0.696*****	**-0.889*****
	(0.199)	(0.119)	(0.156)
Gender	0.035	**-0.246****	-0.071
	(0.217)	(0.086)	(0.082)
Age	-0.113	-0.004	**-0.006***
	(0.083)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Education	0.051	**-0.076***	-0.042
	(0.04)	(0.032)	(0.035)
Income	0.019	0.02	-0.016
	(0.022)	(0.014)	(0.017)
Political Interest	0.258	0.031	**0.157****
	(0.145)	(0.057)	(0.048)
Political Knowledge	0.214	-0.066	-0.199
	(0.429)	(0.107)	(0.174)
Bad Economy	**-0.792*****	0.065	**0.518*****
	(0.226)	(0.157)	(0.117)
Election Loser	**0.599****	**0.654*****	**0.245****
	(0.195)	(0.137)	(0.085)
Constant	**-2.421****	**-1.172*****	-0.325
	(0.848)	(0.349)	(0.306)
$\ln(\sigma^2\mu)$	0.245	0.407	–
	(0.519)	(0.231)	
N	958	6569	3678

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 3.5 presents the results of the first part of the robustness checks. Models 13, 14 and 15 replicate the original models 1, 2 and 3 (Table 3.1) using the multi-party system ambivalence measure of Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller (2012). For the British and the German models, the results show similar significant effects as the original models. For Austria, leader ambivalence is less significant than in model 1. All three models show that with an increasing ambivalence, voters are more likely to engage in vote switching. In sum, Table 3.5 demonstrates robustness for the previous findings regarding measurement.

Table 3.5: Robustness checks I

	(13) Vote Switching *AUT*	(14) Vote Switching *GBR*	(15) Vote Switching *DEU*
Ambivalence	**0.07***	**0.170*****	**0.07*****
(Schmitt-Beck & Partheymüller 2012)	(0.032)	(0.013)	(0.013)
Partisan	**-0.933*****	**-0.713*****	**-0.983*****
	(0.163)	(0.078)	(0.088)
Gender	0.180	**-0.208****	0.069
	(0.178)	(0.065)	(0.058)
Age	**-0.135***	**0.009*****	**-0.007*****
	(0.068)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Education	**0.081***	**-0.078*****	-0.014
	(0.032)	(0.023)	(0.026)
Income	0.002	**0.03****	**-0.024***
	(0.018)	(0.011)	(0.012)
Political Interest	0.179	0.079	**0.149*****
	(0.124)	(0.043)	(0.034)
Political Knowledge	0.151	-0.085	**-0.318***
	(0.358)	(0.077)	(0.124)
Bad Economy	**-0.855*****	**0.319***	**0.307*****
	(0.185)	(0.141)	(0.083)
Election Loser	**0.547*****	**1.719*****	**0.241*****
	(0.161)	(0.136)	(0.062)
Constant	-1.214	**-1.839*****	**0.752*****
	(0.670)	(0.277)	(0.204)
$\ln(\sigma^2\mu)$	**0.556***	**0.542*****	–
	(0.283)	(0.125)	
N	1422	11565	5850

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 3.6 presents the results of the second part of the robustness checks. Models 16, 17 and 18 build again on models 1, 2 and 3 (Table 3.1) but include all available, and as theorized, underlying factors leading from ambivalence to vote switching. Most of the factors behave as expected. In Great Britain and Germany, the effects on *vote switching* of farther away factors like *ambivalence* are weaker, whilst the effects of closer factors like *number intention switches* are stronger in comparison to each other. For Austria, the impact of *vote choice uncertainty* is slightly stronger than the one of *number intention switches*, which is probably related to the coding of both variables. In sum, the chapter concludes that Table 3.6 demonstrates additional robustness for the theorized underlying mechanism.

Table 3.6: Robustness checks II

	(16) Vote Switching *AUT*	(17) Vote Switching *GBR*	(18) Vote Switching *DEU*
Number Intention Switches	**0.864*****	**0.657*****	**0.529*****
	(0.185)	(0.062)	(0.039)
Vote Choice Uncertainty	**0.990*****	**0.403*****	–
	(0.262)	(0.066)	
Vote Decision Difficulty	–	–	**0.296*****
			(0.04)
Ambivalence	**0.076***	**0.068*****	**0.047****
	(0.037)	(0.018)	(0.017)
Partisan	**-0.451***	**-0.694*****	**-0.869*****
	(0.212)	(0.147)	(0.186)
Gender	0.088	**-0.241***	-0.127
	(0.220)	(0.106)	(0.092)
Age	0.016	0.005	-0.005
	(0.089)	(0.004)	(0.003)
Education	0.04	**-0.09***	-0.034
	(0.04)	(0.041)	(0.039)
Income	0.007	**0.036***	-0.034
	(0.023)	(0.018)	(0.018)
Political Interest	0.048	0.108	**0.199*****
	(0.164)	(0.076)	(0.054)
Political Knowledge	0.291	-0.146	**-0.422***
	(0.463)	(0.137)	(0.199)
Bad Economy	-0.416	0.006	**0.669*****
	(0.228)	(0.2)	(0.145)
Election Loser	**0.751*****	**0.907*****	**0.285****
	(0.215)	(0.187)	(0.095)
Constant	**-2.936****	**-2.924*****	**-1.140****
	(0.962)	(0.487)	(0.359)
$\ln(\sigma^2\mu)$	-9.750	0.177	–
	(9046.4)	(0.383)	
N	632	4158	3043

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has investigated the impact of political ambivalence on vote switching and its underlying mechanisms. Using data from the *German Longitudinal Election Study*, the *British Election Study*, and the *Austrian National Election Study*, the chapter focused on the Austrian Legislative elections in 2017 and 2019, the United Kingdom General elections in 2015, 2017 and 2019, and the German Federal elections in 2013 and 2017. Based on those elections, the chapter showed that respondents with higher ambivalence values are more likely to engage in vote switching at the election. German voters with the highest value on *party* ambivalence

compared to voters with the lowest value are nearly about 30 percent more likely to switch parties. Austrian voters with the highest value on *leader* ambivalence compared to voters with the lowest value are about 25 percent more likely to switch parties and British voters are about 20 percent more likely to engage in vote switching. Looking at the underlying mechanisms, this work also tested and demonstrated that party and leader ambivalent voters face a more serious decision difficulty and a higher vote choice uncertainty. Both lead to more unstable voting intentions during the pre-election campaigning period. These unstable voting intentions then increase the likelihood of engaging in vote switching. Overall, the hypotheses tested in this chapter gained strong empirical support. Along with this, the chapter contributed to the current research on ambivalence and vote switching in respect of context. It demonstrated that party and leader ambivalence exert a strong impact on switching not only in the two-party system of the United States but in the multi-party systems of Austria, Great Britain and Germany as well. This supports the initial claim from the beginning of the chapter arguing that investigating ambivalence in multi-party systems is beneficial and should gain more attention in future research, especially as it turned out to be an important factor in explaining electoral volatility.

Nevertheless, differences among the three countries yield interesting insights and have important implications that are shortly discussed. The descriptive statistics showed that the number of vote switchers is highest in the two German elections and lowest in the three British elections. The frequencies of *vote choice uncertainty* and *vote decision difficulty* revealed that 60% of the German voters perceived the voting decision as rather easy, whilst 65% of the Austrian voters and 95% of the British electorate stated to be certain about their vote choice. Similarly, ambivalence was lowest over the pre-election campaigning waves for the British sample compared to the Austrian and German one. The empirical analysis supported the previous findings by demonstrating that the effects of ambivalence on vote switching are also lowest in Britain. Altogether, the statistics showed that voters in Great Britain are less ambivalent, more certain about their vote choice, and less likely to engage in vote switching at elections. These findings fit with the previous discussion on the British party and electoral system. While proportional representation in Austria and Germany provides a workable basis for the two multi-party systems, the British first-past-the-post system encourages the development of two strong parties and is therefore often questioned and sometimes even referred to as a two-party system. These conditions affect the development of ambivalent attitudes as well as the likelihood of engaging in vote switching. Even if a voter is highly ambivalent between two parties in the UK, as long as the two most liked parties do not represent the two largest parties of the constituency the voter's vote choice is most likely unaffected by

ambivalence in his vote choice because the voter probably votes for the party that has the highest chance of winning the constituency majority. All of this suggests that a closer examination of the differences between party and electoral systems in the research of ambivalence and voting is needed to draw more informed conclusions.

In addition, the chapter acknowledges some limitations. This is one of the first studies that investigates the relation between political ambivalence and vote switching in three multi-party systems. Still, the investigation of more multi-party contexts is needed to generalize the findings validity. Furthermore, those online panels may not build on the most representative samples due to their focus on internet users. Generalizability is therefore limited. In conclusion, this work has made an important initial contribution that should be expanded in the future.

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4. Ambivalence Across the Globe: Investigating Political Ambivalence and Its Impact on Vote Switching in 52 Multi-Party Systems[23]

Abstract

In many countries across the globe, the number of vote switchers is quite high. An under-researched dimension of this phenomenon is the impact of ambivalent political attitudes. Ambivalence describes the situation in which a person simultaneously has positive attitudes toward more than one political party or more than one political leader. Whilst the effects of party and leader ambivalence on vote switching have been investigated in the American political system, their application to multi-party systems is rare. This article aims to fill this gap. Before doing so, however, the article focuses on the development of party and leader ambivalent attitudes and system features of multi-party systems influencing ambivalence. For this research purpose, the article uses data from the *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems* covering 195 elections in 52 multi-party systems between 1996 and 2020. The results, among others, demonstrate that ambivalence increases voters' probability to switch parties between elections.

4.1 Introduction

Studies of citizens' attitudes and intentions are widely published in newspapers, reports and academic papers. The implicit assumption is that citizens have clear and unambiguous ideas about what they are being asked. In reality, however, they are often ambiguous—people have mixed feelings. This issue is even more important given that elections are increasingly volatile and voters change their vote frequently. This article argues that we need to look more closely at ambivalent political attitudes if we are to fully understand voter behavior.

Ambivalent political attitudes—also referred to as ambivalence in this article—represent an attitudinal conflict characterized by competing positive and negative considerations regarding one or more objects of interest (Lavine 2001, 915; Basinger and Lavine 2005). While the effects of ambivalence on voters' behavior have been studied primarily

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Only small formal edits (such as the formatting of references, font, labeling of tables and figures) were made in comparison to the published article. The Appendix for this chapter is available in Chapter 7.3. References to the Appendix begin with the letter "A".

in the U.S. two-party system (TPS) (Lavine 2001; Haddock 2003; Basinger and Lavine 2005; Hillygus and Shields 2008; Thornton 2009; Lavine et al. 2012; Thornton 2014; Smidt 2017), this article aims to build on early work by Dentler (2023a; 2023b) investigating the impact of ambivalence in multi-party systems (MPS) where voters can be expected to be particularly likely to hold and develop ambivalent attitudes. The key message of the article is that the influence of ambivalence on voting behavior should also be studied more thoroughly in MPS (Thornton 2009, 126; Steenbergen 2020; Dentler 2023a; Dentler 2023b).

The main contributions of this article to the current literature lie first in broadening the context and generalizing earlier results, which, however, were of little value due to the limited selection of MPS. While Dentler (2023a; 2023b) focused exclusively on Austria, Germany, and the United Kingdom, this article extends the analysis to about 52 MPS across the globe. It builds on the earlier argument that studying the effects of ambivalence on vote switching in MPS that differ from U.S. TPS is important and useful (Thornton 2009, 126; Steenbergen 2020). Second, the article delves a bit deeper into the underlying mechanisms that lead to ambivalent attitudes in MPS, suggesting that ambivalent attitudes are more likely to be present in these systems due to factors such as a different number of parties, the presence of coalition-building processes, strategic voting, the entry of new parties, and the interaction of parties and their leaders. For example, ambivalence might be more pronounced in MPS because the range of parties in these systems offers voters more viable alternatives at election times (Johnson 2014, 509; Steenbergen 2020, 155). If the number of parties is larger, parties are likely to be closer ideologically as they place themselves on the ideological scale, which then provides less space for each party. When parties are closer together on the ideological scale, there is a greater likelihood that policy proposals and opinions will overlap. This, in turn, increases the likelihood of developing similar positive attitudes toward multiple parties. This can lead to an increased likelihood of becoming ambivalent. The two research questions of this article are: How do voters develop ambivalent political attitudes in MPS and do these ambivalent political attitudes influence voter switching in MPS across the globe?

To get to the bottom of these research questions, the analysis uses data from the *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES).* The CSES includes a variety of democratic countries with stable and well-established MPS. The party systems of those countries offer the party menu that is of interest for investigating the development and impact of ambivalence. From the CSES, the article uses the Integrated Module Dataset (IMD) and the fourth advance release of Module 5. The data enables to investigate the impact of *party* and *leader* ambivalence on vote switching in 52 MPS for 195 national elections between 1996 and 2020.

The results support two pathways in which voters in MPS become politically ambivalent. First, the larger the number of parties, the smaller the ideological distance tends to be between the two parties that are ideologically closest to voters, which in turn increases the likelihood that voters develop party ambivalent attitudes. Second, the larger the number of parties, the more likely it is that voters show party-leader ambivalent attitudes[24]. Voters who have conflicting party-leader attitudes are then more likely to be party and leader ambivalent. The results related to the effects of ambivalence on vote switching in MPS demonstrate that higher levels of party and leader ambivalence in MPS lead to a higher probability of engaging in vote switching between elections. The three robustness checks provide support in terms of theory and measurement. In sum, the article successfully shows that ambivalent political attitudes are more prevalent in MPS than in TPS, and that they have strong effects on electoral changes in MPS around the world. Ambivalence is therefore useful in explaining recent trends in electoral volatility.

4.2 Electoral Volatility, Vote Switching and Ambivalence

4.2.1 Electoral Volatility

The current literature on vote switching focuses on a variety of factors to explain electoral volatility and can be divided into aggregated and individual level analyses. Whilst work on the aggregate level focuses on comparative study of official election results, individual level studies rely primarily on data gathered in survey data of respondents (Schoen 2014). There are three main branches trying to explain volatility: the sociological paradigm, socio-psychological approaches, and rational choice explanations. Looking at the influence of political attitudes on individual voter behavior falls into the socio-psychological approach. In this branch, other studies have identified other motivations besides ambivalence to investigate vote switching. Those studies have shown that voters vary in their party support because they are either unaware of or indifferent between party alternatives (Converse 1962; Kelley 1983; Zaller 2004; Hillygus and Shields 2008; Mayer 2008). Scholars have found that volatility is related to voters being independent, less informed, and less sophisticated (Schoen 2004; Zaller 2004). Blumenstiel and Plischke (2015) show that voters' motivations can change over time, and that inter- and intra-individual heterogeneity affects processes of decision-making. At some election, a voter might be candidate-oriented and at another one issue-oriented. As mentioned above, despite much ink

[24] The term *party-leader disagreement* has changed over the course of the dissertation. While in this chapter it is referred to as *party-leader ambivalence* (because that is how it was published), throughout the dissertation it is referred to as *party-leader disagreement*, which is more appropriate.

being spilled over the dynamics underlying vote switching, a hereto under-researched dimension of this phenomenon is the impact of ambivalence.

4.2.2 Ambivalent Political Attitudes and Their Impact on People's Behavior

Ambivalence is an attitude conflict that is characterized by competing considerations and describes the state of having simultaneously positive and negative feelings or contradictory ideas about an object or a person (Kaplan 1972; Zaller and Feldman 1992; Thompson et al. 1995; Lavine 2001).[25,26] Most of the work on ambivalence focuses on policy issues, candidates or parties (Lavine 2001; McGraw et al. 2003; Basinger and Lavine 2005) where individuals can be ambivalent toward *one* or *multiple* objects (Lavine 2001). For example, individuals are ambivalent toward *one* object if they have similar negative and positive feelings or considerations toward one party. Ambivalence toward *multiple* objects can then be found if individuals have negative and positive feelings toward two or more parties. The balance between these positive and negative feelings is expected to lead to the strength of ambivalence. For example, voters who have equally strong positive and negative feelings toward a party are expected to be highly ambivalent (e.g., a 50:50 ratio), while voters who have significantly more positive than negative feelings or more negative than positive feelings toward the party (e.g., a 70:30 ratio) should be less ambivalent. The article captures two types of ambivalence: *Party ambivalence* and *leader ambivalence.* Whereas the previous literature focuses on either party or leader ambivalence, this article considers both types of ambivalence at the same time. Whilst *party ambivalence* examines ambivalence between two parties, *leader ambivalence* is based on ambivalence between two leaders.

Research shows that ambivalence substantially affects electoral behavior. Ambivalence impacts people's political opinions and evaluations. It influences individuals' evaluations of candidates (Guge 1999; Lavine 2001; Lavine 2004; Meffert et al. 2004; Schoen 2010; Blumenstiel and Gavras 2015) and how strongly individuals approve or disapprove with the president (Meffert et al. 2004). Ambivalence also affects people's decisions in different facets of their voting behavior. Ambivalent individuals are more likely to vote based on competence

[25] In earlier work, ambivalence was also referred to as cross-pressure (Lazarsfeld et al. 1944; Berelson et al. 1954; Campbell et al. 1954; Campbell et al. 1960). However, this term has mostly been replaced by ambivalence since the study by Mutz (2002).

[26] Another careful distinction is needed between ambivalence and indifference (Stoeckel 2013). Both concepts are sometimes confounded with each other but denote different mental states (Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller 2012, 303). Whilst an ambivalent person shows strong but contradictory preferences, an indifferent one has a lack of preference. An indifferent individual has the feeling that the existing electoral alternatives are not relevant or not of interest to him (Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller 2012).

and valence issues (Thornton 2009). Basinger and Lavine (2005) show that ambivalent partisans lacking political knowledge are more likely to engage in economic voting, while ambivalent partisans who show a high political knowledge are more likely to engage in ideological voting. Lavine et al. (2012, 161) demonstrate that while partisanship is the dominant influence on vote choice for univalent partisans, their ambivalent counterparts are more affected by political issues and less by partisanship (see also Blumenstiel 2014, 32). Ambivalence also leads voters to make up their minds later (Lavine 2001; Mutz 2002; Lavine 2004, 100; Nir 2005; Plischke 2014, 213; He 2016; Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller 2016), destabilize the relation between vote intention and vote choice (Lavine 2004, 106) making the vote intention less predictable (Lavine 2001; Blumenstiel 2014).

Like research on ambivalence more generally, the literature on the effects of ambivalence on vote switching is dominated by a focus on the United States. Support for the impact of ambivalence comes from Smidt (2017, 375) demonstrating that ambivalence leads to a higher probability of switching for US elections between 1957 and 2004. Lavine et al. (2012) find that ambivalent partisanship facilitates three types of electoral volatility: defection, ticket-splitting and third-party voting. Hillygus and Shields (2008) find that defection strongly increases among ambivalent or cross-pressured partisans if they are exposed to campaign information on issues relevant to them. Conversely, Thornton's (2014, 193) results rarely show significant effects for ambivalence on switching. Thornton's (2009, 103) previous work also yields some counter-evidence where he does not find effects of ambivalence on switching at all. However, presidential elections in the US might be the least likely scenario in which one could expect ambivalence to influence voting behavior due to polarization (Thornton 2009, 125; Thornton 2014, 196). Thornton (2009, 126) suggests pushing the frontiers and to explore ambivalence voting in more contexts (see also Pappi 1996, 256; Keele and Wolak 2008; Johnson 2014). In a first related attempt, Dentler (2023a) shows that ambivalence increases voters' probability to switch parties during the pre-election campaigning period and between two consecutive elections for the 2013, 2017 and 2021 German federal elections. Recent results from another article (Dentler, 2023b) demonstrate for several Austrian, British, and German general elections that respondents with higher ambivalence values are more likely to engage in vote switching. Highly ambivalent voters in Germany were nearly about 30 percent more likely to switch parties compared to voters with the lowest ambivalence value. Highly ambivalent voters in Austria were about 25 percent more likely to switch parties and about 20 percent in the United Kingdom. Both articles demonstrate that party and leader ambivalence exert a strong

impact on switching not only in the TPS of the United States but also in MPS. The replication and generalization of these results for a variety of MPS is one contribution of this article.

4.3 Ambivalence in a Multi-Party Setting

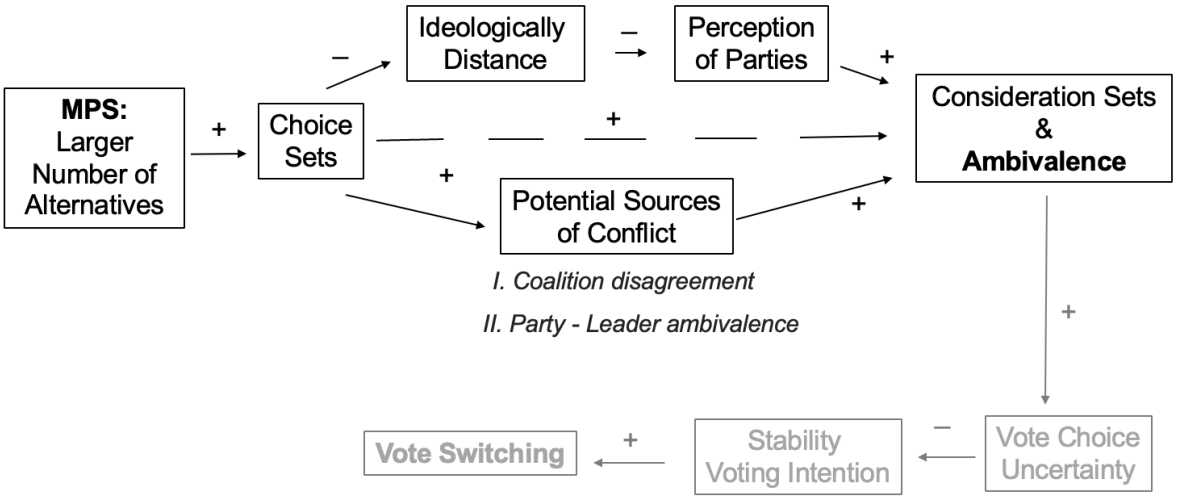
Before testing any impact of ambivalence on vote switching, we should theorize and investigate how MPS factors are expected to lead to ambivalence and how system features might cause changes in it. Therefore, it is important and necessary to investigate the question how do people become political ambivalent in MPS? This is also relevant as voters in MPS might be more likely to hold ambivalent attitudes. People can become ambivalent based on a variety of cognitive processes provoked by internal and external sources. Internal sources are characteristics of individuals influencing the development of ambivalent attitudes. They therefore vary across all individuals. One internal source is the information affinity, people who enjoy systematically processing information are more likely to be ambivalent (Rudolph and Popp 2007). External sources are factors beyond the individual, such as electoral contexts or networks. The focus of this article is the party system, particularly MPS.

4.3.1 External Source: Party System

The two underlying pathways that increase the likelihood of voters in MPS displaying ambivalent attitudes are roughly outlined in Figure 4.1a. Previous research shows that a higher number of alternatives, be it parties or leaders, leads to a larger size of individuals' consideration sets (Wilson 2008; Johnson 2014, 509; Oscarsson and Rosema 2019). Consideration sets are built when voters apply heuristics to reduce their choice sets (Wilson 2008, 162; Lavine et al. 2012; Oscarsson and Rosema 2019). Choice sets consist of all viable alternatives. Whilst the choice set in TPS is a maximum of two, the choice set size of individuals in MPS is larger by default (Oscarsson and Rosema 2019, 257). A larger number of parties in MPS leading to larger choice and consideration sets ends up making decision making more difficult in two ways: The ideological distance between parties decreases, and trade-offs between assessment dimensions become increasingly complicated. Both are caused by larger choice sets leading to a higher decision difficulty in MPS and thus, an increased likelihood of holding ambivalent attitudes.

Turning to the above path, the ideological distance between parties is affected by the number of parties and the polarization of the party system. It is likely that the more parties compete, the ideologically closer they become, and the greater becomes their overlap in content (Plischke 2014, 125). However, a high number of parties does not necessarily mean that distances between parties are small (Dalton 2008). If ideological distances become smaller in MPS, the overlaps in content also mean that parties with similar programs can cooperate if they

Figure 4.1a: Graphical illustration of the underlying mechanisms leading to ambivalence



pursue common goals. They may even be forced to form coalitions to achieve government majorities (Schoen 2010). In coalition governments, parties cannot implement their pure programs but must make compromises that further reduce the discriminatory power of the two coalition partners' perceptions (Plischke 2014, 125). This makes certain parties appear more similar (Plischke 2014, 125). The comparison of positions of the parties would therefore not reveal too many differences from whose evaluation a decision could be derived. This could then cause an increased decision difficulty along with a higher likelihood of showing ambivalent attitudes. The following two hypotheses test whether a higher number of parties affects the degree of closeness between a respondent's two closest parties (*H1a*) and whether the distance between the two closest parties increases the likelihood of showing party ambivalent attitudes (*H1b*).

H1a: The higher the number of effective parties in an election, the closer the two parties that are ideologically closest to the respondent.

H1b: The smaller the ideological distance between a voter's two closest parties, the more party ambivalent is the respondent.

Complicated trade-offs between assessment dimensions display the below pathway in which larger consideration sets could be expected to lead to a higher decision difficulty and more ambivalence in MPS. The article focuses on two types of assessment dimensions: (1) between a favourite party and a potential coalition partner and (2) between a party and its leader. Starting with the first one, voters may become conflicted if they show a clear party favourite but strongly disagree with its potential coalition partner. If the voters' dislike is strong enough, voters may consider to vote for their second most liked party. This can only be observed in MPS. The second trade-off type and focus of this article deals with *party-leader ambivalence*.

Party-leader ambivalence describes a situation in which voters prefer a leader of a party other than their favorite party. For instance, the leader of party A may be preferred to the leader of party B, while party B is assigned a higher competence or more liked than party A. Party-leader ambivalent voters do thus face a greater decision difficulty and are trapped between voting for their favorite party or favorite leader (Wagner and Weßels 2012; Daoust et al. 2021; Quinlan and McAllister 2022). As pointed out by the previous literature (Wagner and Weßels 2012), we should not solely look at party and leader evaluations separately but pay more attention to the interplay between both. For the German Federal elections between 1998 and 2009, Wagner and Weßels (2012) strengthen this argument by showing that leader and party evaluations reinforce each other, and that the match between a party and its leader is what matters most for vote choice. Daoust et al. (2021) find in their research that 17% of the voters preferred a leader from another party. Party-leader ambivalence is thus not rare and could be an important factor influencing the existence of party and leader ambivalent attitudes, and vote choices. To test this mechanism leading from a larger number of parties to ambivalence, the article empirically tests two more observable implications. First, voters should be more likely to show party-leader ambivalent attitudes if they face a higher number of parties in an election (*H2a*). Second, voters should be more likely to show party ambivalent and leader ambivalent attitudes if they hold party-leader ambivalent attitudes (*H2b*).

H2a: The higher the number of effective parties in an election, the higher is the respondents' likelihood of showing party-leader ambivalent attitudes.

H2b: Voters who are party-leader ambivalent are more likely to show party (leader) ambivalent attitudes.

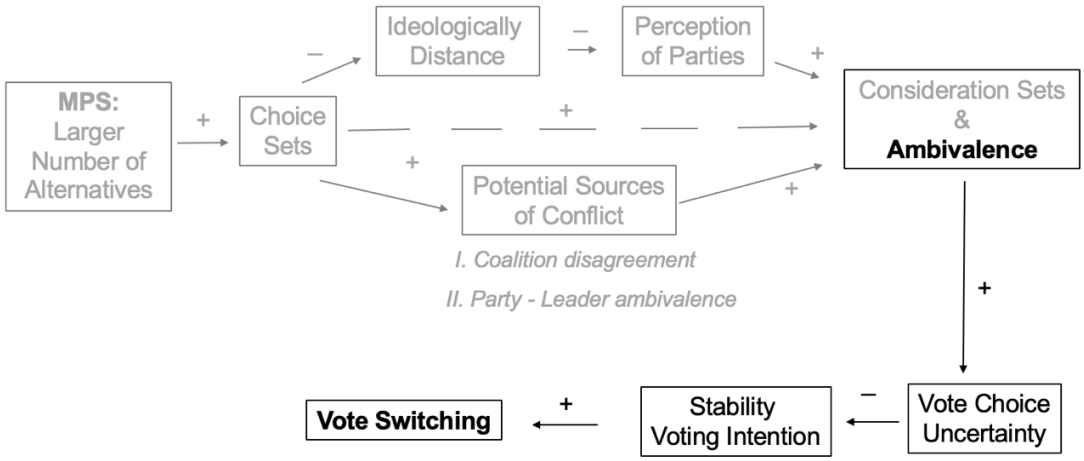
In summary, individuals in MPS can be expected to have larger consideration sets than individuals in TPS. Whilst the choice sets of individuals in TPS is two by default, individuals in MPS are offered more alternatives to choose from. Combined with the two above described arguments of ideological distance and complicated trade-offs, one can expect voters in MPS to show larger consideration sets and thus to be more likely to hold ambivalent attitudes than voters in TPS. The effect of ambivalence on vote switching is then likely to vary depending on the size of the party system – namely the number of parties (leaders).

4.3.2 Ambivalence and Vote Switching in Multi-Party Systems

After having looked at the party system influencing political ambivalence, the article examines how ambivalence affects to vote switching (see Figure 4.1b). First, the article expects voters who find themselves in a difficult decision-making situation and are thus torn between party or

leader alternatives should be less certain of their vote choice. Those voters should hence be more likely to show a higher vote choice uncertainty before an election.

Figure 4.1b: Graphical illustration of the causal mechanisms leading to vote switching



Second, a more uncertain vote choice in turn leads to more unstable as well as delayed voting intentions. Previous literature shows that ambivalence weakens the relation between vote intention and vote choice (Lavine 2004, 106) and leads to forming vote intentions later during the campaigning period (Lavine 2001; Mutz 2002; Lavine 2004, 100; Nir 2005; Plischke 2014; Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller 2016). This demonstrates that voters' vote choice with ambivalent preferences are less predictable (Lavine 2001; Blumenstiel 2014).

Third, an unstable or delayed voting intention indicates that the individual finds himself in an ambivalent decision situation then increasing the likelihood of engaging in vote switching on the election day. In contrast, non-ambivalent voters are expected to show an early and certain vote choice, and stable vote intentions. Hence, they should be less likely to switch parties. Intervening in the above described mechanism, the psychological threshold of switching is lower in MPS. In MPS, the closer two parties are to each other ideologically, the more likely it is for a supporter of one party to consider switching to the other (Schoen 2004, 11). In contrast, parties in TPS tend to be more polarized and distinct and voters must make 'larger steps' in order to switch form one party to the other (Schoen 2004, 11). In summary, the article expects that voters with a higher ambivalence are more likely to engage in vote switching at an election than voters with a lower ambivalence. The article derives hypothesis *H3* to test this impact of ambivalence on vote switching as it was likewise investigated in the American context.

H3: Voters with higher party (leader) ambivalence values are more likely to switch parties at two consecutive elections than voters with lower party (leader) ambivalence values.

4.4 Research Design

For this research agenda, the article unpacks the above-described issues by using data from the *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES)*. The CSES includes a variety of democratic countries with stable and well-established MPS. The party systems of those countries offer the party menu that is of interest for investigating the impact of ambivalence. From the CSES, the article uses the Integrated Module Dataset (IMD) and the fourth advance release of Module 5. Overall, both comprise about 357,000 respondents of 57 polities from which 52 polities can be understood as MPS. The data enables to investigate the impact of *party ambivalence* and *leader ambivalence* on vote switching in MPS for 195 national elections across the globe between 1996 and 2020. The only TPS are the United States with six national elections in 1996, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016 and 2020.

To measure *ambivalence*, the article uses feeling thermometer ratings of a respondent's two highest rated parties and leaders (Johnson 2014). It thus captures ambivalence between *multiple* parties. Measuring ambivalence with feeling thermometer ratings is not new and has been done in the multi-party context by other scholars as well (Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller 2012; Blumenstiel 2014; Çakır 2022). On the feeling thermometer, respondents rate parties and leaders on an 11-point scale from strongly dislike to strongly like. Following previous studies (Basinger and Lavine 2005; Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller 2012; Johnson 2014; Çakır 2022), the ambivalence measures take Griffin's formula of ambivalence as a starting point for the calculations of the indexes (Thompson et al. 1995). Based on the rating of the two most liked parties or leaders (Blumenstiel 2014), two indexes are calculated demonstrating respondents' degree of *party ambivalence* and *leader ambivalence*. The indexes range from -5 to 10, with 10 being the value of respondents who are most ambivalent and -5 being the value of respondents who are least ambivalent. Respondents who rate two parties on the feeling thermometer with the highest possible score of 10 (strongly like) would yield a score of 10 (*party ambivalence* = (10+10)/ 2 - (|10 - 10|)). The lowest value of ambivalence is achieved by respondents who have a clear favorite and rate one party with a 10 (strongly like) and the other with a 0 (strongly dislike). Applying the formula, these respondents obtain the lowest ambivalence value of -5 (*party ambivalence* = (10+0)/ 2 - (|10 - 0|)).

Party-leader ambivalence is also based on the feeling thermometer ratings. Respondents are classified as being party-leader ambivalent if they show a different leader than party favourite based on their like/ dislikes. For instance, respondents rating both Party A (e.g., **$Party_A = 9$**, $Party_B = 7$) and the leader of Party A (e.g., **$Leader_A = 9$**, $Leader_B = 7$) highest among all alternatives would be classified as **not party-leader ambivalent**. Whereas, respondents rating Party A highest among all parties (e.g., **$Party_A = 9$**, $Party_B = 7$) but the leader of Party B highest among all leaders (e.g., $Leader_A = 7$, **$Leader_B = 9$**), would be classified as being **party-leader ambivalent**. *Party-leader ambivalence* is thus a dummy variable coded as 0 if the respondents' favorite party and leader are congruent, and coded as 1 if they are not congruent meaning that respondents show two different favorites.

Vote switching is a dummy variable indicating whether respondents voted in two consecutive national elections for the same party, coded as 0, or whether they voted for two different parties, coded as 1. A detailed operationalization of all variables, as well as descriptive statistics and a comprehensive list of all elections included in the analyses, can be found in the Appendix 7.3.1 and 7.3.2. For the models with binary dependent variables, like *vote switching*, the article uses logistic multivariate regressions. For the models with continuous variables, like *party ambivalence*, it uses linear multivariate regressions. All models using the CSES include country and year fixed effects and standard errors clustered by country.

To assess the robustness of the findings, the article performs three checks. The first check (Models 8 to 10 in Table A4.3 in Appendix 7.3.3) replicates the original models of party and leader ambivalence and vote switching (Model 5 in Table 4.2) but focuses on a subsample of respondents. This subsample only includes respondents that still rate the party that they have voted for in the previous election among their first two most liked parties. This differentiation is important because voters who do not favor the party of their previous vote choice anymore should be highly likely to switch at the current election, independent of their level of ambivalence among two other parties as the party of their previous choice would not be included in the calculation anyways. Based on this, the impact of ambivalence on switching is likely to be underestimated in the original models including all respondents. In the second robustness check (Model 11 in Table A4.3 in Appendix 7.7.3), the article compares and replicates the results from the feeling thermometer ambivalence measurement of Johnson (2014) with the MPS ambivalence measurement of Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller (2012) to provide support in terms of measurement. However, smaller effects can be expected as the measurement does not focus on the two highest evaluated parties but at the general party system as the formula includes all parties. In the last methodological robustness check (Appendix

7.3.3), Tables A4.4 to A4.6 replicate all country-year fixed effects models with random intercept multi-level models to account for the nested structure of the data.

4.5 Results

4.5.1 External Source: Party System

Figure 4.2 provides an overview of the distribution of *party* and *leader ambivalence* in MPS and TPS. The lemon-yellow shaded bars show the number of ambivalent voters, the dark grey shaded bars show the ambivalent voters, and the colour in between represents the overlap. These two figures show that voters in the MPS have much higher party and leader ambivalence scores on average than voters in the TPS. While party and leader ambivalence in MPS has a mean of 5, the mean in TPS is 0.4 for party and -1 for leader ambivalence. Two independent t-tests for party and leader ambivalence, grouped by party system, are both significant and confirm that the means of the two system types differ. Particularly striking is the large number of voters in TPS who score an ambivalence value of -5. A closer look at the U.S., the only TPS in the data, shows a steady decline in ambivalent attitudes among leaders and parties across the six presidential elections. Whereas in 1996 the median and mean were 2, in 2020 the median was -3.5 and the mean was -2 on the leader ambivalence index. Although this is not explored further in this article, it may be indicative of increasing polarization in U.S. elections in recent decades. Overall, the two figures support the earlier argument that voters in MPS tend to have more ambivalent attitudes in the first place. The figures also demonstrate that studying the effects of ambivalence is a highly relevant topic, especially in the MPS, as it affects many voters.

Figure 4.2: Frequency of leader and party ambivalence for MPS and TPS

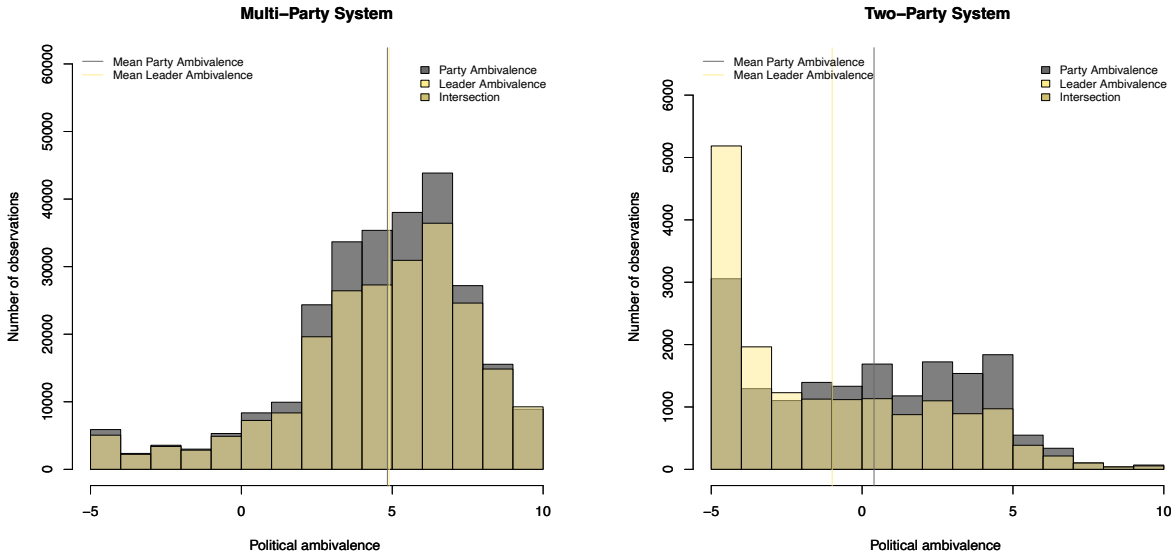


Table 4.1 displays the linear and logistic regression results of models 1 to 4 dealing with the two pathways leading from a larger number of parties to the existence of ambivalent political attitudes (see Figure 4.1a again). Model 1 tests the above pathway investigating whether a higher number of parties affects the degree of closeness between a respondent's two closest parties (*H1a*). The demographic variables as well as *party-leader ambivalence* are excluded because they are not expected to affect the degree of closeness between the two closest parties. *Distance center* controls for the possibility that respondents who place themselves at the extreme end of the ideological left-right scale have greater distances between their first and second closest party, regardless of the number of parties, than respondents who are in the middle of the scale. Model 2 looks at the below pathway leading to ambivalence investigating whether the number of parties affects the likelihood of showing party-leader ambivalent attitudes (*H2a*). *Distance first second closest* and *distance center* are not included because they are not relevant for testing the below pathway and are not expected to affect *party-leader ambivalence*. For Model 1, we find a negative significant effect of the *effective number of electoral parties* on the *ideological distance between respondents' two closest parties*. With a one-unit increase in the effective number of parties, the distance between both parties decreases on average by 0.3 units on the left-right scale, holding everything else constant. Model 2 tests the second pathway leading to ambivalence and reveals the impact of the *effective number of parties* on the probability of holding *party-leader ambivalent attitudes*. The effective number of electoral parties shows positive significant effects indicating that with an increasing number of parties, voters are more likely to hold party-leader ambivalent attitudes. These findings hence support hypotheses *H1a* and *H2a* and therefore, both expectations of how the presence of multiple parties affects voters' two closest parties and party-leader ambivalence.

Models 3 and 4 investigate the second step of both pathways by looking at the effects of ideological distances between the two closest parties (*H1b*) and holding party-leader ambivalent attitudes (*H2b*) on the likelihood of showing an increase in either party or leader ambivalence. Whist the impact of party-leader ambivalence is tested for both types of ambivalence, the influence of ideological distances is solely tested for party ambivalence as the distance variable measures distances between parties and not leaders. Models 3 and 4 do not include the *number of parties* and *distance center* because both variables are only relevant for the first two models. Model 3 reveals the negative significant impact of the *ideological distance* and the positive significant impact on *party-leader ambivalence* on the existence of *party ambivalence*. With a one-unit increase in the ideological distance between the two closest parties, voters' party ambivalence decreases on average by 0.4 units. If voters are party-leader

ambivalent, their party ambivalence increases on average by 0.2 units. In Model 4, we see similar strong and significant effects for *party-leader ambivalence* on the existence of *leader ambivalence*. Although the effects are rather small, both models support hypotheses *H1b* and *H2b* and therefore, the second part of the expected pathways leading to the existence of ambivalent attitudes.

Overall, contextual factors have a considerable influence and a stronger impact on ambivalence than individual factors. *Party identity* and *Distance First Second Closest* are the only rather strong individual factors. *Party identity* only shows significant effects in Model 2, which is understandable as *Distance First Second Closest* captures its effect in Model 3 and it is less relevant in Model 4. As for the context variables, the analysis shows the importance of the *Number of parties*, the *Regime type* and the *Electoral system*. The former variable has already been explained above. With regard to the latter two variables, individuals in parliamentary systems show closer party favorites, a lower probability of holding party-leader ambivalent attitudes, and higher scores for party and leader ambivalence. Similarly, individuals in proportional systems show closer party favorites, are less likely to show party-leader ambivalence, and have lower scores on party and leader ambivalence.

Table 4.1: Explaining the existence of ambivalent attitudes (using fixed effects)

	(1) Distance First Second Closest	(2) Party-leader ambivalence	(3) Party ambivalence	(4) Leader ambivalence
	Testing the impact of the number of parties on the distance between respondents' two closest parties	*Testing the impact of the number of parties on party-leader ambivalent attitudes*	*Testing the impact of the distance between the two closest parties and party-leader ambivalence on party ambivalence*	*Testing the impact of party-leader ambivalence on leader ambivalence*
	H1a	*H2a*	*H1b, H2b*	*H2b*
Effective # of electoral parties	-0.331***	1.141***	–	–
	(0.08)	(0.188)		
Distance First Second Closest	/	–	-0.392***	–
			(0.028)	
Distance Center	0.226***	–	–	–
	(0.04)			
Party-leader ambivalence	–	/	0.178*	0.185*
			(0.073)	(0.077)
Party identity	–	-0.511***	-0.025	0.02
		(0.025)	(0.055)	(0.046)

Gender	–	-0.009	0.127***	0.025
		(0.026)	(0.033)	(0.037)
Age	–	-0.004**	-0.006***	0.001
		(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Education	–	0.005	0.083***	0.09***
		(0.016)	(0.022)	(0.022)
Income	–	-0.002	0.005	0.041**
		(0.008)	(0.014)	(0.013)
Political sophistication	–	-0.073***	0.046*	0.096***
		(0.022)	(0.02)	(0.023)
Regime type (ref: parliamentary regime)				
Mixed	1.06**	3.344***	-0.253***	-5.036***
	(0.337)	(0.667)	(0.052)	(0.044)
Presidential	0.264***	1.524***	2.831***	2.693***
	(0.06)	(0.038)	(0.034)	(0.025)
Electoral system (ref: proportional system)				
Mixed	1.225**	-0.465	4.589***	6.416***
	(0.304)	(0.457)	(0.059)	(0.05)
Majoritarian	2.203***	0.341*	2.33***	4.362***
	(0.08)	(0.164)	(0.095)	(0.071)
Constant	3.109***	-6.533***	0.889***	-1.037***
	(0.272)	(0.677)	(0.158)	(0.137)
Adj./ Pseudo R^2	0.267	0.074	0.216	0.176
Log likelihood		-38155.624		
AIC	790986.6	76323.2	269955.4	379648.5
BIC	791027.4	76378.8	270027.1	379713.4
Country FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Election FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Country N	55	46	47	47
Election N	184	126	129	133
N	198973	77877	57626	78195

Source of data: CSES IMD and CSES Module 5.
Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses. All models include country and year fixed effects. Models (1), (3) and (4) are multivariate linear regression models. Model (2) is a logistic model; "–" not included in the analysis; "/" variable is the dependent variable in the model; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

4.5.2 Ambivalence and Vote Switching in Multi-Party Systems

Model 5 in Table 4.2 examines the article's introductory question whether party and leader ambivalence increase the likelihood of switching votes in a MPS election. The correlation between both ambivalence measures is 0.54 and significant at 0.05. Thus, a correlation exists and indicates that both measures capture a similar concept. Nevertheless, the correlation is not too strong. This demonstrates that both are likely to be independent factors and hence, including both in the same model is reasonable. Both *party ambivalence* and *leader ambivalence* reveal positive significant effects on switching indicating that voters who hold stronger ambivalent

attitudes are in fact more likely to engage in vote switching on the election day. This supports hypothesis *H3*.

Table 4.2: Explaining the effect of ambivalence on vote switching (using fixed effects)

	(5) Vote switching	(6) Vote switching	(7) Vote switching
	Testing the impact of party and leader ambivalence on vote switching H3		
	Original	*Weighted*	*Magnitude*
Effective # of electoral parties	-14.96*** (0.172)	-16.06*** (0.280)	-15.08*** (0.169)
Party-leader ambivalence	0.393*** (0.052)	0.370*** (0.056)	0.401*** (0.054)
Party ambivalence	0.083*** (0.015)	–	–
Leader ambivalence	0.032*** (0.007)	–	–
Party ambivalence Weighted	–	0.224*** (0.033)	–
Leader ambivalence Weighted	–	0.077** (0.026)	–
Magnitude			
I. Party **or** leader ambivalent	–	–	0.252*** (0.05)
II. Party **and** leader ambivalent	–	–	0.509*** (0.063)
Party identity	-0.940*** (0.074)	-0.952*** (0.067)	-0.946*** (0.074)
Gender	-0.019 (0.027)	0.02 (0.031)	-0.015 (0.028)
Age	-0.013*** (0.001)	-0.013*** (0.001)	-0.013*** (0.001)
Education	0.011 (0.016)	0.022 (0.017)	0.014 (0.016)
Income	-0.017 (0.012)	-0.016 (0.012)	-0.016 (0.012)
Political sophistication	-0.007 (0.021)	0.009 (0.025)	-0.005 (0.021)
Regime type (ref: parliamentary regime)			
Mixed	-52.382*** (0.615)	-56.056*** (0.973)	-52.833*** (0.608)
Presidential	-0.83*** (0.064)	-0.767*** (0.067)	-0.648*** (0.053)
Electoral system			

(ref: proportional system)			
Mixed	37.81***	40.852***	38.454***
	(0.44)	(0.678)	(0.424)
Majoritarian	17.763***	19.07**	17.948***
	(0.19)	(0.293)	(0.19)
Constant	53.734***	57.93***	54.176***
	(0.586)	(1.02)	(0.575)
Pseudo. R^2	0.12	0.11	0.116
Log likelihood	-21125.882	-18307.282	-21218.179
AIC	42275.8	36634.6	42460.4
BIC	42378.6	36718.7	42563.2
Country FE	✓	✓	✓
Election FE	✓	✓	✓
Country N	44	44	44
Election N	95	94	95
N	38827	33352	38827

Source of data: CSES IMD and CSES Module 5.
Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses. All models are logistic models with country and year fixed effects; "–" not included in the analysis; The reference category of *Magnitude* is "neither party nor leader ambivalent"; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Figure 4.3 displays two meaningful quantities of interest based on Model 5. Both graphs show the predicted probabilities of vote switching given different levels of party and leader ambivalence. Whilst we see positive effects for both, the impact of party ambivalence on vote switching is considerably stronger. Voters with the highest value on *party ambivalence* compared to voters with the lowest value are about 20 percentage points more likely to switch parties. Voters with the highest value on *leader ambivalence* compared to voters with the lowest value are about 10 percentage points more likely to switch parties. These results are not particularly surprising, but they are shown here for the first time in a non-American context.[27] They also contribute to the ongoing debate about the importance of parties and leaders by showing that parties appear to continue to have a stronger influence on citizens' voting behavior.

Model 6 includes two alternative ambivalence measures that consist of the original measures but are weighted by the respective parties' strength. While the original measures treat all parties and leaders as equal, the alternative measures account for different strengths by weighting the respondents' ambivalence values by the percent vote share that each party gained in the respective election.[28] The results show that the effects of party and leader ambivalence

[27] In appendix 7.3.4, the article shows that we also find a strong effect of ambivalence on vote switching for the U.S. two-party system. This is a contribution to the mixed results in the previous literature, as we find evidence of such effects in more recent U.S. elections.
[28] For a more detailed description please see Appendix 7.3.1.

are more than doubled compared to the original measures. This immense increase is also visualized in Figure 4.4 that illustrates a much larger difference for low and high party ambivalent voters and a smaller difference for leader ambivalent voters compared to Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3: Predicted probabilities of vote switching for party and leader ambivalence

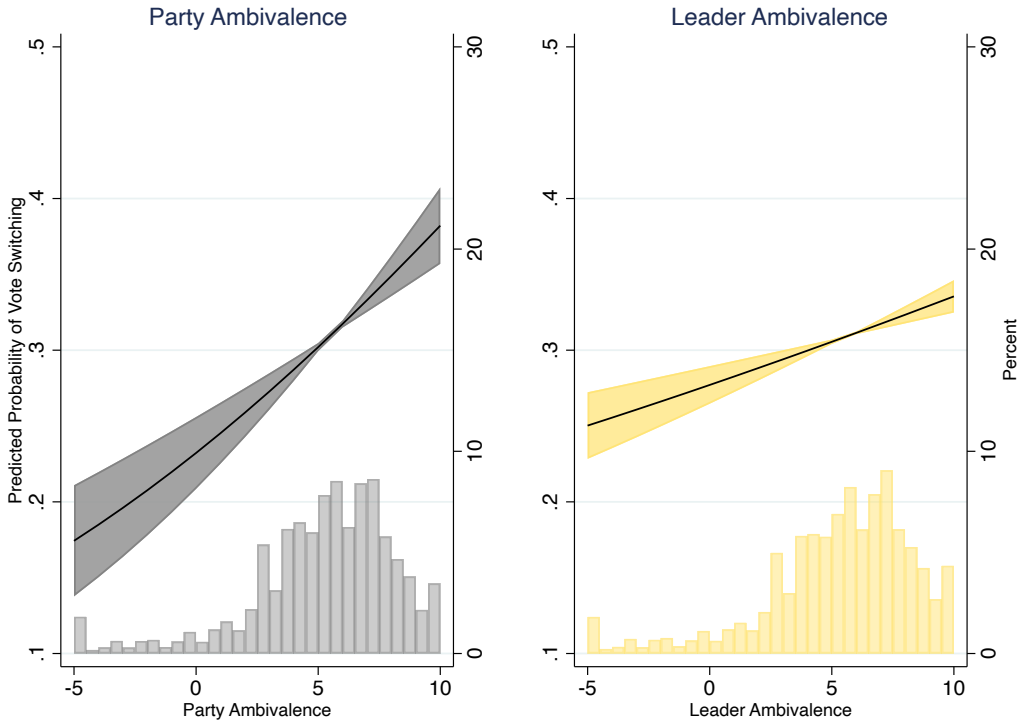
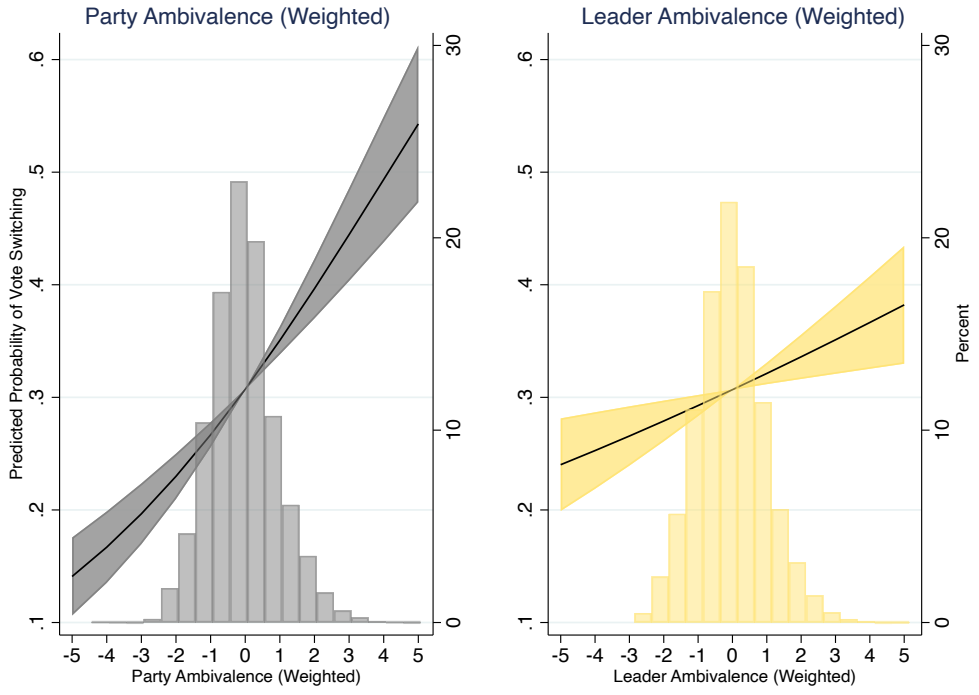


Figure 4.4: Predicted probabilities of vote switching for party and leader ambivalence (weighted)



Model 7 does not look at party and leader ambivalence separately but combines both into one measure.[29] This additional analysis underlines that it is necessary to look at party and leader ambivalence simultaneously. The results support this assumption demonstrating that voters who are party **or** leader ambivalent are more likely to engage in vote switching than voters who are **neither** party **nor** leader ambivalent. Further, voters who are party **and** leader ambivalent show an even higher likelihood to engage in vote switching compared to voters who are **neither** party **nor** leader ambivalent.

4.6 Conclusion

This article examined political ambivalence and its impact on vote switching. Using data from the CSES, several hypotheses were tested. The first set of hypotheses addressed the upper and lower pathway that explain why voters in MPS hold political ambivalent attitudes (*H1a, H1b, H2a, H2b*). The results support both pathways. First, the larger the number of parties, the smaller the ideological distance tends to be between the two parties that are ideologically closest to voters, which in turn increases the likelihood that voters hold party ambivalent attitudes. Second, the larger the number of parties, the more likely it is that voters have ambivalent attitudes toward party leaders. Voters who have conflicting party-leader attitudes are then more likely to be both party and leader ambivalent.

The last hypothesis focused on the effects of political ambivalence on vote switching (*H3*). Whilst the results demonstrate positive effects for party and leader ambivalence, the impact of party ambivalence on vote switching is considerably stronger. Voters with the highest value on *party ambivalence* compared to voters with the lowest value are about 20 percentage points more likely to switch parties. Voters with the highest value on *leader ambivalence* compared to voters with the lowest value are about 10 percentage points more likely to switch parties. In addition, the article emphasizes the importance of considering party strengths when examining the effects of ambivalence on vote switching, and of considering party and leader ambivalence not only separately but also simultaneously. In sum, this article shows that ambivalent political attitudes are more present in MPS than in TPS, and that party and leader ambivalence have a substantial impact on vote switching in the context of MPS. Ambivalence is thus useful to explain the recent trends in electoral volatility. This supports the major argument that investigating ambivalence in MPS is highly relevant and should gain more attention in future research.

[29] For a more detailed description please see Appendix 7.3.1. For an additional robustness check on the measurement of *Magnitude* please see Appendix 7.3.1.

The analysis offered important and new insights into the effects and emergence of political ambivalence. Nevertheless, the article should also acknowledge some limitations. The article was not able to test in detail the expected underlying mechanisms leading to the development of ambivalent attitudes in MPS. A more detailed investigation would be beneficial for future research. In addition, the use of panel data could be useful to examine changes in individuals' behaviors and attitudes over time in more detail as well. It is particularly advisable to examine the impact of a new party or change in leadership in order to investigate dynamic changes besides static ones. Finally, the article did not spend much time on possible differences between party and leader ambivalence. However, there may be important differences to consider.

Ultimately, the question remains as to what the results essentially mean. The article argues that these findings provide valuable insights for practical politics, intra-party politics, and for research on parties and leaders in general. First, it shows that ambivalence has a considerable impact on the stability of elections. This underlines the relevance of, for example, coalition signals and trends such as party convergence that influence ambivalent attitudes. The article highlights differences in system flexibility and how these lead to different incentives for parties. Essentially, parties should be more responsive to voters' needs in political systems with a larger number of parties, as these systems lead to more ambivalence and thus more vote switching. If voters are less party-affiliated, this in turn creates further incentives for parties to try to win over these voters at the next election. Second, the article repeatedly points out the importance of leaders themselves and the interaction between them and parties. The results show that leaders can have a decisive influence on voting behavior. Voters who prefer a leader from a party other than their favorite party are more likely to hold party ambivalent and leader ambivalent attitudes. The implications of this result are somewhat ambiguous and lead to different possible strategies for parties. On one hand, parties should try to ensure that their voters also prefer their own leader in order to reduce the likelihood of losing voters due to party-leader ambivalent attitudes, leading to a higher party ambivalence and in turn increasing the likelihood that voters engage in vote switching. On the other hand, one could argue that parties should opt for a leader who is more attractive to voters outside their normal comfort zone. This could lead to a leader deviating somewhat from the party's ideological position or to parties electing charismatic but less qualified leaders. Even if voters then do not favor the party itself, the leader could secure some additional votes for the party by increasing the likelihood of holding party-leader ambivalent attitudes. This seems to be a trade-off that parties have to

decide on. In summary, the relationship between leaders and parties can have a decisive influence on voters' attitudes and voting behavior in general.

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5. The Conflicted Voter: The Impact of Parties, Leaders and Coalitions on Individuals' Voting Decisions in Multi-Party Systems[30]

Abstract

It is seldomly easy to know who to vote for, especially for voters who do not feel they belong to any party. Over the last two decades, voters have found it increasingly difficult to choose a party. In most cases, voters who experience these difficulties also have greater consideration sets, which means that they consider multiple parties to vote for. For understanding the broadening of voters' consideration sets and subsequent struggles with vote choices, this article focuses on three sources of internal conflict: (1) Ambivalent party and ambivalent leader attitudes, (2) party-leader disagreement and (3) coalition disagreement. The analysis uses data from the *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES)* and the *German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES)*. The results demonstrate how the three sources of conflict increase the likelihood of developing larger consideration sets, leading to more difficult and delayed voting decisions, as well as vote switching.

5.1 Introduction

Reports on citizens' attitudes and intentions are numerous and are covered extensively in news articles and academic papers. Often, citizens do not have crystal clear voting intentions, but rather sway from one side to the other, switching from one party to another (Lavine 2001; Lavine 2004; Blumenstiel 2014). Depending on the particular events leading up to the elections, they end up choosing one of the parties or abstaining from voting if they cannot resolve their inner dilemma (Çakır 2022). From a voting perspective, the question arises as to how such internal conflicts can play into the electoral arena if it all, and how parties can strategically use these conflicts to win votes. This article argues that we need to look more closely at internal conflicts if we want to fully understand voters' behavior and decision-making processes.

Based on this, the article focuses on three internal sources of conflict: (1) Party ambivalent attitudes and leader ambivalent attitudes, (2) party-leader disagreement, and (3)

[30] This chapter was previously submitted as an article to the journal *Perspectives on Politics* and is currently under review.
Only small formal edits (such as the formatting of references, font, labeling of tables and figures) were made in comparison to the article under review. The Appendix for this chapter is available in Chapter 7.4. References to the Appendix begin with the letter "A".

coalition disagreement. Ambivalence is an attitudinal conflict that is characterized by competing considerations and contradictory ideas about an object or a person (Thompson et al. 1995; Basinger and Lavine 2005). This article focuses on ambivalence towards multiple objects. This means that individuals have negative and positive feelings toward two or more parties (or leaders). Party-leader disagreement describes the situation in which voters prefer a leader of a party other than their favorite party (Wagner and Weßels 2012; Daoust et al. 2021; Quinlan and McAllister 2021). For instance, the leader of party A may be preferred to the leader of party B, while party B is assigned a higher competence or more liked than party A. Coalition disagreement adds to the literature on strategic coalition voting (Gschwend and Meffert 2017). Voters are coalition disagreeing if their favorite party is not part of their favorite coalition. Hence whilst the favorite party might be viable and competitive, they consider voting for a different party to support an alternative coalition.

These three sources can help to provide deeper insights in the underlying decision-making processes that lead to a more uncertain voting behavior. Whilst the impact of party and leader ambivalence, as well as party-leader disagreement, was already partly tested on different facets of voting behavior (Dentler 2024), the obvious but inconspicuous mediator *consideration sets* did not gain enough attention in this discussion (Wilson 2008; Oscarsson and Rosema 2019). Furthermore, coalition disagreement as another source of conflict in MPS was disregarded so far but constitutes another important concept that needs to be looked at. The article argues that the party system is not only a crucial factor in the emergence of these three sources of internal conflict, but also in the resulting consequences, such as greater consideration sets and more difficult voting decisions. Although the article does not explicitly focus at MPS and TPS, it is another important contribution that shows how MPS can influence voters in various ways.

The research question of this article is how do these three sources of conflict impact voting behavior? To get to the bottom of this question, the analysis relies on data from the *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES)* and the *German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES)*. The CSES includes a large number of democratic countries with stable and well-established MPS. It therefore provides an opportunity to take a comparative view and a great party menu for studying at least two types of conflict. The article uses CSES Module 3 that includes 38 multi-party systems (MPS) and 47 national elections between 2005 and 2011. In addition, it looks at data from the 2013 and 2017 GLES Short-term Campaign Panels, as well as the GLES 2021 Rolling Cross-Section, to deepen this analysis by looking at the 2013, 2017

and 2021 German federal elections. The GLES allows to examine the expected mechanisms more closely and also to investigate the third source, coalition disagreement, in the first place.

The results more broadly support the impact of the three sources of conflict on considerations sets, and the consideration set's impact on voting behavior. For the first empirical chapter, the results show that the more party (leader) ambivalent voters are, the more likely they are to consider voting for an additional party. Second, voters who prefer a leader from a different party than their favorite party are also more likely to consider an additional party. Thirdly, voters who prefer a coalition that does not include the voters' favorite party are also more likely to show a larger consideration set. For the second empirical section, the findings demonstrate first that voters who consider voting for another party find the decision for which party to vote for more difficult and take longer to decide. Second, consideration sets have a significant effect on vote switching showing that voters who consider another party are more likely to switch votes between elections. In lower house elections, voters are about 20 percentage points more likely to engage in vote switching, while in presidential systems voters are only about four percentage points more likely to switch votes. Overall, the empirical analyses of this article highlight how important parties' choices regarding their leaders and potential coalition partners are and how they can strategically affect voters' consideration sets influencing voting behavior in the end.

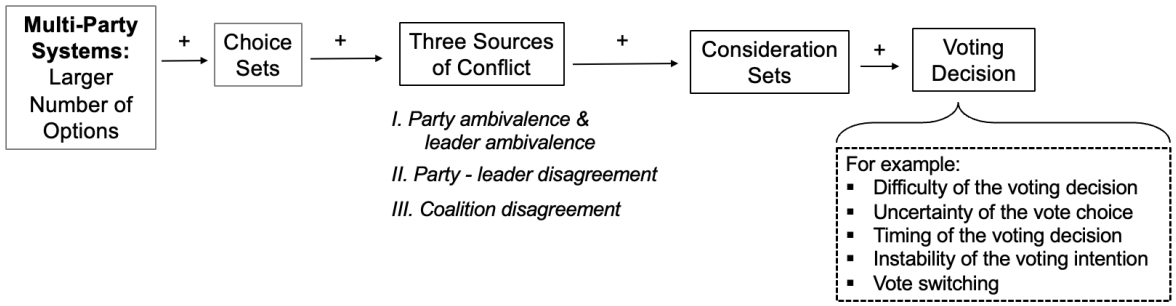
5.2 State of the Art

5.2.1 Internal Sources of Conflict and Consideration Sets

The first part of the article focuses on the explanation what may lead to larger consideration sets, in turn affecting voting decisions. Previous research shows that an increasing number of alternatives leads to an increasing size of individuals' consideration sets (Wilson 2008; Johnson 2014, 509; Oscarsson and Rosema 2019). The article argues that the increasing number of parties in MPS leading to larger choice sets affects individuals' consideration sets based on three types of conflict. The first one deals with party ambivalent and leader ambivalent attitudes. Both are likely to become larger when more parties are available and ideological distances between parties are decreasing. The last two sources of conflict deal with two trade-offs between assessment dimensions that become increasingly complicated. One relates to party-leader disagreement and one to coalition disagreement. Both are expected to lead to larger

consideration sets in MPS. The three underlying types of conflict in which voters in MPS are expected to develop larger consideration sets are roughly sketched in Figure 5.1.[31]

Figure 5.1: Graphical illustration of the mechanisms influencing the voting decision



5.2.1.1 Political Ambivalence

Ambivalence – also known as cross-pressures (Lazarsfeld et al. 1944; Mutz 2002) – is an attitudinal conflict that is characterized by competing considerations and contradictory ideas about an object or a person (Kaplan 1972; Zaller and Feldman 1992; Thompson et al. 1995; Lavine 2001, 915; Basinger and Lavine 2005).[32] The work on ambivalence has mostly focused on policy issues, candidates or parties (Lavine 2001; McGraw et al. 2003; Basinger and Lavine 2005). Individuals can be ambivalent toward *one* or *multiple* objects (Lavine 2001). For example, someone is ambivalent toward *one* object if the person has similar negative and positive feelings or considerations toward one party. Ambivalence toward *multiple* objects can then be found if individuals have negative and positive feelings toward two or more parties. The balance between these positive and negative feelings is expected to lead to the strength of ambivalence. For example, voters who have equally strong positive and negative feelings toward a party are expected to be highly ambivalent, while voters who have significantly more positive than negative feelings or more negative than positive feelings toward the party (e.g., a 70:30 ratio) should be less ambivalent. The article captures two types of ambivalence: *Party ambivalence* and *leader ambivalence.* Whilst *party ambivalence* examines ambivalence between two parties, *leader ambivalence* is based on ambivalence between two leaders.

People can become ambivalent based on a variety of cognitive processes provoked by internal and external sources. Internal sources are characteristics of individuals influencing the

[31] This figure is based on Figure 1 by Dentler (2024, 4), with theoretical adjustments made.

[32] A careful distinction is needed between ambivalence and indifference (Stoeckel 2013). Both denote different mental states but are sometimes confounded with each other (Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller 2012, 303). Whilst ambivalence deals with strong but contradictory preferences, indifference is about a lack of preferences (Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller 2012).

development of ambivalent attitudes (Barker and Hansen 2005; Rudolph and Popp 2007). External sources are factors beyond the individual, such as electoral contexts or changes in the political environment (Mutz 2002; Nir 2005). The party system as an external source is pointed out in this article. Earlier work (Dentler 2024) shows that the ideological distance between parties is affected by the number of parties and the polarization of the party system. The more parties compete, the ideologically closer they become, and the greater becomes their overlap in content (Plischke 2014, 125; Dentler 2024).[33] If ideological distances become smaller in MPS, the overlaps in content also mean that parties with similar programs can cooperate if they pursue common goals. They may even be forced to form coalitions to achieve government majorities (Schoen 2010). In coalition governments, parties cannot implement their pure programs but must make compromises that further reduce the discriminatory power of the two coalition partners' perceptions (Plischke 2014, 125). This makes certain parties appear more similar (Plischke 2014, 125). The comparison of positions of the parties would therefore not reveal too many differences from whose evaluation a decision could be derived. This then causes increasing party and leader ambivalent attitudes (Dentler 2024), probably also explaining an increased likelihood of showing party-leader and coalition disagreement.

5.2.1.2 Party-Leader Disagreement

Party-leader disagreement describes the situation in which voters can get into an internal conflict because they prefer a leader of a party other than their favorite party. For instance, the leader of party A may be preferred to the leader of party B, while party B is assigned a higher competence or more liked than party A. In the 2021 German federal election, party-leader disagreement was one of the driving forces behind the Social Democrats' surprise victory. While two more candidates for chancellor from the CDU/CSU and the Greens ran, both made critical mistakes in the pre-election campaign phase, causing voters and sympathizers of both parties to consider voting for a different party, namely the Social Democrats with Olaf Scholz as the lucky winner. This recent election has demonstrated how easily voters can become party-leader disagreeing and the impact this has on voting behavior.

Party-leader disagreeing voters do thus face a greater decision difficulty and are trapped between voting for their favorite party or favorite leader (Wagner and Weßels 2012; Daoust et al. 2021; Quinlan and McAllister 2021). As pointed out by the previous literature (Wagner and Weßels 2012), we should not solely look at party and leader evaluations separately but pay

[33] However, there is also some counter evidence showing that a high number of parties does not necessarily mean that distances between parties are small (Dalton 2008).

more attention to the interplay between both. For the German Federal elections between 1998 and 2009, Wagner and Weßels (2012) findings strengthen this argument by showing that leader and party evaluations reinforce each other, and that the match between a party and its leader is what matters most for vote choice. Daoust et al. (2021) find in their research that 17% of the voters preferred a leader from another party. Dentler (2023; 2024) shows that voters who are party-leader disagreeing are more likely to engage in vote switching. Party-leader disagreement is thus not rare and could be an important factor influencing voters' consideration sets and voting decisions.

5.2.1.3. Coalition Disagreement

The second trade-off type deals with coalition expectations and disagreement. This source is closely related to the commonly known concept of strategic voting. Gschwend and Meffert (2017) nicely identify four motivations why voters might defect from their preferred party and vote strategically in order to have an effect on the next government. Two motivations focus on general strategic voting and the other two explicitly on *strategic coalition voting* because they aim at the next coalition government. The first general motivation deals with *avoiding a wasted vote* for a party or candidate that has no chance of being represented in the next parliament (Duverger 1954; Cox 1994). The second general one focuses on the *checks-and-balances logic* arguing that some voters might engage in strategic balancing and vote in a way that prevents a single party or coalition controlling all the major institutions (Geschwend and Leuffen 2005).

Strategic coalition voting is another important scope as typical governments are coalitions of two or more parties. Even if voters usually cast only a single vote for one party, they might very well be aware of possible coalitions after the election and might take these expectations into account (Meffert and Gschwend 2010; Meffert and Gschwend 2011). The first motivation of strategic coalition voting refers to the *coalition composition*. The rental votes and threshold insurance strategy, for example, theorize that supporters of a major party cast their vote for a preferred smaller coalition partner to bring a certain coalition into power (Fredén 2016) or support a partner who is in danger of not getting into parliament because of the electoral threshold (Shikano et al. 2009; Meffert and Gschwend 2010; Gschwend et all. 2016). The second one deals with the *coalition portfolio*. Even if a coalition government is rather certain, a voter might still try to influence the coalition's portfolio by supporting one or the other coalition partner (Aldrich et al. 2005). At times when the electoral context does not provide incentives for strategic voting, for example, if the most preferred party is viable and competitive, there is no incentive to vote for a different party (Gschwend and Meffert 2017).

This is where *coalition disagreement* comes into play and may add to the current literature on strategic coalition voting. Whilst the favorite party might be viable and competitive, coalition disagreeing voters might face some conflict if their favorite party is not part of their favorite coalition. The article argues that it may be the case that individuals vote strategically not to create a specific coalition but, for example, to prevent one, hence prefer a different coalition and vote for one of its parties possibly being the second most liked party. However, aligning with classical strategic coalition voting, it may also be the case that the favorite party is not part of the favorite coalition because the most liked party is simply too small or too unpopular for other parties, and therefore no real option for a coalition.

If voters' dislike or simply the wish for a different coalition is strong enough, voters may consider voting for a different party than their favorite party. This trade-off type is an exclusive MPS feature as it can only be observed in MPS where the formation of coalitions is an essential part of the government formation process. In a TPS, voters do not face such situations. In MPS, these disagreements become more likely with a higher number of (effective) parties as more coalition constellations become possible. With a higher number of parties, this means that more parties have an actual chance of becoming part of the governing coalition and that potential coalitions become larger, which in turn makes coalitions with disliked parties more likely. Of course, all possibilities require a certain degree of sophistication on the part of voters.

5.2.2 Consideration Sets and Voting Behavior

The second half of the article focuses on the second part of Figure 5.1 looking at the impact of consideration sets on voting behavior. When investigating voting decisions, we always look at least indirectly at individuals' choice and consideration sets. Choice sets refer to all viable alternatives – whether it be parties or leaders – that voters face when they vote and that they are aware of (Nedungadi 1990). Therefore, they usually include all the available parties or leaders. Again, the external source party system also has an effect here. Whilst the choice set in TPS shows a maximum of two, the choice set of individuals in MPS is larger by default (Oscarsson and Rosema 2019, 257). However, voters are unlikely to consider all viable alternatives, but that they apply heuristics to reduce their choice set (Wilson 2008; Lavine et al. 2012; Plischke 2014, 111; Oscarsson and Rosema 2019, 258). In doing so, voters build consideration sets. Consideration sets are sets of alternatives that voters reasonably consider in their decision-making process (Wilson 2008, 162). Again, voters in TPS can only contain two parties in their consideration sets, whereas voters in MPS have a wide choice and may include even more.

Ideally, applying heuristics might be highly effective resulting in a consideration set containing only one alternative. For instance, partisans can be expected to be more likely to reduce their choice set solely using heuristics (Lavine et al. 2012). If heuristics, however, fail to reduce the number of alternatives to one, then voters are faced with multiple options and must apply different decision strategies to find a solution. Research shows that consideration sets do have an influence on vote choice and voting behavior (Wilson 2008; Sohlberg and Fredén 2020). Larger sets, for example, increase the cognitive complexity of the decision-making process (Lau 2003, 45; Plischke 2014). Sohlberg and Fredén (2020) show that larger consideration sets increase the perceived difficulty of vote choice.

5.3 The Impact of Three Sources of Conflict

By looking at three types of conflict – namely party and leader ambivalence, party-leader disagreement and coalition disagreement – this article examines how a larger number of parties in MPS are likely to increase individuals' consideration sets and thereby affect voters' decision-making processes and voting behavior. This is highly relevant because voters in MPS might be more likely to hold these internal conflicts compared to voters in TPS, and therefore they might be affected stronger in their voting behavior.

5.3.1 Three Sources of Conflict and Their Impact on Consideration Sets

For the first source of conflict, the article argues that voters' consideration sets are affected by the degree of party and leader ambivalent attitudes. Ambivalence in this article relies on the concept of *intensity* and *similarity* of the original Thompson et al. (1995) ambivalence index.[34] Previous scholars (Hass et al. 1991; Thompson et al. 1995) have identified intensity and similarity as two necessary and sufficient conditions for the arousal of ambivalence. Intensity ensures that the evaluations of parties (leaders) should be similar in magnitude. This means that if the like-dislike ranking of one party (leader) becomes stronger than the one of the other party (leader), attitudes between both parties (leaders) become more polarized and ambivalence is decreasing. The respondent is then more likely to clearly favor one of the two options. Similarity captures whether parties' (leaders') evaluations are of at least moderate intensity. This means that ambivalence is greater when respondents rank parties or leaders higher than when they rank them lower. Intensity is then captured on the left of the formula providing the average strength of like and dislike ratings of the two highest rated parties or leaders. Similarity

[34] *Party ambivalence* = $(\text{Party}_A + \text{Party}_B) / 2 - (|\text{Party}_A - \text{Party}_B|)$ and *leader ambivalence* = $(\text{Leader}_A + \text{Leader}_B) / 2 - (|\text{Leader}_A - \text{Leader}_B|)$

is captured on the right of the formula yielding the absolute value of the difference between the rating of the first most liked party (leader) and the second most liked party (leader). The article hypothesizes that voters who show larger scores on both concepts – resulting in the ambivalence measure – are more likely to consider two parties (or even more) to vote for than voters who show lower scores. For example, a voter rating two parties on a scale from 0 – strongly dislike – to 10 – strongly like – should be more likely to consider voting for both parties if they are rated 10 and 9, than if the voter would rate them 10 and 6. The ambivalence measure would result in values of 8.5 and 4 – higher values therefore indicate a higher ambivalence. The article hence theorizes that the more party or leader ambivalent voters are between their two most liked parties or leaders, the more likely they are to consider voting for an additional party (H_1).

> *H_1: The higher the party (leader) ambivalence between a voter's* two *highest rated parties (leaders), the higher the voter's likelihood that the voter considers voting for an additional party.*

The second source of conflict deals with the trade-off between a favorite leader and a deviating favorite party, named party-leader disagreement. Related to Figure 5.1, Dentler's (2024) work supports the argument that a higher number of parties leads to an increased likelihood of holding party-leader disagreeing attitudes. Building on this earlier work, the article investigates whether voters who are party-leader disagreeing are then more likely to consider voting for an additional party. While the debate about the strength of the influence of leaders is still ongoing, most scholars seem to agree that leaders have some influence on voting decisions. In some systems, leaders play a more important role than in others. In presidential systems in particular, leaders are a decisive factor in electoral decisions. The article agrees that the influence of leaders can vary from system to system. Nevertheless, it argues that investigating the influence of leaders on considering voting for another party is inevitable. Therefore, the article hypothesizes that voters who prefer a leader of a party other than their favorite party are more likely to consider another party (H_2).

> *H_2: Voters who are party-leader disagreeing are more likely to consider voting for an additional party.*

The second trade-off type deals with coalition expectations and disagreement. Unfortunately, the effect of the number of parties on coalition disagreements was not tested so far and cannot be tested due to data availability. However, the impact of coalition disagreement on the likelihood of considering voting for an additional party can be tested. The article argues that in certain circumstances, voters may be tempted to vote for a party that is not their favorite, but which would result in a more attractive government for them. For example, if they want to

prevent a particular coalition from coming into government. This may be the case when parties have to form coalitions due to unclear majorities and therefore have to consider all available coalition partners. Some parties may even consider coalitions with parties further to the right or left. For some voters, this could be a deal-breaker that leads them to vote for their second favorite party rather than their favorite party. Therefore, the article assumes that voters who prefer a coalition that does not consist of their favorite party are more likely to show a larger consideration set (H_3).

H_3: Voters who prefer a coalition that does not consist of their favorite party are more likely to consider voting for an additional party.

5.3.2 The Impact of Voters' Consideration Sets on Their Electoral Decision-Making Process

Individuals in MPS are likely to have larger consideration sets than individuals in TPS. Whilst the choice sets of individuals in TPS is two by default, individuals in MPS are offered more alternatives to choose from. Combined with the three internal sources of conflict, one can expect voters in MPS to show larger consideration sets. Larger consideration sets present voters with a more difficult decision task with regard to their electoral choice. Therefore, this article hypothesizes that voters who consider voting for more than one party are more likely to find their voting decision more difficult (H_4), to take longer for their voting decision (H_5), and to switch their votes between two elections (H_6).

H_4: Voters who consider voting for more than one party are more likely to find their voting decision more difficult.

H_5: Voters who consider voting for more than one party are more likely to take longer for their voting decision.

H_6: Voters who consider voting for more than one party are more likely to switch their votes between two elections.

5.4 Empirical Results on the Size of Consideration Sets in MPS

5.4.1 Cross-country investigation using the CSES

In the first section of the results, the article examines the impact of party and leader ambivalence, party-leader disagreement and coalition disagreement on the likelihood of showing larger consideration sets. To tease this out, the article first uses the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) Module 3 (CSES 2015). Due to the availability of variables related to respondents' consideration sets, exclusively Module 3 is used to examine the development

of party and leader ambivalence. Module 3 includes 38 countries with MPS and 47 national elections between 2005 and 2011.[35]

Consider voting other party (lower house) and *consider voting other party (presidential)* are the two dependent variables that capture whether respondents considered voting for another party at the lower house or presidential election.[36] Both are dummy variables that are coded 1 if a respondent considered voting for another party and 0 if the respondent did not consider voting for another party. In countries where multiple elections at once have taken place, the variables focus on the main election. Information on the main election can be found in the codebook part 2 of the IMD (2024).

To measure *party* and *leader ambivalence*, the article uses feeling thermometer ratings of a respondent's two highest rated parties and leaders (Johnson 2014). It thus captures ambivalence between *multiple* parties or leaders. Measuring ambivalence with feeling thermometer ratings is not new and has been done in the multi-party context by other scholars as well (Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller 2012; Johnson 2014; Blumenstiel 2014; Çakır 2022). In CSES election studies, respondents have been consistently asked to rate leaders and the parties on a 0-10 popularity scale, with a score of 0 indicating they did not like the actor and a score of 10 indicating they like the entity a lot. Based on the rating of the two most liked parties or leaders (Blumenstiel 2014), the previously presented index is calculated demonstrating respondents' degree of *party ambivalence* and *leader ambivalence*. The indexes range from -5 to 10, with 10 being the value of respondents who are most ambivalent and -5 being the value of respondents who are least ambivalent. For example, respondents who rate two parties on the feeling thermometer with the highest possible score of 10 (strongly like) would yield a score of 10 (*party ambivalence* = (10+10)/ 2 - (|10 - 10|)). The lowest value of ambivalence is achieved by respondents who have a clear favorite and rate one party with a 10 (strongly like) and the other with a 0 (strongly dislike). Applying the formula, these respondents obtain the lowest ambivalence value of -5 (*party ambivalence* = (10+0)/ 2 - (|10 - 0|)).

Party-leader disagreement uses the feeling thermometer as well. Respondents are classified as being party-leader disagreeing if they show a different leader than party favorite on the 0-10 feeling thermometer. For instance, respondents rating both Party A (e.g., $Party_A$ = 9, $Party_B$ = 7) and the leader of Party A (e.g., $Leader_A$ = 9, $Leader_B$ = 7) highest among all alternatives would be classified as party-leader agreeing. Whereas, respondents rating Party A highest among all parties (e.g., $Party_A$ = 9, $Party_B$ = 7) but the leader of Party B highest among

[35] Further information available in the Appendix 7.4.1.
[36] Further information available in the Appendix 7.4.2.

all leaders (e.g., $Leader_A$ = 7, $Leader_B$ = 9), would be classified as being party-leader **dis**agreeing. *Party-leader disagreement* is thus a dummy variable coded 0 if the respondents' favorite party and leader are congruent, and coded 1 if they are not congruent meaning that respondents show two different favorites.[37]

Further, several *country dummies* are added to account for country fixed effects as well as other common control variables.[38] As the models contain binary dependent variables, the article uses logistic multivariate regressions. All models include country and year fixed effects and standard errors clustered by country. As a methodological robustness check, Table A5.14 (Appendix 7.4.4) replicates both country-year fixed effects models with random intercept multi-level models to account for the nested structure of the data.

Figure 5.2 visualizes the logistic regression results from Table A5.5 in the Appendix 7.4.3 for the lower house elections (model A5-1) and the presidential elections (model A5-2) dealing with the effects of party ambivalence (H_1), leader ambivalence (H_1) and party-leader disagreement (H_2) on considering voting for an additional party (see Figure 5.1 again). Models A5-1 and A5-2 show strong significant effects for nearly all sources of conflict on considering an additional party to vote for, except party ambivalence in presidential elections which has a p-value of 0.051. Figure 5.2 displays very strong effects of *party ambivalence* on *considering voting for an additional party*. For *leader ambivalence*, the effects are not as strong as for party ambivalence, but still strong and visible for lower house and presidential elections. The higher a voter's party (leader) ambivalence value, the higher the likelihood that the voter considers voting for an additional party. For *party-leader disagreement*, we see moderate but existent effects on *consideration sets* for both types of elections. Voters who show a different leader than party favorite are also more likely to consider voting for an additional party. Overall, the findings from a comparative perspective support hypotheses H_1 and H_2. Party and leader ambivalence, as well as party-leader disagreement, seem to impact voters' voting considerations, and hence might have an important impact on voters' decisions. H_3 cannot be tested with the CSES due to data availability.

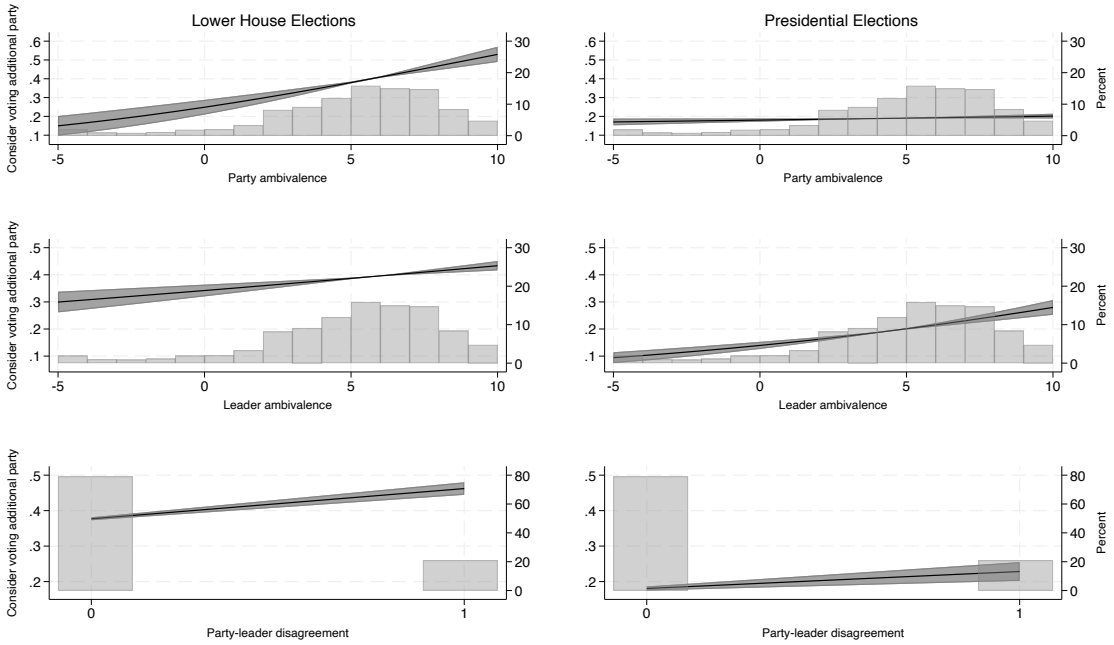
5.4.2 Case study investigation using the GLES

To dig deeper into the question of how internal sources of conflict affect the expansion of consideration sets, the article uses the 2013 (Rattinger et al. 2016) and 2017 (Roßteutscher et

[37] Further information available in the Appendix 7.4.2.

[38] A comprehensive list of all elections included in the analyses and a detailed operationalization of all variables, as well as descriptive statistics, can be found in the Appendix 7.4.1 and 7.4.2.

Figure 5.2: Average predicted effects testing *H1* and *H2*



al. 2019) GLES Short-Term Campaign Panels, as well as the GLES 2021 Rolling Cross-Section (GLES 2022), as a second step. Those panels allow for a more detailed analysis of the underlying effects leading to larger consideration sets, such as the impact of coalition disagreement on consideration sets. Especially the latter could not be measured using the CSES due to missing coalition popularity measures. Furthermore, the data allows to look more detailed at consideration sets of individual parties instead of a vaguer dummy whether any other party was considered or not, like in the previous section. Furthermore, the GLES data allows to look at more recent election than the CSES ranging from 2005 to 2011.

While Germany is a well-established MPS that provides the party menu needed to study the development of ambivalent attitudes, the main reason for choosing Germany is the availability of all the necessary items and variables needed to deepen the preliminary cross-national analyses mentioned above. Regardless, however, Germany is a particularly valuable example for examining the interplay between parties and their leaders because of the media's incessant focus on the race for the chancellorship and the impact of coalition disputes as German election results increasingly require the formation of larger coalitions.

The *GLES* is a central survey program in Germany for the continuous collection and provision of high-quality data for the analysis of federal elections in Germany. One of the main objectives of the *GLES* is to assess the political attitudes, preferences and voting behavior of German voters. For this reason, the *GLES* uses a panel design and regularly conducts surveys

before, between and after elections. Questions of electoral research can thus be examined from a cross-sectional and a longitudinal perspective. The *GLES* data can be used, for example, to analyze both short-term dynamics during the federal election campaign and long-term social change processes between individual elections.

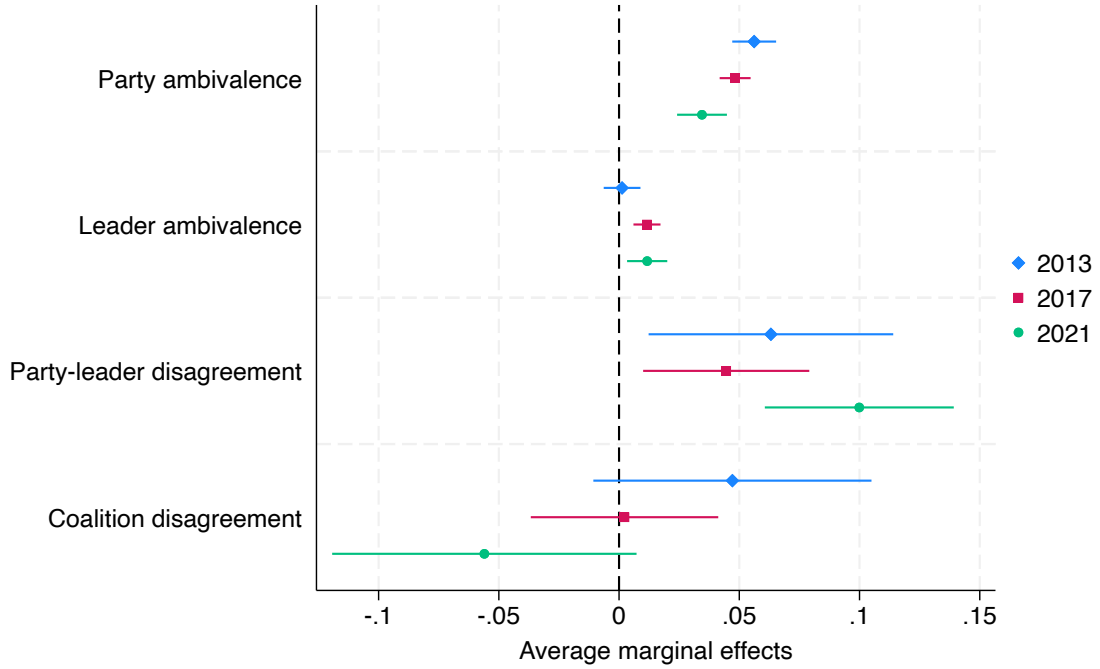
In detail, the article uses the *GLES* Short-term Campaign Panels 2013 and 2017, and the *GLES* Rolling Cross-Section 2021. The two campaign panels allow for an analysis of individuals' behavior over the course of the two election campaigns. In the 2013 campaign panel, respondents are interviewed up to seven times at short intervals during the campaign—six times before and once afterwards the election. In the 2017 campaign panel, respondents are interviewed up to nine times—seven times before and two afterwards the election.[39] The sample of the 2013 campaign panel includes about 5,300 observations. In 2017, significantly more voters were interviewed, resulting in a sample of about 22,500 observations. For 2021, no campaign panel data is available, therefore the article uses the GLES Rolling Cross-Section 2021. This study consists of one interview per respondents prior to the 2021 German federal election and one interview after the election, using a rolling cross-section design. Of these 6,326 people interviewed in the first round, 4,446 respondents agreed to participate in the post-election survey.

In a first step, the article looks at similar analyses compared to the last section. All variables are identically coded and hence, the same logistic regression models are used. The analyses are run for each election separately. The only difference is the inclusion of a new variable: *coalition disagreement*. *Coalition disagreement* deals with respondents' attitudes toward the desirability of coalitions. It captures respondents' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a coalition to which their favorite party belongs. This variable allows the testing of hypothesis H_3 that expects voters who find a coalition more desirable that does not consist of their favorite party to be more likely to consider voting for another party. For coding this variable, the GLES coalition scalometer items ranging from -5 (not desirable at all) to 5 (absolutely desirable) are used.[40] The dummy variable is coded 1 if the respondent prefers a coalition that does not consist of the respondent's party favorite and coded 0 otherwise.[41]

[39] Further information available in the Appendix 7.4.2.
[40] Further information available in the Appendix 7.4.2.
[41] If the highest-rated alternative coalition is rated just as highly as the coalition of the favorite party, the respondent is also coded 0, hence not being coalition disagreeing.

Figure 5.3 shows the empirical results for the three sources of conflict in relation to consideration sets, broken down by national election year (Table A5.6 in Appendix 7.4.3).[42] *Party ambivalence* and *party-leader disagreement* show the strongest and most consistently significant effects for all three German elections. *Leader ambivalence* has a positive impact on voting considerations for 2017 and 2021, but not 2013. Whereas *coalition disagreement* is not significant at all. Therefore, the previous findings on party (leader) ambivalence (H_1) and party-leader disagreement (H_2) are reinforced. The initial investigation on coalition disagreement does not support H_3, and suggests that even if a voter indicates a coalition favorite without the voter's favorite party, the voter is not more likely to consider voting for another party.

Figure 5.3: Average marginal effects testing *H1*, *H2* and *H3*



In a second step, the empirical analysis examines once more voting considerations of respondents. However, instead of looking at whether respondents were generally more likely to consider voting for *any other* party, the following analyses focus on *specific parties* which respondents considered for voting. This allows a more detailed testing of hypotheses *H1*, *H2* and *H3*, and an investigation of differences among parties that are important to be considered and incorporated into the analyses. It might be especially beneficial for explaining the non-significant effects of coalition disagreement on consideration sets. For example, it can be

[42] The regression table of all models can be found in the Appendix 7.4.3. The results of the control variables are not included in the visualization for reasons of clarity.

assumed that it makes a difference whether a voter becomes coalition disagreeing depending on whether the voter initially prefers a smaller or a larger party. Furthermore, this is likely to affect whether or not the coalition disagreement can have an actual impact on the consideration set.

For all three elections, six consideration set dummies based on the six main parties are created (*ConSet CDU/CSU, ConSet SPD, ConSet FDP, ConSet Greens, ConSet Left, ConSet AfD*). Each dummy is coded 1 if the respondent stated to consider the respective party for the upcoming election and coded 0 if the respondent did not mention the party. Parties for which respondents indicated voting for are not included in the dummies intended to capture considerations of *additional* parties.[43]

Party ambivalence $_{[Party\ i]}$ and *leader ambivalence* $_{[Party\ i]}$ are very similar to the variables from the previous analysis but differ in the parties (leaders) used for calculating the index. Previously they were measured based on the two highest rated parties (leaders). The new coding is based on (1) $party_i$ ($leader_i$) that relates to $party_i$ from the dependent variable, hence the respective consideration set under investigation (i.e. the *CDU/CSU* for models looking at *ConSet CDU/CSU*), and (2) the party the voter mentioned to vote for in the next election. For example, if we investigate the *ConSet CDU/CSU*, we should expect that a voter who is more party ambivalent between the CDU/CSU and the party the voter intends to vote for should also be more likely to consider voting for the CDU/CSU. Therefore, each model contains a specific *party (leader) ambivalence* variable that refers to the party of the respective consideration set.

Party-leader disagreement $_{[Party\ i]}$ continues to be a dummy variable but is coded slightly different and more nuanced for each model and adjusted for each party. For example, *party-leader disagreement* included in the *ConSet CDU/CSU* model captures whether the respondent is party-leader disagreeing because of the CDU/CSU or not. The variable is coded 1 if the respondent prefers the leader of the CDU/CSU but a different party, and it is coded 0 if the respondent is not party-leader disagreeing or is disagreeing but independent of the CDU/CSU. Again, the expectation is that a voter who is party-leader disagreeing because of the CDU/CSU leader should be more likely to consider voting for this party in the upcoming election. Overall, six party-leader disagreement variables are calculated for the six models per election.

Coalition disagreement $_{[Party\ i]}$, like the previous variable, is identically coded to the last section but focuses more explicitly on the coalition disagreement based on specific parties. For example, if we investigate the *ConSet CDU/CSU*, we should expect that a voter who prefers a

[43] Further information available in the Appendix 7.4.2.

coalition with the CDU/CSU over a coalition with the voter's favorite party should also be more likely to consider voting for the CDU/CSU. Hence, each model contains a specific *coalition disagreement* variable that refers to the party of the respective consideration set.

As all the models show binary dependent variables, the article uses logistic regressions in order to estimate the impact on vote considerations. All models include robust standard errors and the same control variables from the previous section: Party identity, age, gender and education.

Figure 5.4 displays the average marginal effects of *party (leader) ambivalence*, *party-leader disagreement* and *coalition disagreement* on *considering voting* for the CDU/CSU, SPD, FDP and the Greens for the German federal elections 2013, 2017 and 2021.[44] We can look at the results from two different perspectives, we can either focus on elections (2013, 2017, 2021) or parties (Union, SPD, FDP, Greens), and both yield interesting insights. *Party ambivalence* is the only source of conflict that is continuously significant for all four parties across all three elections. This demonstrates that with a higher ambivalence between a $party_i$ and the voter's party considered to vote for, the probability of considering voting for the party in question ($party_i$) increases. This supports hypothesis H_1. The findings for *leader ambivalence* are still mixed. Whilst the variable is not significant for 2013 at all, it shows more significant effects for 2017 and 2021. This only partly supports H_1 in respective of leaders.

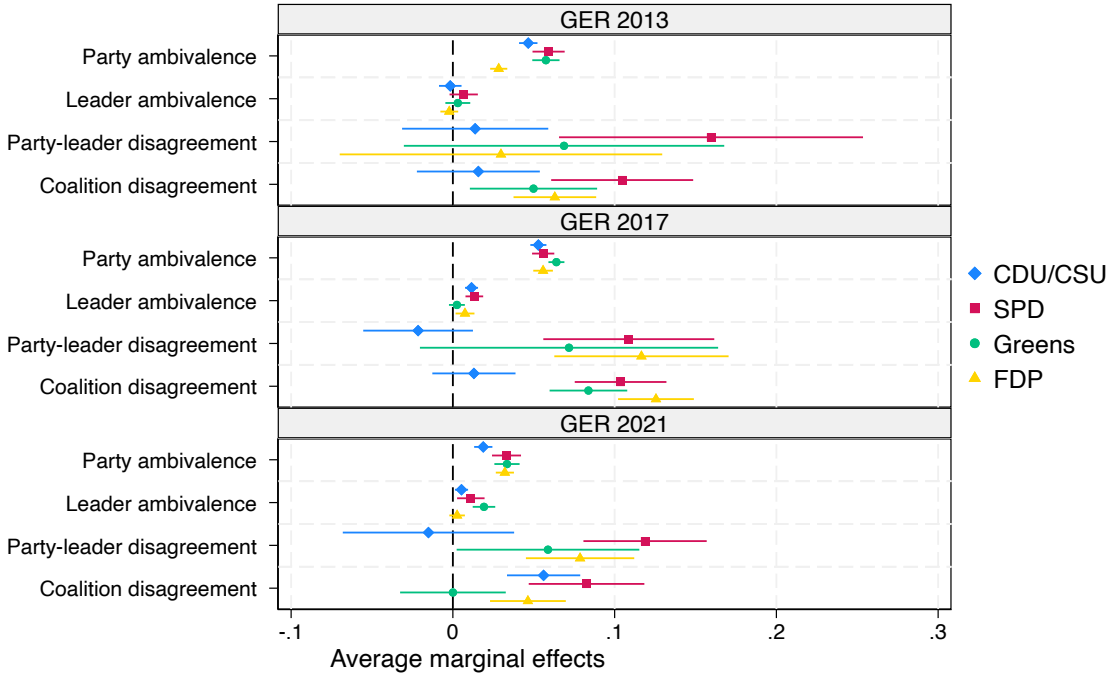
We find similar results for *party-leader disagreement*. While it seems to had less of an impact in 2013, we find stronger effects in 2017 and 2021. Interestingly, in all three elections, voters who prefer the Social Democrat's leader, even though the SPD is not their favorite party, seem to be more likely to consider voting for the SPD. This suggests that the SPD may benefit from a strong leader in elections. At the same time, some findings can be well explained by actual incidents in the pre-election campaign. This applies, for example, to the insignificant effects of the CDU/CSU in 2021. The party's leader, Armin Laschet, was at the time of the election rather unpopular due to several incidents. The results mirror this and indicate that he did not only prevent the CDU/CSU from being considered from other party's voters, but he also increased CDU/CSU voters to consider other parties instead.

Coalition disagreement shows more stable significant effects over the three elections, only being insignificant for the Union in 2013 and 2017, and for the Greens in 2021. This is a very interesting finding as it challenges earlier findings from Figure 5.3 where coalition

[44] The regression tables of all models including two additional models for the Left and the AfD (Table A5.7 to A5.9) and a figure including all parties (Figure A5.2) can be found in the Appendix 7.4.3. The results of the control variables are not included in the visualization for reasons of clarity.

disagreement did not show any significant effect. The article argues that this makes sense due to the important and often underestimated impact of inter party differences. Results hence support H_3 and encourage further investigations.

Figure 5.4: Average marginal effects testing *H1*, *H2* and *H3*



Overall, the results support the article's theory that the four sources of conflict matter for explaining considering voting for an additional party. The effects on considering voting for the SPD were strongest compared to all other parties. This means that voters who (1) show higher party (leader) ambivalent attitudes between the SPD (or its leader) and the party they intend to vote for, (2) prefer the SPD leader to the leader of their favorite party, and (3) favoring a coalition with the SPD, whilst the SPD is not the favorite party, were particularly likely to consider voting for the SPD. More broadly, the internal sources have a lower influence on the 2013 federal election (nine out of 16 significant), but a stronger influence on the 2017 (12 out of 16) and 2021 (13 out of 16) elections. However, the findings also demonstrated that the impact of each source can vary greatly from party to party, and from election to election, which underlines the importance of always keeping an eye on country-, election year- and party-specific circumstances.

Further, one could argue that the independent investigation of these sources of conflict is insufficient and that a combined measurement is required. The robustness check II in Appendix 7.4.4 (Tables A5.16 and A5.17) addresses this by explicitly examining the impact of such a combined measure on *consider voting other party* (dummy) for the CSES and the GLES.

The results highlight the combined importance of all three sources of conflict and their impact on voting considerations. Broadly, voters who hold internal conflicts of all sources are about 20 to 35 percentage points more likely to consider voting for another party than voters who do not show any conflict.

In sum, the empirical analyses in this section, based on international and national data, support the expected impact of party (leader) ambivalence (H_1), party-leader disagreement (H_2) and coalition disagreement (H_3) on considering voting for more than only one party in an upcoming election. However, the analyses also showed some insignificant findings that may need further investigation. Having already assumed an impact on voting decisions and behavior, the next section examines this empirically to show how this can play out in the electoral arena.

5.5 Investigating the Impact of Consideration Sets on Voting Decisions

5.5.1 Vote Decision Difficulty and Timing

In the second empirical section, this article examines the concrete impact of the three sources of conflict and consideration sets on voting decisions and behavior. In a first step, it focuses on considering voting for an additional party and its impact on factors leading to vote choice, like vote decision difficulty (H_4) and vote decision timing (H_5).

To test this, the articles used again the 2013 and 2017 GLES Short-term Campaign Panels, as well as the GLES 2021 Rolling Cross-Section. Both items are not available in the CSES data. The first dependent variable, *vote decision difficulty*, is a categorical variable that ranges from 1 (not difficult at all) to 5 (very difficult) in 2013 and 2017, and from 1 (very easy) to 4 (very difficult) in 2021. *Vote decision timing* is the second categorical dependent variable and ranges from 1 (a long time before the election) to 5 (not until election day) for 2013 and 2021. For 2017, it contains one more category ("2. Year ago").[45] The remaining variables are coded as described in earlier sections 5.4.1 and 5.4.2. For each election, one model is run. Each contains the respective dependent variable, the consideration set dummy, the three sources of conflict and the same set of control variables: Party identity, gender, age and education. As the dependent variables are categorical variables, the models use ordered logistic regressions. All models include robust standard errors.

Figure 5.5[46] presents the average predicted effects of *considering voting for an additional party* on the *vote decision difficulty*. For all three elections, the results show strong

[45] Further information available in the Appendix 7.4.2.

[46] The regression Table A5.10 can be found in the Appendix 7.4.3.

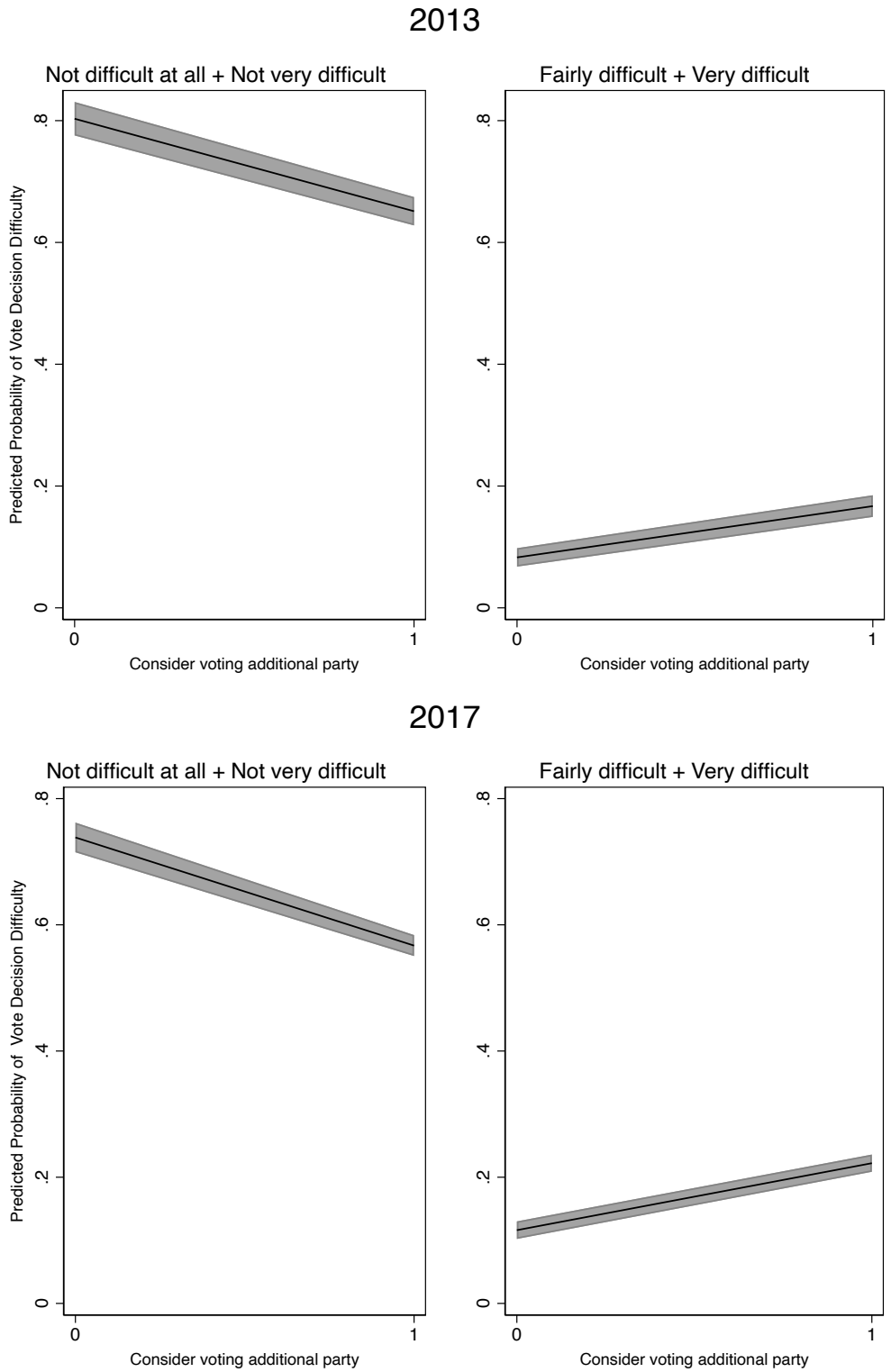
significant effects. The individual graphs for each election in Figure 5.5 show the combined predicted probabilities for the two lowest ("1. Not difficult at all" and "2. Not very difficult") and two highest ("4. Fairly difficult" and "5. Very difficult") categories. The middle category is not shown for 2013 and 2017, and is not available for 2021. For all three sub-graphs, we find that voters who are considering another party are less likely to perceive the voting decision as "not difficult" (left graphs) and at the same time more likely to perceive it as "difficult" (right graphs) compared to voters who are not considering another party. For 2013 and 2017, voters are around 15 percentage points less likely to find it "not difficult" and around 10 percentage points more likely to find it "difficult". For 2021, the impact is much stronger. Possible differences could be due to a different scale that did not include a middle category. The probability that voters perceive it "not difficult" is about 35 percentage points lower, while the probability that they find it "difficult" is 35 percentage points higher. In general, the results show that voters who are considering voting for another party are more likely to find the vote decision difficult. This supports hypothesis H_4.

Figure 5.6[47] presents the average predicted effects of *considering voting for an additional party* on the *vote decision timing*. Each graph displays the predicted probabilities for each category of decision timing. For 2013, we find that voters considering another party are about 15 percentage points less likely to decide "a long time before the election" than voters not considering an additional party. No major differences can be seen in the graph for the second category "few months before election". There is a slight increase for categories "few weeks before E", "few days before E" and "on election day", which means that voters who are considering voting for another party are more likely to decide later than voters who are not. The results for 2017 show a similar picture. While the probability for the three categories furthest in the past ("long time before E", "year ago" and "few months ago") decreases or remains stable, it increases for the three categories closest to the election, even if it is rather low in the last category "on election day". This suggests that the consideration of voting for another party has an influence, but voters probably resolve their internal conflicts earlier than on election day and decide which party to vote for. The results for 2021 support the previous findings. While the two categories furthest in the past show a decreasing or constant probability, the three categories closest to the election show an increasing probability of someone considering another party. To summarize, the results support hypothesis H_5 by showing that voters who consider voting for another party are more likely to decide later than voters who only consider one party.

[47] The regression Table A5.11 can be found in the Appendix 7.4.3.

Overall, the results are trivial and rather straightforward. Nevertheless, they support the two hypotheses and provide some additional evidence for the underlying argument that the three sources of internal conflict can exert an important influence on voting decisions by influencing consideration sets in MPS.

Figure 5.5: Average predicted effects testing *H4* with the GLES 2013, 2017 and 2021



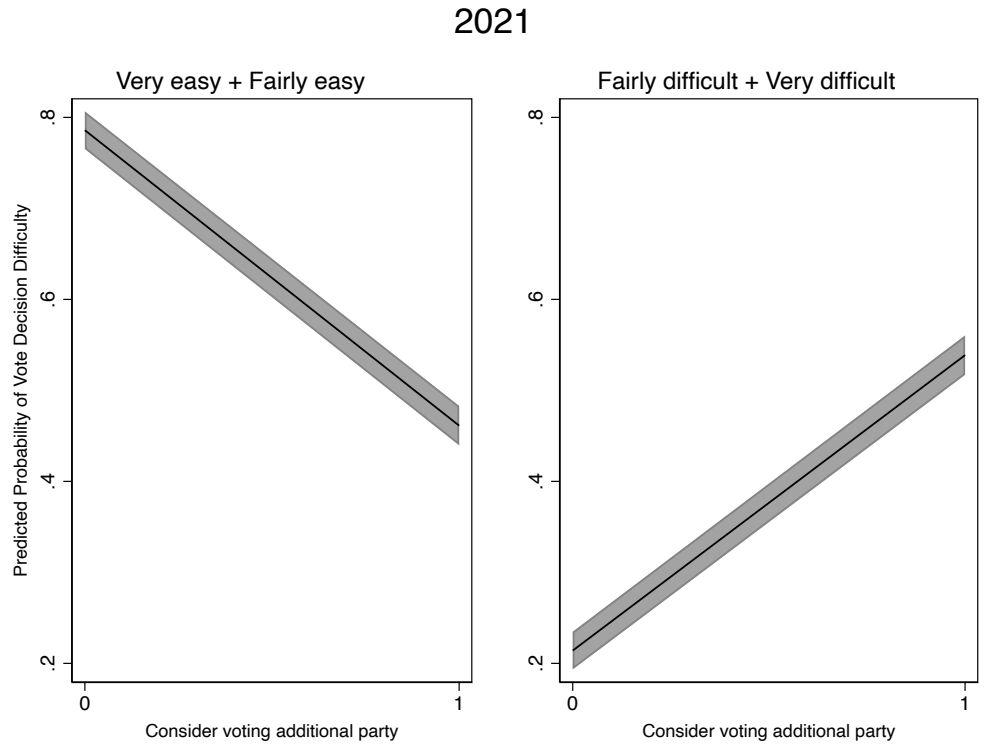
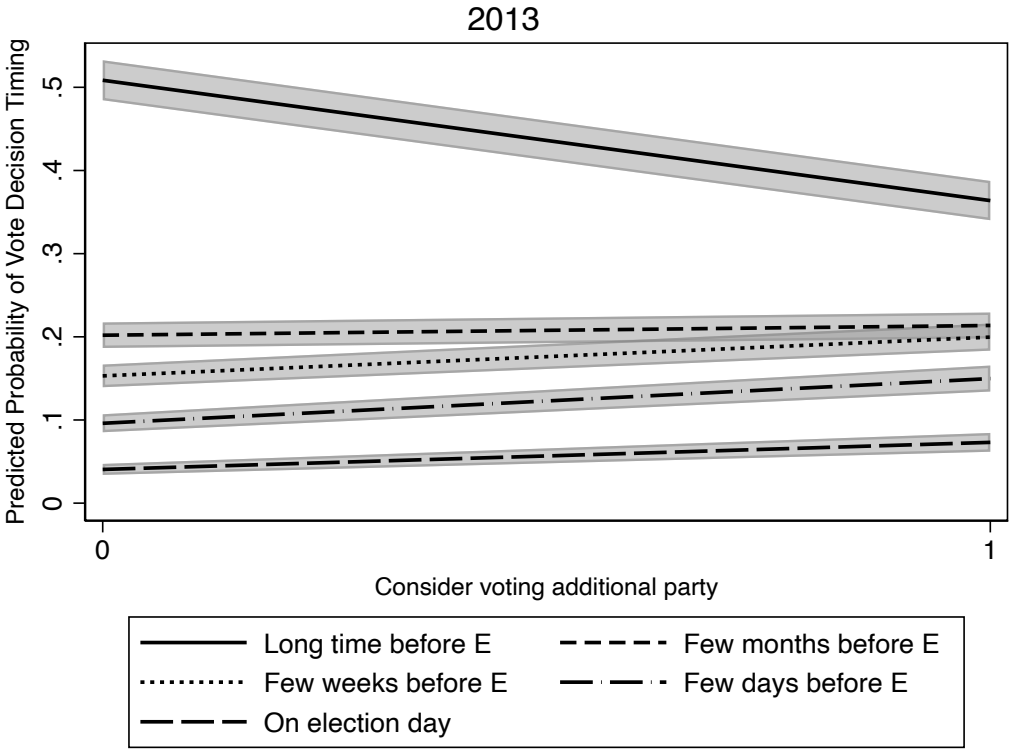
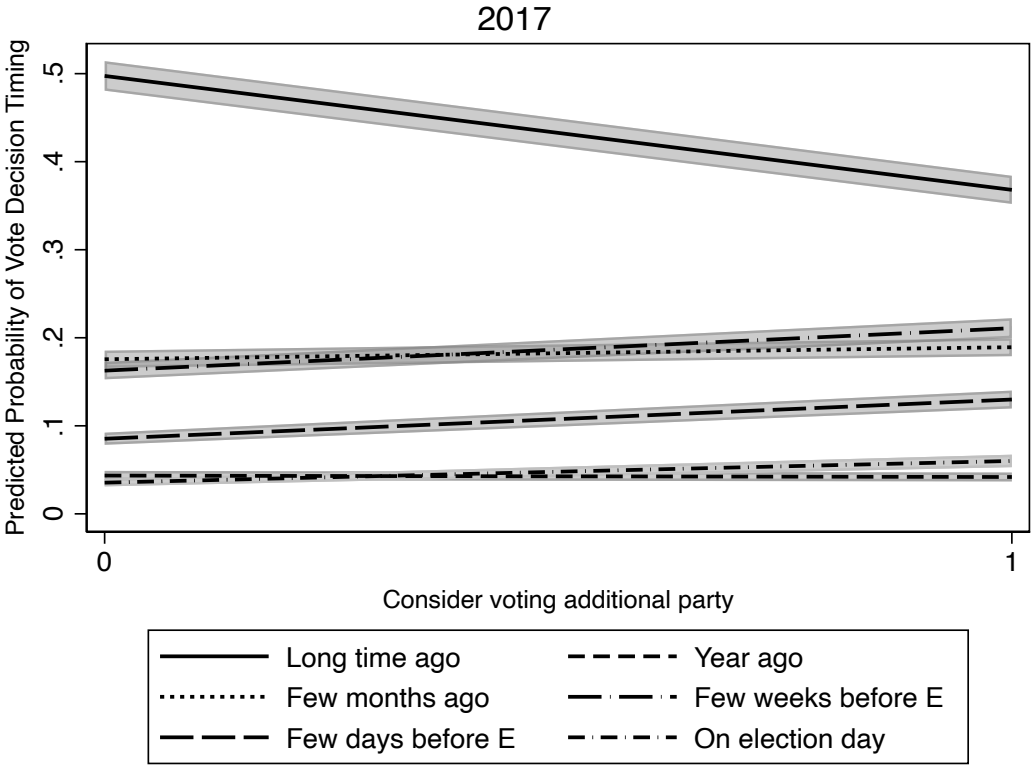
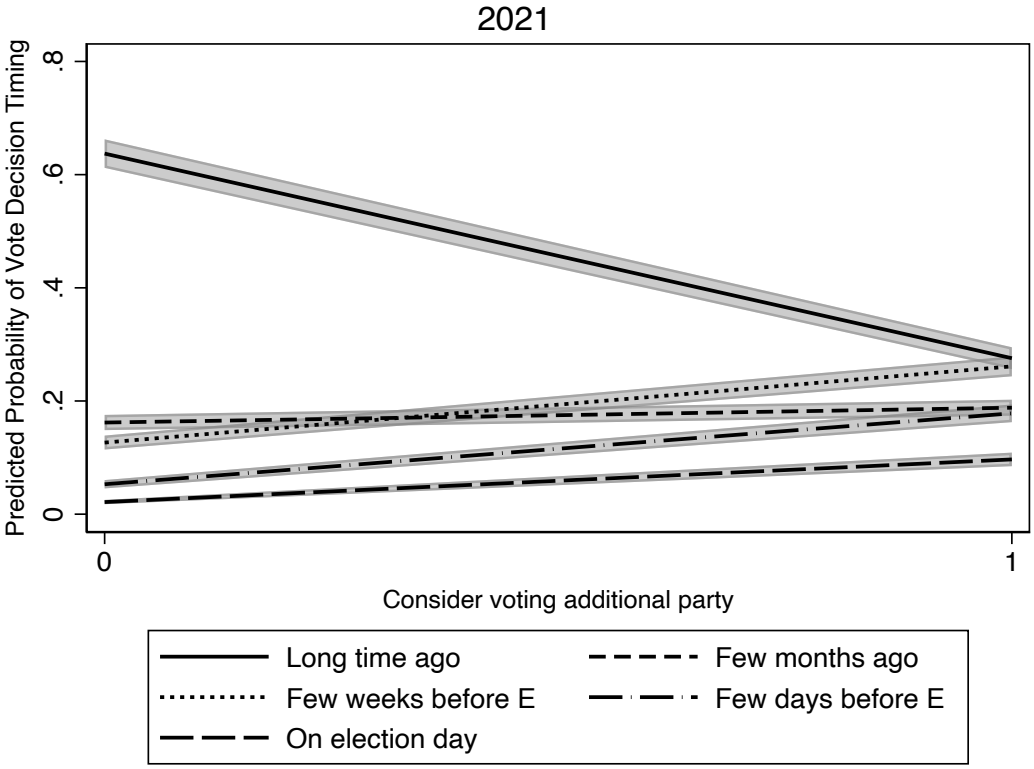


Figure 5.6: Average predicted effects testing *H5* with the GLES 2013, 2017 and 2021




2017
Predicted Probability of Vote Decision Timing
0
.1
.2
.3
.4
.5
0
1
Consider voting additional party
Long time ago
Year ago
Few months ago
Few weeks before E
Few days before E
On election day


2021
Predicted Probability of Vote Decision Timing
0
.2
.4
.6
.8
0
1
Consider voting additional party
Long time ago
Few months ago
Few weeks before E
Few days before E
On election day

5.5.2 Vote Switching

In a second step, this section looks at the impact of consideration sets on vote switching. It uses the same GLES data as before but also the CSES Module 3 data from section 5.4.1 that allows to add a comparative investigation.

Vote switching is a dummy variable indicating whether respondents voted in two consecutive national elections for the same party, coded as 0, or whether they voted for two different parties, coded as 1.[48] The empirical analysis for the GLES is again split by election year, resulting in one model for 2013, one for 2017, and one for 2021. For the CSES, the analysis is divided by main election, resulting in one model for lower house and one for presidential elections. All models include robust standard errors and if applicable, country fixed effects.[49] The models include the previous control variables.

Figures 5.7 and 5.8 present the average predicted probabilities of vote switching given voters who either consider an additional party or not.[50] Whilst Figure 5.7 focuses on the GLES, hence the 2013, 2017 and 2021 German federal elections, Figure 5.8 is based on the CSES and hence, takes a variety of lower house and presidential elections between 2005 and 2011. In the respective tables, we find strong significant effects of *considering voting for an additional party* on the likelihood of engaging in *vote switching*. For the three German federal elections, Figure 5.7 shows very similar effects across elections, the slightly strongest in 2021. This suggests that voters who are considering voting for another party are about 15 percentage points more likely to switch their vote, which supports H_6. From a comparative perspective using the CSES, we find considerable differences in the strength of the effects. Whilst considering an additional party is significant in both models, Figure 5.8 shows that its impact is much stronger for lower house elections than presidential elections. Voters in presidential elections are only about four percentage points more likely to switch voters. Whereas, voters in lower house elections are about 20 percentage points more likely to switch votes. This is in line with the results of the German federal elections, which are also lower house elections.

Overall, the empirical analyses in this section support the last three hypotheses H_4, H_5 and H_6 and provide evidence for the impact of consideration sets on voting decisions and behavior. Whilst this section has explicitly looked at consideration sets, it also demonstrates the

[48] Further information available in the Appendix 7.4.2.

[49] Table A5.15 (Appendix 7.4.4) replicates both country-year fixed effects models with random intercept multi-level models.

[50] For both figures, the regression tables of both models (Table A5.12 and Table A5.13) can be found in the Appendix 7.4.3.

underlying influence of three sources of conflict: Party (leader) ambivalence, party-leader disagreement and coalition disagreement.

Figure 5.7: Average predicted effects testing *H6* with the GLES 2013, 2017 and 2021

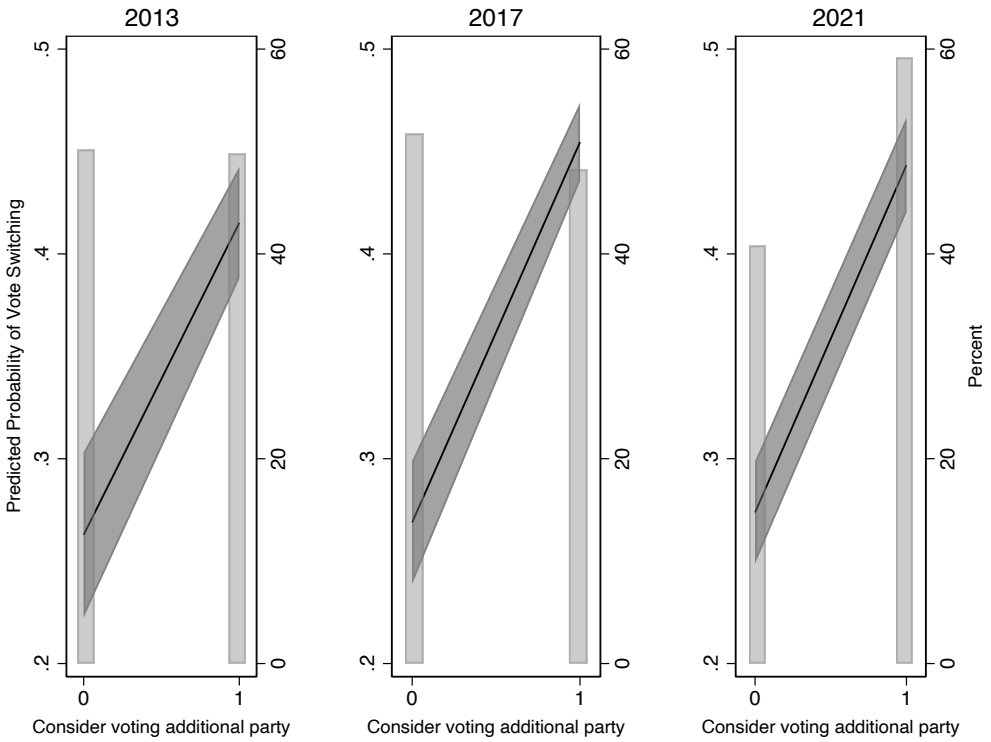
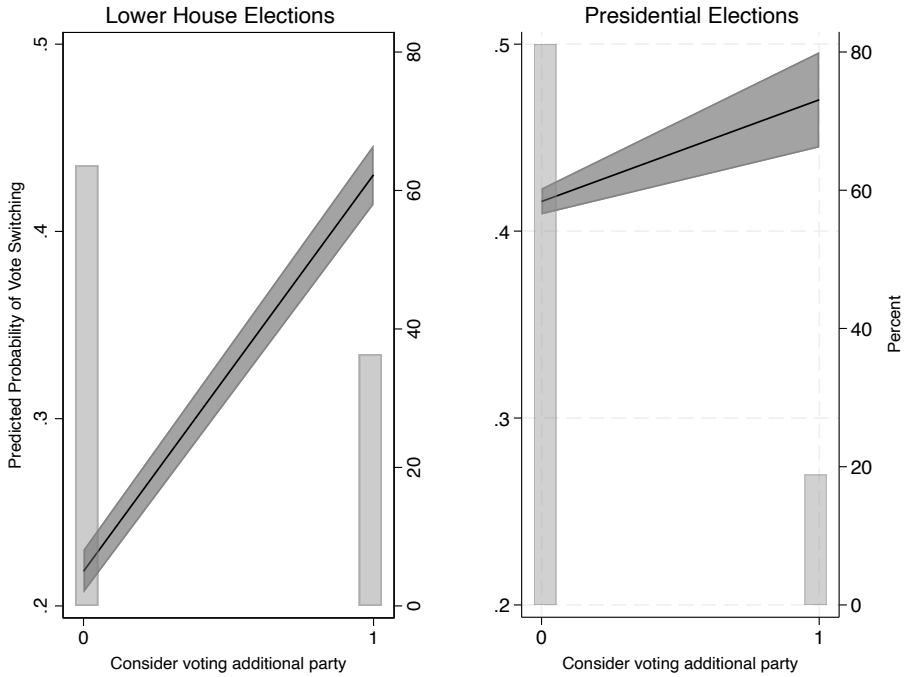


Figure 5.8: Average predicted effects testing *H6* with CSES Module 3



5.6 Conclusion

This article examined voters' decision-making and behavior by looking at three sources of conflict and their impact on consideration sets. In the first empirical section, the article successfully showed that party ambivalence, leader ambivalence, party-leader disagreement and coalition disagreement impact voters' likelihood to consider voting for another party. Using data from the CSES and GLES, three hypotheses were tested. The first hypothesis using CSES and GLES data addressed how larger party ambivalence and leader ambivalence values increase the probability of developing larger consideration sets (H_1). For the second hypothesis (H_2), the article investigated how party-leader disagreement influences voters' probability to consider voting for another party at the upcoming election. Using only GLES data, a third hypothesis (H_3) tested whether voters who prefer a coalition that does not include their favorite party increases voters' probability to consider voting for another party. Overall, the results provide support for all three hypotheses. First, the more party (leader) ambivalent voters are, the more likely they are to consider voting for an additional party. Second, voters who prefer a leader from a different party than their favorite party are also more likely to consider an additional party. Thirdly, voters who prefer a coalition that does not include the voters' favorite party are also more likely to show a larger consideration set. However, the results, especially from the GLES, also demonstrated that it is not reasonable to lump all parties together, as we neglect important inter-party differences that need to be considered. This probably applies to all three sources, but the analyses have emphasized this particularly for coalition disagreement.

The second empirical section dealt with the impact of consideration sets on voters' decision difficulty (H_4), decision timing (H_5), and vote switching (H_6). For the first two hypotheses, the article used GLES data and showed for the election years 2013, 2017 and 2021 that voters considering voting for another party find the decision for which party to vote for more difficult and take longer to decide. For the last hypothesis, data from the GLES and CSES was used. The graphical representation of the regression results showed that consideration sets have a significant effect on vote switching in both, presidential and lower house elections. The impact was much stronger in lower house elections, as voters were about 20 percentage points more likely to engage in vote switching, while in presidential systems voters were only about four percentage points more likely to switch votes if they considered another party.

Overall, this article successfully showed that internal sources of conflict, like party (leader) ambivalence, party-leader disagreement and coalition disagreement, have a significant impact on consideration sets and thereby, strongly affect voters' decision-making and electoral behavior.

Nevertheless, the article should also acknowledge some limitations. First, making use of the available panel data could be valuable to examine changes in individuals' and attitudes over time, and investigate the impact of these sources of conflict in more detail. It is particularly advisable to examine the impact of a new party or change in leadership. Second, the article did not spend much time on possible differences between party and leader ambivalence. However, there may be important differences to consider. Third, future research may incorporate differences on the size of favorite parties into the measurement and tests of coalition disagreement, as this might influence how likely somebody is coalition disagreeing and hence the likelihood that he or she considers another coalition in the first place.

Ultimately, the question remains as to what the results essentially mean. The article argues that these results provide valuable insights for practical politics and for research on party politics in general. First and more generally, the comparison between the results of the lower house elections and presidential elections demonstrated that the impact of sources of conflict on consideration sets as well as for the impact of consideration sets on vote switching are stronger in lower house elections. This supports the previous argument that these three types of conflict are more prevalent in MPS than in TPS. Second, the article underlines again the importance of leaders for parties' electoral success. The results revealed that leaders seem to be the more decisive force in presidential elections, whilst parties are more important in lower house elections. Related to this, the article emphasizes the importance of the interplay between leaders and their parties, and the impact of conflicts between the two on voters' attitudes and voting behavior. The impact of changes in leadership should thus also not be underestimated. Third, the findings of coalition disagreement may open up a new realm in the literature on strategic coalition voting. They have also shown that coalition signals can have important effects on voters' views and attitudes, which will be reflected in their voting behavior.

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6. Discussion and Conclusion

To investigate the increase in electoral volatility, this dissertation began by looking at the funnel of causality (Campbell et al. 1960; Dinas 2008). Building on the finding that partisanship, as a long-term predisposition, has been in constant decline over recent years, the dissertation argued that it is worthwhile to extend the funnel of causality further and examine short-term evaluations in the voting decision process. In doing so, the dissertation focused on three internal sources of conflict: party and leader ambivalence, party-leader disagreement, and coalition disagreement. The following sections discuss the findings of the four empirical chapters in relation to the overarching research questions and place their contributions within the research field. First, the theoretical and empirical results for the three contributions presented in Chapter 1.3 are summarized (Section 6.1). The limitations of the dissertation are then discussed, and directions for future research are proposed (Section 6.2). A general discussion of the knowledge gained from this dissertation (Section 6.3) concludes the chapter.

6.1 Contributions to the Research Field

The findings of this dissertation can be categorized into three main contributions (Chapter 1.3). The first contribution relates to the development of a detailed theoretical framework explaining how party and leader ambivalence, party-leader disagreement, and coalition disagreement influence vote switching in a multi-party context. In Chapter 1, the theoretical framework was situated within the context of existing research, highlighting key connections between various frameworks. This framework demonstrated the significant impact of these three sources of conflict on voting behavior, both through a general explanation (Figure 1.2) and a more in-depth exploration of cognitive processes (Figure 1.3). The general explanation argued that the number of parties in a system—the distinction between two-party systems (TPS) and multi-party systems (MPS)—has a decisive impact on the development of conflicting attitudes. As the number of effective parties increases, voters are more likely to experience conflict introduced by parties and their leaders. Voters with conflicting attitudes tend to perceive their vote choice as more difficult, take longer to decide, and are more likely to switch votes between elections. This framework built on earlier work by Plischke (2014) and Oscarsson and Rosema (2019), who focused on decision-making processes and the impact of party number on vote choices, as well as Lavine et al. (2012), who studied partisan ambivalence. Empirical support for the expected differences between TPS and MPS came from various findings presented across the chapters, particularly in the third contribution.

The second contribution involved the development and validation of an alternative measure of party and leader ambivalence tailored to multi-party contexts. Chapter 2 critiqued the established measurements of ambivalence and their limitations, offering an alternative measure for MPS. This new measure is based on previous research using feeling thermometer ratings (Johnson 2014) and creates an index based on the Griffin formula (Thompson et al. 1995). The use of feeling thermometer ratings allowed for a cross-country investigation of ambivalence and offers a means to generalize empirical results. Various robustness checks validated the measure and its findings. For example, results were replicated using the measures of Basinger and Lavine (2005), which have been applied in two-party contexts, as well as Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller (2012), who adapted the Griffin formula for MPS. While the alternative measure presented here is a substantial contribution, it also has limitations that may warrant further refinement in future research. Although feeling thermometer ratings enable generalizability, they have been used in various research contexts and may not perfectly capture the underlying concepts of political ambivalence.

The third contribution was the empirical investigation of the impact of internal sources of conflict on voting behavior, especially vote switching. The elections under analysis supported the notion of large-scale vote switching, as discussed in the introduction. For instance, the second chapter revealed an average vote-switching rate of 42% for three German elections (2013, 2017, and 2021). The third chapter showed average rates of 36% for the 2017 and 2019 Austrian elections, and 30% for the 2015, 2017, and 2019 British elections. The fourth chapter provided a more comparative perspective, showing an average electoral volatility of 34% globally, including the U.S. (TPS), and 52 MPS elections. The final empirical chapter, focusing on a smaller sample of 38 MPS, found an average volatility of about 33%. This is consistent with the earlier claim that vote switching is more prevalent in MPS than in TPS. Although separate volatility figures for the U.S. (the only TPS in the dataset) were not available, the below-average value of 30% for the UK somewhat supported the assumption that political systems with fewer effective parties experience lower volatility. A comparison of ambivalence distributions between TPS and MPS further added on this. As shown in Figure 4.2, voters in MPS exhibit more ambivalence toward parties and leaders than voters in TPS, such as the U.S. While party and leader ambivalence both average around five in MPS, they tend to be near zero in TPS (ambivalence values ranging between -5, least ambivalent, to 10, most ambivalent). This finding reinforced the idea that internal sources of conflict are more prevalent—and hence more important—in MPS, and may be crucial for understanding electoral behavior in such systems. Building on this premise, the fourth chapter showed that as the number of parties increases, (a)

the distance between a respondent's two closest parties decreases, and (b) voters are more likely to express party-leader disagreement. Additionally, as the distance between the two closest parties decreases, party ambivalence tends to increase. This supported the argument that more parties in an MPS increase the likelihood of voters experiencing party and leader ambivalence or party-leader disagreement.

The fifth chapter did not directly examine the impact of the three sources of conflict on vote switching but instead tested the underlying argument that these sources lead to larger consideration sets, which, in turn, increase the likelihood of vote switching. The findings supported this hypothesis, revealing interesting differences between lower house and presidential elections. While party-leader disagreement increases consideration sets for both types of elections, party ambivalence appears to be more influential in lower house elections, and leader ambivalence plays a more significant role in presidential elections. To investigate the impact of coalition disagreement on consideration sets, the dissertation focused on three federal elections in Germany due to data availability. The results again showed strong effects for party-leader disagreement and party ambivalence, with the latter supporting the earlier finding that party ambivalence has a stronger impact in lower house elections, as observed in Germany. Surprisingly, coalition disagreement did not exhibit any significant effect, leading to the conclusion that party- and election-specific factors must be incorporated into the analysis. Therefore, the chapter run party-specific regressions for each party and election, isolating effects and offering more comprehensive insights into the influence of conflict sources on consideration sets. Altogether, the results affirmed that internal sources of conflict matter for explaining considering voting for an additional party. Contrary to the results before, coalition disagreement did influence voters' considerations as well in the party-specific regressions. The findings hence highlighted that the impact of each source can vary considerably across parties and elections, underscoring the importance of considering country-, election year-, and party-specific factors.

The impact of conflict sources on vote switching is consistently supported across various analyses in several chapters. For example, the second chapter showed that German voters with higher levels of party ambivalence or party-leader disagreement are more likely to switch parties on election day. Leader ambivalence did not show significant effects. In addition, the chapter also investigated vote intention switching during the pre-election period, providing a dynamic component to the analysis. The findings revealed significant effects of party ambivalence and party-leader disagreement on vote intention switching, showing that respondents who either become more ambivalent or develop party-leader disagreement between

survey waves are more likely to change their voting intentions during the pre-election period. Leader ambivalence again showed no significant impact, highlighting that, in the three German federal elections studied, party ambivalence was a more valuable predictor.

The third chapter added empirical evidence from Austria and Great Britain, alongside Germany. In doing so, it emphasized interesting differences between countries with proportional representation systems (Austria and Germany) and first-past-the-post systems (Great Britain). While ambivalence affects vote switching in all three countries, the impact is slightly stronger in Germany than in Austria and Great Britain. [51] In Germany, voters with the highest levels of party ambivalence are about 30% more likely to switch parties compared to those with the lowest levels. In Austria, the difference is 25%, and in Great Britain, 20%. These differences may be due to the electoral systems. Whilst proportional representation in Austria and Germany allows voters more viable party choices, the British first-past-the-post system favors the emergence of two dominant parties. In the UK, voters are thus less likely to be affected by ambivalence if the two most liked parties are not the two largest ones in the constituency, as voters most likely choose the party with the best chance of winning the constituency majority. These system-specific conditions shape the development of ambivalence and the likelihood of vote switching.

The fourth chapter further supported these findings by demonstrating that both party and leader ambivalence significantly impact vote switching, showing that ambivalent voters are more likely to switch votes on election day. This generalized earlier findings in a comparative perspective, examining elections in 52 polities between 1996 and 2020. The effect size was similar for both MPS and TPS, with party ambivalence showing an effect size of around 20% in both systems, and leader ambivalence ranging from 5% to 7%. Although the effect sizes were similar, ambivalence was far more prevalent in MPS, leading to a larger overall impact on elections in these systems. This fitted to the argument that political systems with more effective parties experience higher volatility.

In addition to the direct impact of political ambivalence and party-leader disagreement on vote switching, the third chapter investigated the underlying mechanism from ambivalence to vote switching. It found that ambivalent voters face higher decision difficulty and greater uncertainty in their vote choices, leading to more unstable voting intentions and a higher likelihood of vote switching. This analysis, covering national elections in Austria, Great Britain,

[51] Whilst we have party like-dislike ratings for Germany and Great Britain, we solely have leader like-dislike ratings for Austria. Hence the analyses include party ambivalence for Germany and Great Britain and leader ambivalence for Austria.

and Germany between 2013 and 2019, supported the expected differences between countries with proportional representation and those with first-past-the-post systems. For instance, ambivalence was lower in the UK compared to Austria and Germany over the pre-election campaigning waves. The frequencies of vote choice uncertainty and difficulty showed that 60% of the German voters perceived the voting decision was rather easy, similar to 65% of Austrian voters who said they were certain about their vote choice, compared to 95% of UK voters who said they were certain about their vote choice. Similarly, the frequency of vote switching was highest in Germany and lowest in the UK, further supporting the conclusion that the UK's electoral system reduces ambivalence and vote switching.

The fifth chapter, building on the same three German elections studied in Chapter 3, introduced the final missing element in the mechanism from sources of conflict to volatility: the size of consideration sets (Figure 1.1). It showed that voters who consider voting for another party face more difficulty in deciding which party to choose and take longer to make their decision. German election data as well as comparative data from the CSES supported that larger consideration sets lead to higher rates of vote switching. In lower house elections, the impact was much stronger with voters being about 20% more likely to engage in vote switching if they consider another party. In presidential elections, the effect was smaller (about 4%) but still significant. These findings reinforced the argument that a larger number of parties increases internal conflicts, expands the consideration set, and ultimately affects vote switching.

In conclusion, the results provided empirical support for the theoretical framework and the alternative measure of ambivalence in MPS, enabling meaningful comparative analyses. The findings on coalition disagreement reinforced the importance of not treating all parties as a homogenous group, as party-specific, country-specific, and election-year factors significantly impact the results of this type of conflict. Important country differences can also be found when comparing electoral volatility as well as the distribution of sources of conflict across countries. Mixed results regarding leader ambivalence raised intriguing questions, suggesting that its impact may vary across contexts too.

6.2 Limitations and Future Research Avenues

The limitations of the chapters presented have been discussed in detail within the respective chapters. This section, therefore, focuses on more general limitations and potential avenues for future research. First, while the chapters generally build well upon each other, it is evident that some factors evolved throughout the dissertation, leading to new ideas and different perspectives that were adopted and incorporated into subsequent studies. This could be seen as

either a weakness or a strength of the dissertation. Overall, the manuscripts for the four chapters have been submitted to reputable journals and book series. Studies 1, 2, and 3 (Chapters 2, 3, and 4) have already been published, and Study 4 (Chapter 5) is currently undergoing peer review.

Second, there are some limitations related to the data and survey instruments worth mentioning. For example, the use of CSES data may have introduced measurement issues, as the survey—such as the feeling thermometer questions about leaders and parties—was administered between the day after the election and six months later. It is possible that respondents' views of parties and leaders may have changed significantly within three months after the election. For instance, parties may have strongly criticized their leaders or even blamed them for election losses, or parties may have made questionable decisions, such as joining or not joining a specific coalition, which could affect their likability scores. Therefore, responses to the feeling thermometer questions may have no longer reflected their vote choice on election day, leading to potential bias when relating these evaluations to vote choice. A possible avenue for future research could involve focusing on respondents who completed interviews within a specific time period after the election (e.g., two weeks) or utilizing more panel data that relies on interviews conducted directly before and after elections.

Furthermore, the case selection might be criticized, as much of the work was based on German federal elections and data from the GLES. Germany, in comparison to other MPS, may have drawbacks when studying voting behavior and electoral volatility. Its electoral system, which allows voters to split their vote if they are attracted to two parties simultaneously, complicates the operationalization of vote switching (as discussed in Chapter 2). Strategic voting is common in Germany, and it cannot be ruled out as an underlying mediator. This also raises important implications for strategic voting. In general, we should assume that voters are rational and vote for their most preferred party or leader. In TPS, the existence of only two parties means that one party's success is always the other party's defeat (Plischke 2014). Voters, therefore, should have little motivation to vote strategically. In contrast, in MPS, where coalitions form or where voters can cast two votes, as in Germany, strategic voting becomes a significant factor. For example, a voter may choose not to vote for their favorite party but instead for a different one with higher chances of being part of the government. In the German case, voters sometimes choose a different party to support a coalition partner of their favorite party, for instance, to help the coalition reach the necessary threshold to form a government. Despite these complexities, the chapters also highlighted various positive aspects of selecting

Germany as a case study, with the availability of items needed for investigation being the most important.

Third, as mentioned earlier, the alternative measure of MPS ambivalence represents a significant contribution to the field and is the only option to test this research agenda in a comparative manner. However, it is important to acknowledge that this measure may not be the ideal solution. More appropriate indicators to measure ambivalence could be included in international surveys, or perhaps a more effective approach could be found to assess the impact of this internal source of conflict. For example, if the measure focuses on the two highest-rated parties or leaders, it may be relevant to incorporate these parties' strengths into the measure to account for potential biases. To address this, Chapter 4 introduced two new ambivalence measures, which are weighted according to the respective parties' strength. While the alternative measures treat all parties and leaders as equal, the new measures adjusted for varying party strengths by weighting respondents' ambivalence values based on each party's percentage of the vote share in the respective election. The results showed that the effects of party and leader ambivalence are significantly larger with the new weighted measures. Incorporating differences in the strength of parties may also be important for coalition disagreement, as it could influence how likely someone is to disagree with a coalition and, consequently, the likelihood that they consider another coalition.

Moreover, Chapter 4 emphasized that a combined measure of party and leader ambivalence may be more effective than the single indicators on their own, as it may be necessary to consider both simultaneously. The results supported this assumption, showing that voters who are ambivalent toward either the party or the leader are more likely to switch votes than voters who are not ambivalent toward either. Voters who are ambivalent toward both the party and the leader have an even higher likelihood of vote switching. Chapter 5 took this further, suggesting that it might be useful to combine all three internal sources of conflict—party and leader ambivalence, party-leader disagreements, and coalition disagreements—into a single measure.

Fourth, the dissertation did not devote much attention to potential differences between party and leader ambivalence, despite these differences being important. The mixed results of leader ambivalence throughout the dissertation suggested that further investigation is needed. For example, while a significant positive effect of leader ambivalence on vote switching was found in Chapter 3 for the 2017 and 2019 Austrian elections, as well as in the comparative analysis in Chapter 4, no such effect was observed in the German federal elections between 2013 and 2021 in Chapter 2, and the results were mixed in Chapter 5. One possible explanation

is that leader ambivalence may be more important in presidential elections (e.g., U.S. TPS), while party ambivalence may have a stronger influence in lower-house elections (e.g., Germany MPS), where parties play a more crucial role due to coalition formation processes and the functioning of parliamentary systems. These mixed results presented an interesting avenue for future research. Further studies could focus more intensively on the respective campaigns, such as examining the influence of leaders before and after televised debates. Using election campaign panels could provide an opportunity to test whether leader ambivalence and party-leader disagreement have a greater impact on voting intentions immediately after televised debates but diminish in influence as the election approaches (Lindemann and Stoetzer 2021).

This also ties into a more general critique that evaluations of parties and leaders are not entirely independent of one another. Most people have cognitive schemas and heuristics that guide the processing and storage of information, which in turn affect the recall and interpretation of that information (Lau and Redlawsk 2006). These schemas allow for inference because people have learned through experience that certain things are related. For example, political leaders are strongly associated with party labels (Bittner 2014). Since people are limited information processors (Simon 1957; Simon 1985; Lau and Sears 1986; Fiske and Taylor 1991), they rely on shortcuts, schemas, and stereotypes to process information efficiently. Studies by Miller et al. (1986) show that most people have shortcuts for political leaders just as they do for parties. Meffert et al. (2004) demonstrate that ambivalence toward a party moderates evaluations of candidates. Nevertheless, this dissertation argued that voters can be ambivalent toward both a party and a leader, and that such ambivalence can have a substantial impact on voting behavior. Therefore, investigating both parties and leaders is crucial and valuable.

Fifth, a promising direction for future research could focus on static versus dynamic changes. The use of panel data would allow for a more detailed examination of how individuals' behaviors and attitudes change over time, as demonstrated in Chapter 2. For a deeper understanding of the impact of internal sources of conflict, it is particularly important to explore changes in the political environment. For example, the entry of a new party or a change in party leadership could have significant effects on the development of internal sources of conflict. The AfD's entry into the German federal election in 2013, for instance, may have had a relatively small effect in 2013, but a larger impact in subsequent elections, with the party securing about 21% in the 2025 federal elections. New parties might primarily influence voters ideologically aligned with them. Leadership changes, which happen more frequently, could also provide valuable insights, offering the possibility to analyze differences among supporters of the same

party (intra-party changes) in addition to inter-party changes. Changes in the number of parties can influence all four factors linked to internal sources of conflict. A new party may increase party ambivalence, particularly among ideologically close voters, affect party-leader disagreement if it becomes a new favorite, influence leader ambivalence due to the introduction of new leaders, and affect coalition disagreement, especially in MPS. Similarly, changes in leadership can directly impact leader ambivalence and party-leader disagreement, and indirectly influence party ambivalence and coalition disagreement as new leaders may alter parties' orientations. Therefore, the dissertation suggests that future research should explore how changes in the political environment and voters' attitudes affect the internal sources of conflict.

Finally, it would be interesting to examine the experiences of individuals who face long-term ambivalent attitudes, as this could reveal whether they become less influenced by ambivalence over time. Those used to be ambivalent might reach a point where they accept their ambivalence and decide to vote for one party, simplifying the decision-making process. This could reduce the cognitive costs of repeatedly engaging in decision-making.

In line with the previous discussion of changes in the political environment, the dissertation agrees with Mainwaring et al. (2017) that it might be important to distinguish between electoral volatility caused by vote shifts among established parties (within-system volatility) and shifts to new parties (extra-system volatility) (see also Powell and Tucker 2014). This distinction is especially relevant given the rise of populist parties in many Western countries in recent decades and should be considered when further investigating the impact of the three sources of conflict on electoral volatility.

Lastly, two additional avenues for research emerge. First, although this dissertation did not focus on partisan ambivalence (Lavine et al. 2012), it could be considered a fourth source of internal conflict and may be worth investigating in more detail in future studies. While the dissertation argued that voters without party affiliation can still be ambivalent, and that party members can be ambivalent between two parties unrelated to their party affiliation, partisan ambivalence could enrich the framework of internal sources of conflict. Second, the findings in this dissertation highlighted important differences between electoral systems, such as proportional representation versus first-past-the-post systems, and election types, such as lower house versus presidential elections. These differences should be further investigated, with attention to incorporating party, election, and system differences into analyses of internal sources of conflict and vote switching.

6.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, this dissertation sheds light on the importance of three internal sources of conflict and their impact on electoral volatility within a broader framework than previous research. Through four studies embedded in Chapters 2 to 5, the relevance of these short-term factors was examined. In focusing on MPS, existing frameworks were further developed and interconnected. Additionally, an alternative measurement of ambivalence was presented and tested, building on previous research. This allowed for the investigation of political ambivalence from a comparative perspective, which was crucial for investigating electoral volatility.

The chapters presented a balanced mix of national (Austria, Germany, United Kingdom) and international data, as well as cross-sectional and panel data. This variety facilitated a diverse investigation of the research topic. The empirical results largely supported the assumed mechanisms and the expected influence of party and leader ambivalence, party-leader disagreement, and coalition disagreement on vote switching in MPS. The findings demonstrated that the effects of conflicting attitudes are generally comparable between TPS and MPS. However, the key difference is that voters seem more likely to have conflicted attitudes in MPS than in TPS. This indicates that the impact of these sources of conflict is more relevant in MPS, where they are more prevalent.

Furthermore, the findings emphasized the importance of a diverse set of factors—such as party and electoral system characteristics, election type, country, and election year—that influence these outcomes. Overall, it can be said that all three sources have the potential to influence voting behavior and electoral volatility. However, it is crucial to note that individuals do not necessarily need to be ambivalent to switch parties. For instance, voters who were highly disappointed with the performance of the party they voted for in the previous election may choose to vote for another party, even if they do not have ambivalent attitudes. Conversely, voters can be ambivalent but do not switch parties between elections. Therefore, while ambivalence increases the likelihood of vote switching, it is not a necessary determinant.

But what are the practical implications of these findings? First, this dissertation showed that conflicting attitudes significantly affect electoral stability. This underscores the relevance of factors like coalition signals, party and leader likability and evaluation, as well as trends like personalization that influence conflicting attitudes. More broadly, the findings have implications for both inter-party and intra-party politics. Inter-party implications focus on, for instance, coalition signals. Regarding coalition disagreement, the results show that voters may not only vote strategically to support certain parties but also to prevent others from gaining

power. This not only opens up a new dimension in the literature on strategic coalition voting but also reinforces previous arguments that coalition signals can have decisive effects on voters' attitudes, which will ultimately be reflected in their voting behavior (Gschwend et al. 2017; Bahnsen et al. 2020; Wagner and Praprotnik 2024). Therefore, parties must be careful with their coalition signaling.

Intra-party politics, particularly the choice of party leaders, is another important area. The findings on leaders—whether related to leader ambivalence or party-leader disagreement—demonstrate the impact leaders have on voters' attitudes and, consequently, voting behavior. Voters who prefer a leader from a party other than their preferred party are more likely to hold ambivalent attitudes toward both the party and the leader. The implications of this are somewhat ambiguous and suggest different strategies for parties. On one hand, parties should ensure that their voters also prefer their own leader, to reduce the likelihood of losing voters due to party-leader disagreement, which increases party ambivalence and the likelihood of vote switching. On the other hand, parties could opt for a leader who appeals to voters outside their traditional base. This might lead to a leader who deviates somewhat from the party's ideological position or a charismatic but less qualified leader. Even if voters do not favor the party itself, the leader could attract additional votes by fostering party-leader disagreement. Hence, the relationship between parties and their leaders is crucial in shaping voters' attitudes and voting behavior and this presents a trade-off that parties must navigate.

Finally, differences between political systems result in varying political incentives for parties. In political systems with a larger number of parties, parties should be more responsive to voters' needs, as these systems involve more voters with conflicting attitudes, and thus more vote switching. If, combined with declining partisanship, this creates further incentives for parties to capture these voters in subsequent elections, it underscores the importance of parties' responsiveness and awareness of the impact of their actions and decisions. Relating this to the role of leaders, the dissertation's findings show that leaders are more decisive in presidential elections, whereas parties play a more prominent role in lower-house elections. This highlights that leader-led conflicting attitudes are even more important in presidential systems than in parliamentary ones. The impact of leadership changes should, therefore, not be underestimated.

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7. Appendices

7.1 Appendix for Chapter 2

7.1.1 Appendix 1

This appendix addresses the ambivalence measures included in this article. It elaborates on their operationalization and the coding decisions made with respect to these measures. The final section provides information on model fit statistics.

Choice of the Survey Instrument

For calculating party and leader ambivalence, previous studies on the U.S. use respondents' answers of "like" and "dislike" to open-ended questions about parties and leaders (Lavine 2001; Basinger and Lavine 2005; Thornton 2009; Thornton 2014; Blumenstiel and Plischke 2015; Smidt 2017). In those questions, respondents can indicate up to five positive and negative considerations about the same object of interest. Based on the Griffin formula (Thompson et al. 1995), the number of positive and negative considerations are then used to calculate an index according to which respondents are classified as being ambivalent or not, where *P* signifies *Positive* and *N* relates to *Negative* considerations toward parties *A* and *B*.

I. $Ambivalence = ((P_A + N_B)/2 + (P_B + N_A)/2)/2 — |(P_A + N_B)/2 — (P_B + N_A)/2|$

Table A2.1 provides an example of the calculation of party ambivalence for two individuals. The first individual can be expected to be least ambivalent, and the second the most ambivalent. The index based on this formula, therefore, ranges from a minimum of -2.5 to a maximum of 5.

Instead of relying on the positive and negative considerations toward parties and leaders, this article uses respondents' evaluations based on the feeling thermometer. The use of the feeling thermometer is motivated by two key aspects. First, the feeling thermometer indicates a respondent's overall evaluation of a party or leader. The valence of positive and negative considerations should automatically be incorporated in the thermometer ratings. In contrast, the sheer number of positive and negative considerations, as used in previous work, does not tell us much about the salience of these answers and may lead to an inadequate assessment of ambivalence (Lavine 2001, 917; Steenbergen 2020, 160). Second, feeling thermometer ratings are included in many surveys across the globe. In contrast, questions asking for positive and negative evaluations are rarely included in any election study besides the ANES, hindering

scholars from investigating the impact of ambivalence in other electoral contexts. Based on both of these aspects, the article uses the feeling thermometer ratings. As mentioned in the main text, measuring ambivalence with feeling thermometer ratings is not new and has been done in the multi-party context by other scholars (Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller 2012; Blumenstiel 2014; Johnson 2014; Plischke 2014; Çakır 2022). While the Griffin formula is mainly calculated using the number of positive and negative reactions, it provides an appropriate comparative measure of ambivalence for the feeling thermometer as well (Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller 2012, 315; Johnson 2014, 509).

II. $Party\ ambivalence = (Party_A + Party_B) / 2 — (|Party_A — Party_B|)$

III. $Leader\ ambivalence = (LeaderA + LeaderB) / 2 — (|LeaderA — LeaderB|)$

Table A2.1: Calculation of ambivalence based on the Griffin formula

	Attitudes toward parties A and B				**Measuring ambivalence**	
ID	Positive Party A	Negative Party A	Positive Party B	Negative Party B	Ambivalence values	
1	5	0	0	5	-2.5	Minimum
2	5	5	5	5	5	Maximum

Note: Evaluations build on the number of considerations mentioned by a respondent.

Table A2.2 shows an example of the calculation of party ambivalence for two individuals based on the Griffin formula being adapted to use the feeling thermometer ratings. The first individual can again be expected to be the least ambivalent, and the second the most ambivalent. The index ranges from a minimum of -5 to a maximum of 10.

In addition to "party ambivalence" and "leader ambivalence," the article introduces "party-leader ambivalence" as another important and valuable indicator. The article argues that multi-party parliamentary systems have become increasingly personalized over the past 50 years, leading to a greater importance of the interplay between parties and their leaders. Wagner and Weßels's (2012) findings strengthen this argument by showing that leader and party evaluations reinforced each other in the German federal elections between 1998 and 2009, and that the match between a party and its leader was what mattered most for vote choice. Daoust et al. (2021) show that party-leader ambivalent attitudes are not rare by revealing that 17 percent of the voters in their research preferred a leader from another party. Therefore, the expectation expressed in this article that voters also have party-leader ambivalent attitudes and that these influence voting behavior is supported. "Party-leader ambivalence" is a dummy variable that

builds on the feeling thermometer as well; it is coded as 1 if respondents prefer a leader from a different party than their favorite party, and is coded as 0 if respondents' leader favorite belongs to their favorite party. Table A2.3 shows an example of a party-leader ambivalent voter and one who is not.

Table A2.2: Calculation of ambivalence based on feeling thermometer ratings

	Attitudes toward parties A and B		**Measuring ambivalence**	
ID	Party A	Party B	Ambivalence values	
1	10	0	-5	Minimum
2	10	10	10	Maximum

Note: Evaluations are based on the feeling thermometer ratings.

Table A2.3: Calculation of party-leader ambivalence

	Attitudes toward parties and leaders				**Measuring ambivalence**
ID	Party A	Leader A	Party B	Leader B	Party-leader ambivalent
1	**9**	**9**	7	7	No (=0)
2	**9**	7	7	**9**	Yes (=1)

Note: Evaluations are based on the feeling thermometer ratings.

Coding Decisions

Instead of taking into account all available parties (Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller 2012) or the two major parties (Johnson 2014), the article considers respondents' ratings of their two highest-evaluated parties (leaders) (Blumenstiel 2014) as the article relies on the concept of decision ambivalence for investigating the effects of ambivalence on vote choice. Although the focus is on ambivalence in the multi-party context, it is not reasonable to include all parties in the calculations as the article is not interested in the respondents' ambivalence toward the party system or the whole range of available parties. Rather, the goal is to analyze respondents' ambivalence among the best-rated parties that are relevant for their vote decision. Including irrelevant alternatives in the calculation would distort the actual effect on voting intention and vote switching. The article considers the two highest-rated parties (leaders) because model fit checks have shown that voting decisions are primarily determined by the two most popular parties. The third highest-rated party almost never increases the probability of voting for that party. In most cases, it even lowers the probability of doing so.

Changes in Ambivalence

In addition to party ambivalence, leader ambivalence, and party-leader ambivalence, the article includes three variables that address changes in these three variables: "change party ambivalence," "change leader ambivalence," and "change party-leader ambivalence." "Change party (leader) ambivalence" is calculated as the difference between party (leader) ambivalence index in *t* minus the index value in *t-1*. Positive values of the new variable indicate an increase in respondents' ambivalence, negative ones a decrease in ambivalence, and zero values no difference in ambivalence between the two waves. "Change party-leader ambivalence" is a dummy variable that captures whether respondents actually became party-leader ambivalent between two waves. It is therefore coded as 0 if respondents were party-leader ambivalent in both waves, were not party-leader ambivalent in both waves, or were party-leader ambivalent in *t-1* but are no longer so in *t*. It is coded as 1 if respondents were not party-leader ambivalent in *t-1* but are in *t*. Table A2.4 shows an example of changes in ambivalence of one individual in *t-1* and *t*. First, we see that party (leader) ambivalence indexes do not change over time, and hence change party (leader) ambivalence is coded as 0. Second, while the respondent was not party-leader ambivalent in *t-1*, the respondent became party-leader ambivalent in *t* and would, therefore, be coded as 1 in change party-leader ambivalence.

Table A2.4: Calculation of changes in ambivalence over time

	Attitudes				**Ambivalence**				
t	Party A	Leader A	Party B	Leader B	*Party amb.*	*Leader amb.*	*Party-leader amb.*	*Change leader/ party amb.*	*Change party-leader amb.*
t-1	**9**	**9**	7	7	6	6	No	0	Yes
t	**9**	7	7	**9**	6	6	Yes		

Note: Evaluations are based on the feeling thermometer ratings.

Robustness Checks

In the two methodological robustness checks, the article incorporates the ambivalence measures of Basinger and Lavine (2005) and Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller (2012). For calculating *B and L (2005) amb. (continuous)*, this article uses an item battery from the GLES 2013 campaign panel. However, the items differ slightly in that they ask respondents about the *strength* of their negative and positive feelings toward parties rather than listing positive and negative considerations about each party. Response categories range from 1, "no negative (positive) feelings at all," to 5, "very strong." Using formula I. from above, a continuous ambivalence

index is calculated. Instead of ranging from -2.5 to 5, the index ranges from -1 to 5 in the present data. The *B and L (2005) amb. (dummy)* measure is based on a median split of the continuous measure *B and L (2005) amb. (continuous)*. Respondents with an index value below 2.25 are classified as non-ambivalent, while respondents with values above or equal to 2.25 are classified as ambivalent.

For calculating *SB and P (2012) party amb.* and *SB and P (2012) leader amb*., the article relies on the generalized Griffin formula introduced and used by Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller (2012, 315). This generalized formula builds on the one from Thompson et al. (1995) but expands it to multi-party systems using feeling thermometer ratings. While Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller developed and used it for five parties present in the German Bundestag at the time of interest, the formula can be used for fewer or more parties. Higher values imply again more ambivalent attitudes.

IV. $Ambivalence = Mean\ (Party_A, \ldots, Party_N) — 2 * Standard\ Deviation\ (Party_A, \ldots, Party_N)$

Table A2.5 shows three examples resulting from this generalized formula. The table is based on three people rating five parties on the feeling thermometer, as Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller (2012) did for Germany. The lowest value of -6.94 is assigned to a respondent who rated one party extremely positive and all other four parties extremely negative (see individual 1 in Table A2.5). The highest value of +10.00 is gained by a respondent who evaluated all parties extremely positive (individual 3 in Table A2.5). While this generalized formula is highly useful, it does not come without its problems (Plischke 2014). The second respondent in Table A2.5 illustrates one of the main problems related to the objective of this article. While the respondent rates three out of five parties extremely positive, the respondent will nevertheless gain a very low ambivalence value. Based on this value, one should expect that the decision-making situation of this respondent is relatively clear, but looking at the actual evaluations shows the opposite to be the case. This respondent can be expected to be highly ambivalent between three parties. This example demonstrates why the use of the generalized Griffin formula including all parties is not suitable for the research interest of this article. Moreover, it illustrates why the article expects little, if any, effect of Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller's two measures of ambivalence on vote switching.

Table A2.5: Calculation of ambivalence based on the *generalized* Griffin formula

	Attitudes toward parties A to E					Calculating ambivalence			
ID	A	B	C	D	E	Mean	2*SD	Amb.	
1	+10	0	0	0	0	+2.00	8.94	-6.94	Minimum
2	+10	+10	+10	0	0	+6.00	10.95	-4.95	
3	+10	+10	+10	+10	+10	+10.00	0.00	+10.00	Maximum

Note: Evaluations are based on the feeling thermometer ratings. The formula used to calculate the standard deviation (SD) refers to the SD of the sample and not to the SD of the population. For the sample SD, the denominator in the fraction is additionally subtracted by 1.

Model Fit Statistics

Please note that the article does not include the pseudo-R^2 in the regression tables as the article does not consider it to be an adequate proxy estimate outside of linear regressions. Nevertheless, to evaluate model fit, three other measures of model fit are used. These tests could not be applied to the panel data analyses (Table 2.2) and therefore refer only to Tables 2.3 and 2.4.

In a first step, the article calculates the roc curves for all the models. The results show an area under curve of above 0.7 for most of the models including party, leader, and party-leader ambivalence. This demonstrates that the models are acceptable although not excellent. While the robustness models including *B and L (2005) amb. (continuous)* and *B and L (2005) amb. (dummy)* perform equally well, the models with *SB and P (2012) party amb.* and *SB and P (2012) leader amb*. show a slightly lower area under curve of about 0.6. Model fit statistics on the AIC and BIC strengthen the findings based on the roc curves as both show the same pattern.

In a second step, the article looks at the correctly predicted cases. This check reveals differences in the model fits between Models 5 to 7—hence, the three election years. In Model 5, corresponding to the 2013 election, sensitivity (percentage of vote switchers who are correctly classified) lies around 71 percent and specificity (percentage of non-switchers who are correctly classified) around 59 percent. In Model 6, corresponding to the 2017 election, sensitivity lies around 79 percent and specificity around 35 percent. In Model 7, and thus 2021, sensitivity is about 75 percent and specificity around 45 percent. While all three models classify approximately three out of four voters correctly as vote switcher, their performance in classifying non-switchers strongly differs. As the percentage of vote switchers lies around 40 percent in each election year, the article concludes that although the models do not do an excellent job, they do a reasonable one. Again, the models from the robustness checks perform slightly worse than the main models in terms of the number of correctly predicted cases.

In a last step, the article checks the Pearson and Hosmer-Lemeshow goodness of fit (gof) tests. For nearly all models, both tests show an insignificant p-value indicating a good model fit. Only Model 11 from Table 4, including *SB and P (2012) party amb.* and *SB and P (2012) leader amb*. for the 2017 election, shows a significant p-value for the Hosmer-Lemeshow gof test, highlighting a poor model fit. In sum, the article concludes that these statistics demonstrate an adequate model fit of the main models (Table 2.3). It also worth mentioning that Models 10 to 12 from the robustness checks show the lowest model fit across all measures of model fit. This once again supports the argument that to study the influence of ambivalence on vote switching, it is better to include ambivalence measures for the two highest-rated parties rather than considering all parties in the respective party system.

7.1.2 Appendix 2

The empirical analyses include several control variables such as socio-demographic measures like age, gender, education, and income. "Age" is a continuous variable. "Gender" is a dummy coded 1, if the respondent is a female, and coded 0, if a male. "Education" is an ordinal variable that is coded from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest) education. "Income" is coded from 1 to 13, where 1 is the lowest and 13 the highest income category. Furthermore, the article adds the dummy partisan, as partisans should be less likely to switch even if they hold ambivalent attitudes (Thornton 2014). "Partisan" is coded 1, if a respondent holds a partisanship, and coded 0, if the respondent does not. "Bad economy" captures the impact of economic voting theory and thus of the economic performance in evaluating political parties and candidates (Powell and Whitten 1993; Bellucci and Lewis-Beck 2011). Economic voting theory assumes that individuals reward—that is, re-elect governments that have performed well economically during their tenure and punish those that have performed poorly. The economy is a crucial factor in electoral decisions because it is one of the most discussed issues during election campaigns and is an easily observable characteristic of government performance for voters (Anderson 1995; Ansolabehere et al. 2012). Bad economy is therefore concentrated on voters who voted for one of the incumbent parties in the last election but are dissatisfied with their past economic performance. These voters can be expected to be more likely to vote for a different party than in the last election (Fiorina 1981). Bad economy is a dummy variable measured by individuals' perceptions of the general economic situation: it is coded 1, if a respondent voted for the incumbent government in the last election and evaluates the economy as neither good nor bad, bad, or very bad, and is coded 0 for all others.

Political sophistication is measured by respondents' political interest and political knowledge (Johnson 2014; Thornton 2014). These two variables capture how likely it is that voters receive political information, how interested they are in learning about politics, and how able they are to assimilate and organize this information (Luskin 1990). Both variables are based on respondent self-reports and therefore may contain some bias due to desirability. "Political interest "is coded from 1 (highest) to 4 (lowest) political interest. "Political knowledge" is an index based on the average of correctly answered questions and ranges from 1 (the respondent answered all political knowledge questions correctly) to 0 (the respondents answered all questions incorrectly). The variable consists of three single knowledge questions and one item battery. The first three questions ask about the first and the second vote, the 5 percent threshold, and the electoral law. The item battery asks respondents to assign the top candidates to their parties. Finally, "election loser" is a dummy variable that captures whether respondents were part of the losing side in the last election, meaning that the party they voted for did not become part of the government. This could influence whether they consider switching to another party because they want to be on the winning side, which could make them more ambivalent. It is coded 1 if respondents voted for a party that did not become part of the government after the last election and 0 if respondents voted for a party that did become part of the government.

7.1.3 Appendix 3

Table A2.6: Descriptive statistics on the GLES short-term campaign panel 2013

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Vote Switch 2009/2013	2,205	0.4	0.5	0	1
Yes	897 (40.68%)				
No	1,308 (59.32%)				
B and L (2005) amb. (continuous)	2,484	2.0	0.9	-1.0	5.0
B and L (2005) amb. (dummy)	2,484	0.5	0.5	0.0	1.0
SB and P (2012) party amb.	3,744	-2.1	2.4	-7.0	7.7
SB and P (2012) leader amb.	3,709	-1.3	2.8	-9.1	8.8
Gender	5,256	0.5	0.5	0	1
Male	2,553 (48.57%)				
Female	2,703 (51.43%)				
Age	5,256	45.7	14.6	18	83
Education	5,230	3.3	1.2	1	5
Income	5,168	6.3	2.7	1	13
Partisan	4,177	0.7	0.4	0	1

Yes	3,068 (73.45%)				
No	1,109 (26.55%)				
Political interest	4,101	3.3	1.1	1	5
Political knowledge	3,608	0.7	0.3	0.0	1.0
Bad economy	4,643	0.3	0.5	0	1
Yes	1,515 (32.63%)				
No	3,128 (67.37%)				
Election loser	3,672	0.6	0.5	0	1
Yes	2,372 (64.60%)				
No	1,300 (35.40%)				

Note: The total number of observations is 5,256. Survey questions to calculate *B and L (2005) amb. (continuous)* and *B and L (2005) amb. (dummy)* were only included in the GLES 2013.

Table A2.7: Descriptive statistics on the GLES short-term campaign panel 2017

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Vote Switch 2013/2017	5,333	0.5	0.5	0	1
Yes	2,439 (45.73%)				
No	2,894 (54.27%)				
SB and P (2012) party amb.	11,501	-1.9	2.3	-7.0	8.6
SB and P (2012) leader amb.	11,631	-1.7	2.6	-9.1	9.0
Gender	22,521	0.5	0.5	0	1
Male	10,579 (46.97%)				
Female	11,942 (53.03%)				
Age	22,521	46.4	15.3	18	102
Education	17,897	3.4	1.2	1	5
Income	17,876	6.6	2.6	1	13
Partisan	22,521	0.9	0.3	0	1
Yes	19,935 (88.52%)				
No	2,586 (11.48%)				
Political interest	12,392	3.5	1.0	1	5
Political knowledge	11,829	0.6	0.3	0.0	1.0
Bad economy	14,919	0.3	0.5	0	1
Yes	4,273 (28.64%)				
No	10,646 (71,36%)				
Election loser	10,751	0.4	0.5	0	1
Yes	4,518 (42.02%)				
No	6,233 (57.98%)				

Note: The total number of observations is 22,521.

Table A2.8: Descriptive statistics on the GLES rolling cross-section 2021

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Vote Switch 2017/2021	3,828	0.4	0.5	0	1
Yes	1,476 (38.56%)				
No	2,352 (61.44%)				
Party ambivalence	6,504	6.2	2.1	-5.0	10.0
Leader ambivalence	4,290	5.7	2.2	-5.0	10.0
Party-leader ambivalence	6,343	0.5	0.5	0	1
SB and P (2012) party amb.	7,046	-1.4	2.0	-7.7	10.0
SB and P (2012) leader amb.	7,044	-2.0	2.3	-8.6	10.0
Gender	7,063	0.4	0.5	0	1
Male	3,390 (55.08%)				
Female	3,173 (44.92%)				
Age	6,985	55.2	16.8	18	94
Education	6,767	4.0	1.1	1	5
Partisan	6,763	0.7	0.5	0	1
Yes	4,631 (68.48%)				
No	2,132 (31.52%)				
Political interest	7,062	3.8	0.9	1	5
Bad economy	5,230	0.3	0.4	0	1
Yes	1,346 (25.74%)				
No	3,884 (74.26%)				
Election loser	5,677	0.4	0.5	0	1
Yes	2,447 (43.10%)				
No	3,230 (56.90%)				

Note: The total number of observations is 7,068. *Party ambivalence, leader ambivalence* and *party-leader ambivalence* are included in this table because no other table or figure reported descriptive statistics on these three variables. Information on *income* and *political knowledge* is not included in this table because these measures were not included in the RCS 2021.

7.2 Appendix for Chapter 3

7.2.1 Appendix 1

Table A3.1 investigates the likelihood that respondents vote for their third-highest ranked party. This is done in an exemplary manner for the *GLES* data. Six vote choice dummies for the six largest parties are included and coded as 1 if the respondent voted for the respective party and coded as 0 if the respondent did not. The findings below show that the third-highest rated party solely increased the likelihood of voting for the AfD. For the SPD, FDP, the Left and the Greens, the third-highest rated party even significantly decreases the likelihood of voting for this party. For the Union, no significant effects on the likelihood of voting for the Union can be found. Overall, the decision of solely including the first and second highest-rated party or leader in the ambivalence calculations is supported.

Table A3.1: Testing the likelihood of voting for the third-highest rated party

	(A3-1) Union vote	(A3-2) SPD vote	(A3-3) FDP vote	(A3-4) Left vote	(A3-5) Greens vote	(A3-6) AfD vote
Union First H	**2.269*****	**-1.013*****	**-0.626*****	**-1.094*****	**-0.602****	0.085
	(0.371)	(0.155)	(0.171)	(0.182)	(0.209)	(0.145)
Union Second H	0.409	-0.174	0.027	-0.173	0.021	0.178
	(0.395)	(0.103)	(0.139)	(0.112)	(0.154)	(0.133)
Union Third H	-0.336	–	–	–	–	–
	(0.248)					
SPD First H	**-1.231*****	**3.479*****	**-1.546*****	**-1.290*****	**-1.101*****	**-0.715***
	(0.369)	(0.170)	(0.216)	(0.158)	(0.195)	(0.290)
SPD Second H	-0.205	**1.332*****	**-0.407****	-0.096	0.089	0.007
	(0.243)	(0.171)	(0.129)	(0.092)	(0.127)	(0.156)
SPD Third H	–	**-1.094*****	–	–	–	–
		(0.197)				
FDP First H	**-2.563*****	**-1.153*****	**3.184*****	**-1.372*****	**-1.692*****	-0.255
	(0.563)	(0.264)	(0.176)	(0.271)	(0.339)	(0.256)
FDP Second H	-0.562	**-0.493*****	**1.605*****	**-0.491*****	**-0.764*****	0.105
	(0.313)	(0.114)	(0.163)	(0.124)	(0.175)	(0.144)
FDP Third H	–	–	**-1.066*****	–	–	–
			(0.263)			
Left First H	**-0.900***	**-0.560*****	**-1.477*****	**3.236*****	**-1.307*****	**-0.619****
	(0.411)	(0.168)	(0.274)	(0.172)	(0.194)	(0.222)
Left Second H	**-0.712***	-0.129	-0.137	**1.837*****	-0.185	**0.365***
	(0.355)	(0.110)	(0.165)	(0.187)	(0.141)	(0.155)
Left Third H	–	–	–	**-1.203*****	–	–
				(0.274)		

Greens First H	**-1.243*****	**-0.348***	**-1.267*****	**-1.078*****	**3.274*****	-0.429
	(0.374)	(0.160)	(0.249)	(0.163)	(0.197)	(0.402)
Greens Second H	**-0.953*****	0.112	**-0.648*****	-0.033	**1.355*****	**-0.661*****
	(0.285)	(0.096)	(0.139)	(0.092)	(0.209)	(0.195)
Greens Third H	–	–	–	–	**-1.418*****	–
					(0.296)	
AfD First H	-0.977	**-0.768****	**-1.973*****	**-2.035*****	**-1.800*****	**4.697*****
	(0.543)	(0.237)	(0.269)	(0.191)	(0.425)	(0.205)
AfD Second H	-0.381	-0.05	**-0.388***	-0.133	-0.596	**2.243*****
	(0.406)	(0.171)	(0.189)	(0.124)	(0.306)	(0.252)
AfD Third H	–	–	–	–	–	**0.562***
						(0.285)
Partisan	0.370	0.077	-0.219	**0.289***	-0.081	0.134
	(0.254)	(0.148)	(0.145)	(0.118)	(0.155)	(0.155)
Gender	0.249	-0.081	-0.064	-0.082	-0.017	-0.176
	(0.162)	(0.081)	(0.101)	(0.079)	(0.098)	(0.118)
Age	-0.00003	**0.007***	0.003	0.004	-0.003	0.007
	(0.006)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.005)
Education	-0.061	**-0.118****	0.056	-0.053	**0.107***	-0.087
	(0.071)	(0.036)	(0.047)	(0.036)	(0.045)	(0.056)
Income	0.029	0.012	0.013	0.002	0.004	-0.022
	(0.034)	(0.017)	(0.021)	(0.017)	(0.02)	(0.023)
Political Interest	–	–	–	–	–	**0.267*****
						(0.073)
Political Knowledge	–	–	–	–	–	-0.071
						(0.238)
Satisfaction Democracy	**-0.289***	0.031	**-0.147***	0.088	-0.099	**0.286*****
	(0.127)	(0.056)	(0.07)	(0.047)	(0.067)	(0.064)
Political Efficacy	-0.173	0.033	–	–	–	0.022
	(0.154)	(0.079)				(0.119)
Bad Economy	-0.172	**0.257***	–	–	–	–
	(0.201)	(0.126)				
Election Loser	**-0.842*****	0.042	–	–	–	–
	(0.238)	(0.102)				
Constant	-0.341	**-3.076*****	**-2.584*****	**-3.292*****	**-3.211*****	**-6.093*****
	(0.804)	(0.440)	(0.444)	(0.331)	(0.447)	(0.630)
N	2159	7349	10002	10005	10004	6900

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; "H" = highest; *Satisfaction Democracy* and *Political Efficacy* are solely included in this table. *Satisfaction Democracy* consists of five categories ranging from 1 "very satisfied with democracy" to 5 "very dissatisfied with democracy". *Political Efficacy* is an index based on five efficacy items. It ranges from a strong political efficacy, coded as 1, to a weak political efficacy, coded as 5.

7.2.2 Appendix 2

For Table A3.2, Table A3.3 and Table A3.4, variable *Number Intention Switches* does not match perfectly with variable *Vote Intention Switcher.* Whilst *Number Intention Switches* contains information on *Vote Intention Switcher* for all available waves, *Vote Intention Switcher* is only listed in those three tables for those waves for which data on *Vote Choice Uncertainty* is available. Furthermore, *Number Intention Switches* focuses solely on waves from the pre-election campaigning period. Whereas *Vote Intention Switcher* also includes one intention switch between the last pre-election and the first post-election wave for each country and each election. This is highlighted separately in the tables. The inclusion of those pre-post intention switches is necessary to enable a panel analysis for the three countries for which otherwise only data for one point in time would be available due to data constraints on *Vote Choice Uncertainty.*

Table A3.2: Descriptive statistics for the AUTNES

Statistic		N	Frequencies	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Vote Switch							
	2017	991	**Yes**: 35%; **No**: 65%	0.4	-	0.0	1.0
	2019	816	**Yes**: 37%; **No**: 63%	0.4	-	0.0	1.0
Number Intention Switches							
	2017	974	**0:** 63%; **1:** 28%; **2:** 8%; **3:** 2%	0.5	0.7	0.0	3.0
	2019	556	**0:** 49%; **1:** 36%; **2:** 11%; **3:** 3%; **4:** 1%	0.7	0.8	0.0	4.0
Vote Intention Switcher							
	W2/ W3	1,111	**Yes**: 14%; **No**: 86%	0.1	-	0.0	1.0
	W4/ W5*	1,033	**Yes**: 23%; **No**: 77%	0.2	-	0.0	1.0
	W9/ W10	830	**Yes**: 29%; **No**: 71%	0.3	-	0.0	1.0
	W11/ W12*	690	**Yes**: 24%; **No**: 76%	0.2	-	0.0	1.0
Vote Choice Uncertainty							
	W2	1,130	**Yes**: 41%; **No**: 59%	0.4	-	0.0	1.0
	W4	1,053	**Yes**: 33%; **No**: 67%	0.3	-	0.0	1.0
	W9	844	**Yes**: 35%; **No**: 65%	0.4	-	0.0	1.0
	W11	694	**Yes**: 34%; **No**: 66%	0.3	-	0.0	1.0
Partisan	2017	1,318		0.5	-	0.0	1.0
	2019	1,002		0.5	-	0.0	1.0
Gender		1,339		0.4	-	0	1
Age		1,339		4.2	1.4	1	7
Education		1,339		8.4	2.7	3	15
Income		1,339		13.8	5.3	1	20
Political	2017	1,295		3.1	0.8	1.0	4.0
Interest	2019	974		3.0	0.8	1.0	4.0
Political Knowledge		1,339		0.6	0.3	0.0	1.0
Bad	2017	1,306		0.2	-	0.0	1.0
Economy	2019	1,072		0.4	-	0.0	1.0
Election	2013	1,074		0.6	-	0.0	1.0
Loser	2017	1,163		0.5	-	0.0	1.0

Note: * Vote intention switch between the last pre-election and the first post-election wave. Percent frequencies are exclusively provided for the dependent variables. As described in the Research Design, *Age* is a categorical variable with the following values: 1 "younger than 20", 2 "20-29 years", 3 "30-39 years", 4 "40-49 years", 5 "50-59 years", 6 "60-69 years", 7 "older than 69". *Education, Income* and *Political Knowledge* are only measured once at the beginning of the panel and differentiation between the two elections is thus not possible.

Table A3.3: Descriptive statistics for the BES

Statistic	N	Frequency	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Vote Switch						
2015	9,662	**Yes**: 38%; **No**: 62%	0.4	-	0.0	1.0
2017	9,882	**Yes**: 30%; **No**: 70%	0.3	-	0.0	1.0
2019	9,110	**Yes**: 21%; **No**: 79%	0.2	-	0.0	1.0
Number Intention Switches						
2015	5,143	**0:** 73%; **1:** 16%; **2:** 8%; **3:** 3%; **4:** 0.4%	0.4	0.8	0.0	4.0
2017	3,646	**0:** 67%; **1:** 19%; **2:** 10%; **3:** 3%; **4:** 0.8%; **5:** 0.03%	0.5	0.9	0.0	5.0
2019	2,051	**0:** 46%; **1:** 21%; **2:** 21%; **3:** 11%; **4:** 1%	1.0	1.1	0.0	4.0
Vote Intention Switcher						
W1/ W2	6,446	**Yes**: 16%; **No**: 84%	0.2	-	0.0	1.0
W2/ W3	6,825	**Yes**: 20%; **No**: 80%	0.2	-	0.0	1.0
W3/ W4	6,709	**Yes**: 17%; **No**: 83%	0.2	-	0.0	1.0
W4/ W5	7,998	**Yes**: 14%; **No**: 86%	0.1	-	0.0	1.0
W5/ W6*	8,167	**Yes**: 13%; **No**: 87%	0.1	-	0.0	1.0
W9/ W10	6,839	**Yes**: 38%; **No**: 62%	0.4	-	0.0	1.0
W10/ W11	6,068	**Yes**: 26%; **No**: 74%	0.3	-	0.0	1.0
W11/ W12	7,456	**Yes**: 17%; **No**: 83%	0.2	-	0.0	1.0
W12/ W13*	8,574	**Yes**: 12%; **No**: 88%	0.1	-	0.0	1.0
W17/ W18	6,077	**Yes**: 31%; **No**: 69%	0.3	-	0.0	1.0
W18/ W19*	7,636	**Yes**: 21%; **No**: 79%	0.2	-	0.0	1.0
Vote Choice Uncertainty						
W1	6,489	**1:** 51%; **2:** 28%; **3:** 16%; **4:** 4%; **5:** 1%; **6:** 0.3%; **7:** 0.3%	1.8	1.0	1.0	7.0
W2	6,863	**1:** 52%; **2:** 27%; **3:** 15%; **4:** 4%; **5:** 1%; **6:** 0.4%; **7:** 0.2%	1.8	1.0	1.0	7.0
W3	6,744	**1:** 52%; **2:** 27%; **3:** 16%; **4:** 4%; **5:** 1%; **6:** 0.4%; **7:** 0.2%	1.8	1.0	1.0	7.0
W4	8,024	**1:** 57%; **2:** 21%; **3:** 16%; **4:** 5%; **5:** 1%; **6:** 1%; **7:** 0.1%	1.7	1.0	1.0	7.0
W5	7,381	**1:** 60%; **2:** 22%; **3:** 12%; **4:** 5%; **5:** 1%; **6:** 0.4%; **7:** 0.3%	1.7	1.0	1.0	7.0

W9		6,901	**1:** 52%; **2:** 25%; **3:** 16%; **4:** 5%; **5:** 1%; **6:** 1%; **7:** 0.4%	1.8	1.1	1.0	7.0
W10		6,101	**1:** 55%; **2:** 26%; **3:** 14%; **4:** 4%; **5:** 1%; **6:** 0.2%; **7:** 0.2%	1.7	1.0	1.0	7.0
W11		6,131	**1:** 75%; **2:** 19%; **3:** 5%; **4:** 1%; **5:** 0.05%; **6:** 0.03%; **7:** 0.05%	1.3	0.6	1.0	7.0
W12		7,454	**1:** 66%; **2:** 18%; **3:** 11%; **4:** 4%; **5:** 1%; **6:** 0.3%; **7:** 0.3%	1.6	0.9	1.0	7.0
W17		1,189	**1:** 74%; **2:** 21%; **3:** 5%; **4:** 1%; **5:** 0%; **6:** 0%; **7:** 0.08%	1.3	0.6	1.0	7.0
W18		6,562	**1:** 64%; **2:** 20%; **3:** 11%; **4:** 4%; **5:** 1%; **6:** 1%; **7:** 0.4%	1.6	1.0	1.0	7.0
Partisan	2015	8,393		0.8	-	0.0	1.0
	2017	8,916		0.8	-	0.0	1.0
	2019	7,630		0.8	-	0.0	1.0
Gender		10,216		0.5	-	0	1
Age		10,216		53.6	13.4	16	87
Education	2015	8,562		3.0	1.4	0.0	5.0
	2017	10,022		3.1	1.4	0.0	5.0
	2019	9,852		3.1	1.4	0.0	5.0
Income	2015	8,678		5.1	3.0	1.0	14.0
	2017	9,934		5.2	3.0	1.0	14.0
	2019	9,575		5.3	3.1	1.0	14.0
Political	2015	8,554		3.5	0.7	1.0	4.0
Interest	2017	9,005		3.5	0.7	1.0	4.0
	2019	8,072		3.5	0.8	1.0	4.0
Political	2015	6,756		0.8	0.3	0.0	1.0
Knowledge	2017	9,550		0.8	0.4	0.0	1.0
	2019	5,165		0.8	0.4	0.0	1.0
Bad	2015	5,066		0.1	-	0.0	1.0
Economy	2017	9,304		0.3	-	0.0	1.0
	2019	8,088		0.3	-	0.0	1.0
Election	2010	9,832		0.4	-	0.0	1.0
Loser	2015	9,499		0.6	-	0.0	1.0
	2017	9,905		0.6	-	0.0	1.0

Note: * Vote intention switch between the last pre-election and the first post-election wave. Percent frequencies are exclusively provided for the dependent variables.

Table A3.4: Descriptive statistics for the GLES

Statistic		N	Frequencies	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Vote Switch							
	2013	2,045	**Yes**: 41%; **No**: 59%	0.4	-	0.0	1.0
	2017	5,292	**Yes**: 46%; **No**: 54%	0.5	-	0.0	1.0
Number Intention Switches							
	2013	1,575	**0:** 69%; **1:** 14%; **2:** 10%; **3:** 4%; **4:** 2%; **5:** 0.3%	0.6	1.0	0.0	5.0
	2017	3,188	**0:** 55%; **1:** 15%; **2:** 14%; **3:** 9%; **4:** 5%; **5:** 2%; **6:** 1%	1.0	1.4	0.0	6.0
Vote Intention Switcher							
2013	W5/W6	2,191	**Yes**: 13%; **No**: 87%	0.1	-	0.0	1.0
	W6/W7*	2,240	**Yes**: 16%; **No**: 84%	0.2	-	0.0	1.0
2017	W5/W6	6,091	**Yes**: 17%; **No**: 83%	0.2	-	0.0	1.0
	W6/W7	5,149	**Yes**: 16%; **No**: 84%	0.2	-	0.0	1.0
	W7/W8*	5,374	**Yes**: 16%; **No**: 84%	0.2	-	0.0	1.0
Vote Decision Difficulty							
2013	W6	466	**1:** 34%; **2:** 26%; **3:** 22%; **4:** 14%; **5:** 5%	2.3	1.2	1.0	5.0
	W7	2,752	**1:** 38%; **2:** 27%; **3:** 19%; **4:** 12%; **5:** 5%	2.2	1.2	1.0	5.0
2017	W6	1,148	**1:** 33%; **2:** 24%; **3:** 20%; **4:** 15%; **5:** 8%	2.4	1.3	1.0	5.0
	W7	1,171	**1:** 28%; **2:** 24%; **3:** 22%; **4:** 18%; **5:** 8%	2.6	1.3	1.0	5.0
	W8	7,201	**1:** 33%; **2:** 25%; **3:** 20%; **4:** 15%; **5:** 6%	2.4	1.3	1.0	5.0
Partisan	2013	3,326		0.8	-	0	1
	2017	9,994		0.8	-	0	1
Gender	2013	3,326		0.5	-	0	1
	2017	9,994		0.5	-	0	1
Age	2013	3,326		47.6	14.4	18	83
	2017	9,994		50.4	14.2	18	89
Education	2013	3,326		3.4	1.2	1	5
	2017	9,994		3.5	1.2	1	5
Income	2013	3,326		6.5	2.6	1	13
	2017	9,994		6.8	2.6	1	13
Political	2013	3,199		3.5	1.0	1.0	5.0
Interest	2017	8,629		3.6	1.0	1.0	5.0
Political	2013	2,873		0.7	0.3	0.0	1.0

Knowledge	2017	8,295	0.7	0.3	0.0	1.0
Bad	2013	3,262	0.3	-	0.0	1.0
Economy	2017	9,437	0.3	-	0.0	1.0
Election	2009	2,604	0.6	-	0.0	1.0
Loser	2013	7,026	0.4	-	0.0	1.0

Note: * Vote intention switch between the last pre-election and the first post-election wave. Percent frequencies are exclusively provided for the dependent variables.

Table A3.5: Descriptive statistics of ambivalence over the campaigning period

Wave	**W1**	**W2**	**W3**	**W4**	**W5**		
AUT 2017					post-election		
Leader ambivalence							
N	968	986	1,014	1,073	1,034		
Mean	5.25	5.23	5.36	5.32	5.97		
St. dev.	3.12	3.11	3.16	3.40	2.85		
Wave	**W7**	**W8**	**W9**	**W10**	**W11**	**W12**	
AUT 2019						post-election	
Leader ambivalence							
N	665	–	–	684	722	759	
Mean	6.01	–	–	5.49	5.35	5.65	
St. dev.	2.84	–	–	3.15	3.25	2.72	
Wave	**W1**	**W2**	**W3**	**W4**	**W5**	**W6**	
GBR 2015						post-election	
Party ambivalence							
N	3,067	3,330	3,289	3,787	3,837	3,816	
Mean	3.96	4.11	3.97	4.21	4.44	4.45	
St. dev.	2.84	2.95	2.98	2.80	2.83	2.98	
Wave	**W7**	**W8**	**W9**	**W10**	**W11**	**W12**	**W13**
GBR 2017							post-election
Party ambivalence							
N	8,034	7,597	7,188	6,117	7,110	8,077	7,313
Mean	4.13	4.22	4.12	4.44	4.45	4.33	4.48
St. dev.	2.84	2.88	2.84	2.84	2.87	2.92	2.96

Wave	W14	W15	W16	W17	W18	W19		
GBR 2019						post-election		
Party ambivalence								
N	6,425	4,546	4,798	5,775	7,113	6,877		
Mean	4.05	4.60	4.74	4.77	4.86	4.47		
St. dev.	3.00	2.97	2.91	2.81	2.74	2.98		
Wave	**W1**	**W2**	**W3**	**W4**	**W5**	**W6**	**W7**	**W8**
DEU 2013							post-election	
Party ambivalence								
N	2,101	1,988	1,982	1,935	1,972	1,935	2,031	
Mean	5.37	5.46	5.56	5.22	5.37	5.35	5.33	
St. dev.	2.80	2.54	2.58	2.62	2.51	2.61	2.56	
DEU 2017								post-election
Party ambivalence								
N	5,711	5,701	5,568	5,336	6,946	7,040	6,618	7,716
Mean	5.21	5.43	5.28	5.12	5.10	5.23	5.18	5.27
St. dev.	2.99	2.82	2.99	3.01	2.99	2.94	3.00	2.90

Note: The minimum of each ambivalence variable is -5 and the maximum is 10. For both German Federal Elections 2013 and 2017, the wave numbering starts with the first wave because both panels consist of two independent fieldwork periods. For Austria, data on leader ambivalence is not available for waves 8 and 9.

7.3 Appendix for Chapter 4

7.3.1 Appendix 1 – Operationalization of Variables and Descriptive Statistics

Vote switching: *Vote switching* focuses exclusively on switches between parties, and not between abstaining and voting. In countries where multiple elections at once have taken place, the variable focuses on the main election. The information on respondents' previous election vote choice is collected by a recall question. The accuracy of this recall question several years after the election is probably lower as a contemporary measure would be. The recall measure most likely underestimates the extent of switching as people might have tried to reduce cognitive dissonance by bringing their memory of their previous party choice into line with their current one.

Ambivalence*:*

Party ambivalence and leader ambivalence*:*

I. Party ambivalence = $(\text{Party}_A + \text{Party}_B) / 2 - (|\text{Party}_A - \text{Party}_B|)$

II. Leader ambivalence = $(\text{Leader}_A + \text{Leader}_B) / 2 - (|\text{Leader}_A - \text{Leader}_B|)$

Respondents who did not rate any of the parties or leaders positively on the feeling thermometer (equal to or higher than 5) were classified and coded as indifferent (Çakır 2022) and therefore not included in the calculation of the respective index. This is particularly important in the context of vote switching, as voters with a positive attitude towards parties or leaders are generally more likely to cast a vote and thus might switch than voters who do not like a party or leader and thus likely abstain from voting (Çakır 2022).

Party-leader Ambivalence: Please note that respondents may also rate two parties or two leaders equally and therefore prefer two parties or two leaders. As long as the highest rated party does not match the highest rated party of the leader, respondents will still be classified as being party-leader ambivalent.

Party ambivalence (weighted) and leader ambivalence (weighted): While the party ambivalence and leader ambivalence measures treat all parties and leaders as equally strong, they do not consider the party sizes and strengths that likely differ in MPS. For example, a voter rates Party A by 7, Party B by 8 and Party C by 4 on the feeling thermometer, but because the voter is aware that Party B has no chance of winning (vote $\text{share}_{\text{Party A}}$: 30%, vote $\text{share}_{\text{Party B}}$: 10%, vote $\text{share}_{\text{Party C}}$: 29%) and the race will probably be decided between parties A and C, the voter might still choose to vote for the second most liked party or leader. To control for such effects, two additional ambivalence measures are calculated. Both formulas to calculate *party*

ambivalence (weighted) and *leader ambivalence (weighted)* are identical but are weighted by parties' vote shares of the respective election and added to the equations (Çakır 2022)[52].

III. Party ambivalence (weighted) = ($Party_A$*Vote $share_A$ + $Party_B$*Vote $share_B$) / 2 – (|$Party_A$*Vote $share_A$ – $Party_B$*Vote $share_B$|)

IV. Leader ambivalence (weighted) = ($Leader_A$*Vote $share_A$ + $Leader_B$*Vote $share_B$) / 2 – (|$Leader_A$*Vote $share_A$ – $Leader_B$*Vote $share_B$|)

Party ambivalence (SB&P)* and *Leader ambivalence (SB&P): For calculating both robustness measures, the article relies on the generalized Griffin formula introduced and used by Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller (2012). This generalized formula builds on the one from Thompson and colleagues (1995) but expands it to multi-party systems using feeling thermometer ratings. Whilst Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller (2012) developed and used it for five parties present in the German Bundestag at the time of interest, the formula can be used for fewer or more parties. Higher values imply again more ambivalent attitudes.

V. Party ambivalence (SB&P) = Mean ($Party_A$, …, $Party_N$) – 2*SD ($Party_A$, …, $Party_N$)

VI. Leader ambivalence (SB&P) = Mean ($Leader_A$, …, $Leader_N$) – 2*SD ($Leader_A$, …, $Leader_N$)

Ambivalence Magnitude: *Magnitude* is an ordinal variable with three categories. The purpose of this variable is to combine the measures of *party ambivalence* and *leader ambivalence*. For example, respondents that are party ambivalent and leader ambivalent should be even more likely to switch than respondents who are only leader ambivalent. *Magnitude* is coded 0 if respondents are neither party nor leader ambivalent. The variable gets a score of 1 if respondents are either party or leader ambivalent. It is coded 2 if respondents are both party and leader ambivalent. Using Formulas I and II above, we first calculate the continuous party and leader ambivalence index. For classifying respondents into two categories of being party or leader ambivalent or not, this article uses a median split for each continuous variable. Based on this, respondents are classified as party ambivalent if their *party ambivalence* score is equal to or greater than 5. They are classified as leader ambivalent if their *leader ambivalence* score is equal to or higher than 5.5.

The categorization into ambivalent and non-ambivalent based on the median is definitely not perfect as it is somewhat arbitrary, but it is an important first step to include such

[52] This measure is definitely not perfect, as weighting leaders' ratings with their party's vote shares is not ideal, but it is an important first step in including such effects in the calculation.

a combined effect of party and leader ambivalence in the analysis[53]. For robustness, the appendix contains two additional analyses that replicate Model 7 from Table 4.2 with two alternative ambivalence magnitude measures. Model A4-1 from Table A4.1 uses a very similar coding of magnitude, but applies Basinger and Lavine's (2005, 173) cutoff to classify respondents as ambivalent or not ambivalent. On this basis, respondents with a positive ambivalence score are classified as ambivalent and those with a negative score as non-ambivalent (univalent). However, this results in two distributions of dummy variables (*party ambivalence dummy* and *leader ambivalence dummy*), in which 90 percent of respondents are classified as ambivalent and only 10 percent as univalent. This has a strong effect on the coding of *Magnitude* and leads to 86 percent of respondents being classified as party and leader ambivalent (coded as 2 in *Magnitude*). This underscores the more general argument that a two-category division into univalent and ambivalent is not useful. For this reason, Model A4-2 in Table A4.1 includes an alternative continuous variable *Ambivalence Combined*. This variable adds the scores for *leader ambivalence* and *party ambivalence,* and divides the result by two to obtain the average.

Table A4.1: Robustness check on the impact of magnitude on vote switching (using fixed effects)

	(A4-1) Vote switching	(A4-2) Vote switching
	Basinger & Lavine 2005	*Continuous measure*
Effective # of electoral parties	-15.261***	-15.07***
	(0.167)	(0.161)
Party-leader ambivalence	0.396***	0.395***
	(0.054)	(0.051)
Magnitude (Basinger and Lavine, 2005)		
I. Party **or** leader ambivalent	0.23*	–
	(0.147)	
II. Party **and** leader ambivalent	0.824***	–
	(0.176)	
Ambivalence Combined	–	0.114***
		(0.015)
Party identity	-0.925***	-0.94***

[53] See for example: DeCoster, Jamie, Marcello Gallucci, and Anne-Marie R. Iselin. 2011. "Best practices for using median splits, artificial categorization, and their continuous alternatives." *Journal of experimental psychopathology* 2(2):197–209.

	(0.073)	(0.075)
Gender	-0.004	-0.018
	(0.029)	(0.028)
Age	-0.013***	-0.013***
	(0.001)	(0.001)
Education	0.02	0.011
	(0.015)	(0.016)
Income	-0.019	-0.017
	(0.012)	(0.012)
Political sophistication	-0.003	-0.007
	(0.02)	(0.021)
Regime type		
Mixed	-53.543***	-52.687***
	(0.6)	(0.583)
Presidential	-0.786***	-0.826***
	(0.059)	(0.062)
Electoral system		
Mixed	-18.121***	-17.82***
	(0.188)	(0.185)
Majoritarian	20.612**	20.226***
	(0.227)	(0.23)
Constant	72.59***	71.958***
	(0.757)	(0.726)
Pseudo. R^2	0.114	0.12
Log likelihood	-21103.224	-21140.695
AIC	42230.4	42301.4
BIC	42333.1	42387.1
Country FE	✓	✓
Election FE	✓	✓
Country N	44	44
Election N	94	95
N	38448	38827

Source of data: CSES IMD and CSES Module 5.
Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses. All models are logistic models with country and year fixed effects; "–" not included in the analysis; The reference category of *Magnitude* is "neither party nor leader ambivalent"; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Distance first second closest: This variable indicates the ideological distance on the left-right scale between the two parties that are closest to the respondent. It ranges from 0 to 10 whilst about 85% of the respondents show a value smaller or equal to 3.

Effective number of electoral parties: To measure the number of parties within a country, the *effective number of electoral parties* is used. This variable is selected to count the number of parties and to account for their relative strength (i.e., their vote share) (Laakso and Taagepera

1979). It is important to consider the parties' strength as it has crucial implications for voters' electoral behavior. Even though several parties line up at an election if the electoral outcome is for sure dominated only by the two or three largest parties, voters will most likely only choose between those largest parties as voting for one of the other parties would be a wasted vote. The number of parties in MPS ranges from 2 to 18.

Distance center*: Distance center* is a continuous variable ranging from 0 to 5 that measures respondents' ideological distance between their own positioning on the left-right scale of 0 to 10 and the center of the scale (5). This variable could alternatively also be named *extremity*[54].

Party identity (PID): *Party identity* differentiates between partisans and non-partisans. It is coded as 1, if the respondent states a party affiliation and coded as 0, if not.

Age*: Age* is a continuous variable.

Gender: The dummy *gender* is coded as 1, if the respondent is a female, and coded as 0, if male.

Education: *Education* is an ordinal variable that is coded from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest) education.

Income: *Income* is also coded from 1 to 5 where 1 is the lowest and 5 the highest income quantile.

Political Sophistication: *Political sophistication* is added to account for respondents' political interest or knowledge. It is measured by political interest for CSES Module 5 and by political knowledge for the CSES IMD as only one of each indicator was available in the respective dataset. It is an ordinal variable that is coded from 1 (lowest) to 4 (highest) political knowledge for the IMD and political interest for Module 5. While political interest could be adopted as it was measured in the CSES, political knowledge had to be recoded to obtain four categories. Political knowledge in the CSES originally consists of three items that ask respondents three

[54] See for example: Torcal, Mariano, and Pedro C. Magalhães. 2022. "Ideological extremism, perceived party system polarization, and support for democracy." *European Political Science Review* 14(2):188–205.

questions about their political knowledge. An index is calculated based on the correct and incorrect answers, indicating whether a respondent answered none of the questions, one, two, or all three questions correctly.

Regime Type: *Regime type* is a categorical variable with three categories. The coding follows the original classification of the CSES where polities are distinguished by their type of executive. Polities are coded 1 if they are classified as a parliamentary regime, 2 if they belong to a mixed regime and 3 if they can be described as a presidential regime.

Electoral System: *Electoral system* is another categorical variable with three categories. The classification is adopted from the CSES and indicates the polity's electoral formula. The order is, however, slightly adjusted. It is coded 1 for proportional systems, 2 for mixed systems and 3 for majoritarian systems.

Table A4.2: Descriptive statistics CSES IMD and CSES Module 5

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Vote switching	138,558	0.3	0.5	0.0	1.0
No	91,731 (66%)				
Yes	46,827 (34%)				
Party ambivalence	253,784	4.9	3.0	-5.0	10.0
Leader ambivalence	211,777	5.0	3.1	-5.0	10.0
Party-leader ambivalence	197,719	0.2	0.4	0.0	1.0
No	153,687 (78%)				
Yes	44,032 (22%)				
Party ambivalence weighted	230,139	-0.1	1.0	-4.5	5.0
Leader ambivalence weighted	188,842	-0.0	1.0	-3.0	5.0
Magnitude	182,964	1.0	0.8	0.0	2.0
0. Neither party **nor** leader ambivalent	65,575 (36%)				
1. Party **or** leader ambivalent	55,180 (30%)				
2. Party **and** leader ambivalent	62,209 (34%)				
Party ambivalence (SB&P)	294,338	-0.8	2.9	-9.1	10.0

Leader ambivalence (SB&P)	246,293	-0.6	3.1	-9.1	10.0
Distance center	253,478	1.9	1.7	0.0	5.0
Distance first second closest	191,584	1.6	1.7	0.0	10.0
Effective # of electoral parties	304,299	5.2	2.4	2.3	18.0
Party identity	302,363	0.5	0.5	0.0	1.0
No	165,190 (55%)				
Yes	137,173 (45%)				
Gender	325,502	0.5	0.5	0.0	1.0
Male	155,975 (48%)				
Female	169,527 (52%)				
Age	319,335	47.5	17.3	15.0	115.0
Education	296,810	2.3	1.3	0.0	5.0
Income	258,320	2.9	1.4	1.0	5.0
Political sophistication	191,477	2.9	0.9	1.0	4.0
Regime type	326,144	1.6	0.8	1.0	3.0
Parliamentary regime	207,928 (64%)				
Mixed regime	56,882 (17%)				
Presidential regime	61,334 (19%)				
Electoral system	326,144	2.1	0.6	1.0	3.0
Proportional	190,816 (59%)				
Mixed	87,414 (27%)				
Majoritarian	47,914 (15%)				
Party system	343,872	2.9	0.2	2.0	3.0
TPS	17,728 (5%)				
MPS	326,144 (95%)				

Source of data: CSES IMD and CSES Module 5.
Note: Apart from variable *party system*, the above statistics refer exclusively to multi-party systems.

Figure A4.1: Distribution of party and leader ambivalence across all CSES MPS

7.3.2 Appendix 2 – Comprehensive List of Elections Included in the CSES IMD and Module 5

Multi-Party Systems:

- Albania: 2005
- Argentina: 2015
- Australia: 1996, 2004, 2007, 2013, 2019
- Austria: 2008, 2013, 2017
- Belgium: 1999, 2003, 2019
- Brazil: 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014, 2018
- Bulgaria: 2001, 2014
- Canada: 1997, 2004, 2008, 2011, 2015, 2019
- Chile: 1999, 2005, 2009, 2017
- Costa Rica: 2018
- Croatia: 2007
- Czech Republic: 1996, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2013
- Denmark: 1998, 2001, 2007, 2019
- Estonia: 2011
- Finland: 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019
- France: 2002, 2007, 2012, 2017
- Germany: 1998, 2002, 2005, 2009, 2013, 2017
- Great Britain: 1997, 2005, 2015, 2017
- Greece: 2009, 2012, 2015
- Hong Kong: 1998, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016
- Hungary: 1998, 2002, 2018
- Iceland: 1999, 2003, 2007, 2009, 2013, 2016, 2017
- Ireland: 2002, 2007, 2011, 2016
- Israel: 1996, 2003, 2006, 2013
- Italy: 2006, 2018
- Japan: 1996, 2004, 2007, 2013, 2017
- Kenia: 2013
- Kyrgyzstan: 2005
- Latvia: 2011, 2011, 2014
- Lithuania: 1997, 2016

- Mexico: 1997, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015
- Montenegro: 2012
- Netherlands: 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2017
- New Zealand: 1996, 2002, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2020
- Norway: 1997, 2001, 2005, 2009, 2013, 2017
- Peru: 2000, 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016
- Philippines: 2004, 2010, 2016
- Poland: 1997, 2001, 2005, 2007, 2011
- Portugal: 2002, 2005, 2009, 2015, 2019
- Romania: 1996, 2004, 2009, 2012, 2014
- Slovakia: 2010, 2016, 2020
- Slovenia: 1996, 2004, 2008, 2011
- South Korea: 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016
- Spain: 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008
- Sweden: 1998, 2002, 2006, 2014, 2018
- Switzerland: 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2019
- Taiwan: 1996, 2001, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016, 2020
- Thailand: 2001, 2007, 2011, 2019
- Tunisia: 2019
- Turkey: 2011, 2015, 2018
- Ukraine: 1998
- Uruguay: 2009, 2019

Two-Party System:

- United States: 1996, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016, 2020

7.3.3 Appendix 3 – Robustness Checks

7.3.3.1 Robustness Check I: Measurement Checks

Table A4.3 shows the logistic regression results of the first two robustness checks. In the first check, models A4-3, A4-4, and A4-5 replicate the original models 5, 6, and 7 (Table 4.2) and focus only on a subsample of respondents. The sample used excludes respondents who do not rate the party they voted for in the last election first or second on the feeling thermometer. This approach is useful because voters who do not rank their previous choice as one of their favorites are very likely to switch their vote regardless of their level of ambivalence between two other parties. The regression results show similar significance, although the weighted leader ambivalence in the robustness check is even slightly more significant than in the original model (model 6 table 4.2). Most striking, however, are the larger effects compared to the original models. This supports the argument that voters who place their prior vote choice among the two highest rated parties or leaders show a stronger effect of ambivalence on vote switching.

The second robustness check related to an alternative ambivalence measurement based on Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller (2012) is presented in Model A4-6. It demonstrates that we still find positive and highly significant effects of party ambivalence on vote switching if we use the MPS ambivalence measure of Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller (2012). With increasing party ambivalence voters are more likely to vote for a different party in upcoming election. Leader ambivalence does not show significant effects anymore. It is, however, not surprising that the effects are weaker or even no longer significant as the measurement includes not only the two highest-rated parties and leaders, but the ratings of all parties and leaders. In summary, Model A4-6 shows that the previous results on the effects of ambivalence on switching are partially robust with respect to the measurement. While the effects of party ambivalence are supported, the effects of leader ambivalence are not.

Table A4.3: Robustness checks I and II (using fixed effects)

	(A4-3) Vote switching	(A4-4) Vote switching	(A4-5) Vote switching	(A4-6) Vote switching
	Robustness Check I: Ambivalence related to previous vote choice			*Robustness Check II: Alternative measurement*
Effective # of electoral parties	-8.312***	-9.796***	-8.915***	-16.86***
	(0.254)	(0.378)	(0.230)	(0.185)
Party-leader ambivalence	0.940***	0.867***	0.908***	0.399***
	(0.055)	(0.061)	(0.064)	(0.052)

Party ambivalence	0.197***	–	–	–
	(0.032)			
Leader ambivalence	0.076***	–	–	–
	(0.009)			
Party ambivalence Weighted	–	0.312***	–	–
		(0.037)		
Leader ambivalence Weighted	–	0.106***	–	–
		(0.028)		
Magnitude				
I. Party **or** leader ambivalent	–	–	0.663***	–
			(0.065)	
II. Party **and** leader ambivalent	–	–	1.159***	–
			(0.069)	
Party ambivalence (SB&P)	–	–	–	0.059***
				(0.012)
Leader ambivalence (SB&P)	–	–	–	0.001
				(0.008)
Party identity	-0.970***	-0.930***	-0.962***	-0.892***
	(0.089)	(0.083)	(0.086)	(0.074)
Gender	0.027	0.079	0.045	-0.007
	(0.041)	(0.048)	(0.041)	(0.028)
Age	-0.01***	-0.011***	-0.01***	-0.013***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)
Education	0.034	0.058*	0.039	0.017
	(0.025)	(0.024)	(0.023)	(0.016)
Income	-0.026	-0.025	-0.027	-0.016
	(0.017)	(0.015)	(0.017)	(0.011)
Political sophistication	-0.001	0.013	0.002	0.01
	(0.036)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.018)
Regime type (ref: parliamentary regime)				
Mixed	-28.705***	-33.688***	-30.914***	-59.134***
	(0.904)	(1.312)	(0.81)	(0.655)
Presidential	-0.213*	0.159	0.126	-0.834***
	(0.094)	(0.089)	(0.069)	(0.056)
Electoral system (ref: proportional system)				
Mixed	20.415***	24.995***	22.56***	42.88***
	(0.658)	(0.878)	(0.532)	(0.44)
Majoritarian	9.387***	11.283***	10.018***	19.619***
	(0.261)	(0.375)	(0.241)	(0.196)
Constant	27.817***	33.798***	30.283***	60.896***
	(0.892)	(1.431)	(0.859)	(0.69)
Pseudo R^2	0.136	0.109	0.121	0.115
Log likelihood	-10171.347	-9278.8171	-10344.708	-21988.857
AIC	20364.7	18577.6	20711.4	43999.7
BIC	20455.5	18658.9	20802.3	44094.3
Country FE	✓	✓	✓	✓

Election FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Country N	44	43	44	44
Election N	95	93	95	95
N	28528	24971	28528	39992

Source of data: CSES IMD and CSES Module 5.
Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses. All models are logistic models with country and year fixed effects; "–" not included in the analysis; The reference category of *Magnitude* is "neither party nor leader ambivalent"; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

7.3.3.2 Robustness Check II: Replication of Main Analyses with Multi-Level Models

Table A4.4: Robustness check III (using multilevel effects)

	(A4-7) Distance First Second Closest	(A4-8) Party-leader ambivalence	(A4-9) Party ambivalence	(A4-10) Leader ambivalence
	Original (1)	*Original (2)*	*Original (3)*	*Original (4)*
Effective # of electoral parties	-0.036	0.084**	–	–
	(0.025)	(0.031)		
Distance First Second Closest	–	–	-0.394***	–
			(0.028)	
Distance Center	0.225***	–	–	–
	(0.039)			
Party-leader ambivalence	–	–	0.179*	0.185*
			(0.073)	(0.077)
Party identity	–	-0.511***	-0.025	0.018
		(0.024)	(0.055)	(0.047)
Gender	–	-0.009	0.127***	0.024
		(0.026)	(0.033)	(0.037)
Age	–	-0.004**	-0.006***	0.001
		(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Education	–	0.006	0.082***	0.088***
		(0.015)	(0.022)	(0.022)
Income	–	-0.002	0.006	0.041**
		(0.008)	(0.014)	(0.013)
Political sophistication	–	-0.073**	0.048*	0.097***
		(0.022)	(0.02)	(0.023)
Regime type (ref: parliamentary regime)				
Mixed	0.083	0.012	-0.066	-0.188
	(0.189)	(0.148)	(0.336)	(0.418)
Presidential	0.353	0.333	0.025	-0.523
	(0.182)	(0.183)	(0.406)	(0.547)
Electoral system (ref: proportional system)				
Mixed	0.292**	0.105	-0.354	-0.502
	(0.108)	(0.188)	(0.261)	(0.307)
Majoritarian	0.525	0.21	0.134	-0.273
	(0.347)	(0.18)	(0.251)	(0.476)

Constant	1.211***	-1.29***	5.38***	4.461***
	(0.164)	(0.244)	(0.305)	(0.35)
Random effects				
Country variance	0.283	0.087	0.642	0.928
	(0.121)	(0.072)	(0.204)	(0.337)
Election variance	0. 077	0.221	0.352	0.658
	(0.02)	(0.086)	(0.137)	(0.23)
Residual variance	3.088		6.353	7.532
	(0.435)		(0.500)	(0.728)
Quality indicator				
Log pseudo likelihood	-394861.64	-38421.12	-135275.96	-190185.69
AIC	789743.3	76870.2	270583.9	380401.4
BIC	789845.3	76999.9	270727.3	380540.4
Wald chi2	61.91	642.00	834.79	79.84
Country N	55	46	47	47
Election N	184	126	129	133
N	198973	77877	57626	78195

Source of data: CSES IMD and CSES Module 5.
Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses. All models are random intercept models at the election level; "–" not included in the analysis; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table A4.5: Robustness check III (using multilevel effects)

	(A4-11) Vote switching	(A4-12) Vote switching	(A4-13) Vote switching
	Original (5)	*Original (6)*	*Original (7)*
Effective # of electoral parties	0.102*	0.112	0.106*
	(0.048)	(0.057)	(0.403)
Party-leader ambivalence	0.395***	0.374***	0.403***
	(0.052)	(0.056)	(0.053)
Party ambivalence	0.082***	–	–
	(0.014)		
Leader ambivalence	0.033***	–	–
	(0.006)		
Party ambivalence Weighted	–	0.222***	–
		(0.033)	
Leader ambivalence Weighted	–	0.073**	–
		(0.025)	
Magnitude			
I. Party **or** leader ambivalent	–	–	0.253***
			(0.049)
II. Party **and** leader ambivalent	–	–	0.51***
			(0.062)
Party identity	-0.942***	-0.956***	-0.948***
	(0.074)	(0.067)	(0.073)
Gender	-0.019	0.019	-0.015
	(0.027)	(0.031)	(0.028)

Age	-0.013***	-0.013***	-0.013***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Education	0.01	0.021	0.013
	(0.017)	(0.018)	(0.016)
Income	-0.016	-0.015	-0.015
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)
Political sophistication	-0.006	0.01	-0.004
	(0.021)	(0.024)	(0.02)
Regime type			
(ref: parliamentary regime)			
Mixed	-0.285	-0.064	-0.264
	(0.224)	(0.264)	(0.224)
Presidential	0.297	0.202	0.278
	(0.299)	(0.321)	(0.302)
Electoral system			
(ref: proportional system)			
Mixed	-0.199	-0.055	-0.205
	(0.172)	(0.188)	(0.176)
Majoritarian	0.367	0.469	0.383
	(0.553)	(0.632)	(0.538)
Constant	-0.799*	-0.345	-0.504
	(0.309)	(0.415)	(0.298)
Random effects			
Country variance	0.15	0.184	0.166
	(0.214)	(0.258)	(0.197)
Election variance	0.241	0.213	0.234
	(0.137)	(0.157)	(0.123)
Quality indicator			
Log pseudo likelihood	-21331.457	-18501.863	-21424.427
AIC	42696.9	37037.7	42882.9
BIC	42842.6	37180.8	43028.5
Wald chi2	880.97	563.96	1091.04
Country N	44	44	44
Election N	95	94	95
N	38827	33352	38827

Source of data: CSES IMD and CSES Module 5.
Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses. All models are random intercept models at the election level. The reference category of *Magnitude* is "neither party nor leader ambivalent"; "–" not included in the analysis; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table A4.6: Robustness check III (using multilevel effects)

	(A4-14) Vote switching	(A4-15) Vote switching	(A4-16) Vote switching	(A4-17) Vote switching
	Original (8)	*Original (9)*	*Original (10)*	*Original (11)*
Effective # of electoral parties	0.066* (0.026)	0.101*** (0.026)	0.072* (0.029)	0.11* (0.048)
Party-leader	0.94***	0.875***	0.91***	0.4***

ambivalence	(0.055)	(0.062)	(0.065)	(0.048)
Party ambivalence	0.196***	–	–	–
	(0.031)			
Leader ambivalence	0.076***	–	–	–
	(0.008)			
Party ambivalence Weighted	–	0.309***	–	–
		(0.037)		
Leader ambivalence Weighted	–	0.099***	–	–
		(0.028)		
Magnitude				
I. Party **or** leader ambivalent	–	–	0.67***	–
			(0.063)	
II. Party **and** leader ambivalent	–	–	1.169***	–
			(0.068)	
Party ambivalence (SB&P)	–	–	–	0.059***
				(0.012)
Leader ambivalence (SB&P)	–	–	–	0.0002
				(0.008)
Party identity	-0.975***	-0.934***	-0.967***	-0.894***
	(0.088)	(0.082)	(0.085)	(0.074)
Gender	0.028	0.08	0.045	-0.008
	(0.041)	(0.048)	(0.041)	(0.028)
Age	-0.01***	-0.011***	-0.01***	-0.013***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)
Education	0.028	0.047	0.033	0.016
	(0.026)	(0.025)	(0.024)	(0.017)
Income	-0.023	-0.02	-0.024	-0.014
	(0.017)	(0.015)	(0.017)	(0.012)
Political sophistication	0.001	0.013	0.003	0.012
	(0.034)	(0.035)	(0.034)	(0.018)
Regime type (ref: parliamentary regime)				
Mixed	-0.125	0.005	-0.124	-0.31
	(0.152)	(0.206)	(0.154)	(0.23)
Presidential	0.341	0.156	0.312	0.19
	(0.203)	(0.199)	(0.178)	(0.312)
Electoral system (ref: proportional system)				
Mixed	-0.226	-0.047	-0.253	-0.243
	(0.177)	(0.231)	(0.184)	(0.17)
Majoritarian	0.56*	0.792**	0.565*	0.325
	(0.231)	(0.283)	(0.222)	(0.547)
Constant	-2.983***	-1.747***	-2.2***	-0.226
	(0.227)	(0.24)	(0.21)	(0.304)
Random effects				
Country variance	0.075	0.142	0.083	0.142
	(0.046)	(0.057)	(0.049)	(0.202)

Election variance	0.083	0.066	0.084	0.247
	(0.024)	(0.021)	(0.025)	(0.129)
Quality indicator				
Log pseudo likelihood	-10295.56	-9397.88	-10470.57	-22201.364
AIC	20625.1	18829.8	20975.1	44436.7
BIC	20765.5	18967.9	21115.6	44582.9
Wald chi2	1822.61	936.17	1256.63	989.47
Country N	44	43	44	44
Election N	95	93	95	95
N	28554	24990	28554	39992

Source of data: CSES IMD and CSES Module 5.
Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses. All models are random intercept models at the election level. The reference category of *Magnitude* is "neither party nor leader ambivalent"; "–" not included in the analysis; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

7.3.4 Appendix 4 – Replication of the Main Analysis for the Two-Party System of the USA

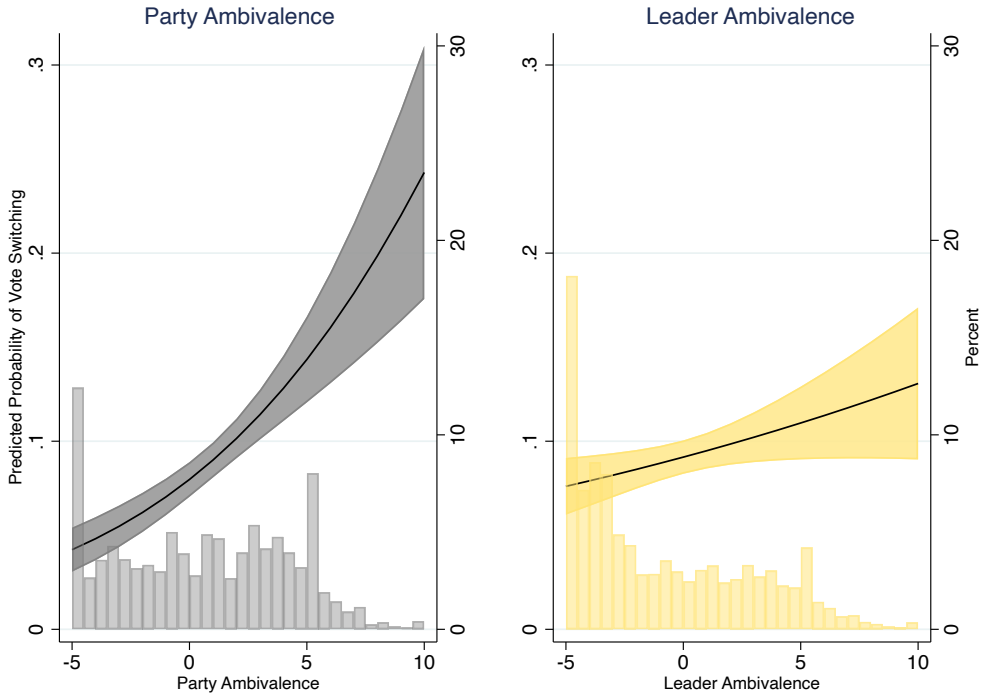
Table A4.7: Explaining the effect of ambivalence on vote switching in the two-party system of the USA (using fixed effects)

	(A4-18)
	Vote switching
	TPS (USA)
Party-leader ambivalence	1.657***
	(0.236)
Party ambivalence	0.141***
	(0.0214)
Leader ambivalence	0.0449*
	(0.0197)
Party identity	-0.824***
	(0.127)
Gender	0.185
	(0.124)
Age	0.00412
	(0.00393)
Education	-0.137
	(0.0781)
Income	-0.00175
	(0.0484)
Political sophistication	-0.154*
	(0.0734)
USA 2008	0.0273
	(0.226)
USA 2012	-0.315
	(0.235)
USA 2016	0.476**
	(0.171)
Constant	-1.536***
	(0.427)
Pseudo R^2	0.1450
Log pseudo likelihood	-994.77638

AIC	2015.6
BIC	2096.6
N	3776

Source of data: CSES IMD and CSES Module 5.
Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses. Reference category is the USA 2020. Data on the 1996 and 2004 elections are not available; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Figure A4.2: Predicted probabilities of vote switching for party and leader ambivalence for the USA (2008-2020)



7.4 Appendix for Chapter 5

7.4.1 Appendix 1 – List of Elections Included in the CSES Module 3

- Australia: 2007
- Austria: 2008
- Brazil: 2006, 2010
- Canada: 2008
- Chile: 2009
- Croatia: 2007
- Czechia: 2006, 2010
- Denmark: 2007
- Estonia: 2011
- Finland: 2007, 2011
- France: 2007
- Germany: 2005, 2009
- Greece: 2009
- Hong Kong: 2008
- Iceland: 2007, 2009
- Ireland: 2007
- Israel: 2006
- Japan: 2007
- Latvia: 2010
- Mexico: 2006, 2009
- Netherlands: 2006, 2010
- New Zealand: 2008
- Norway: 2005, 2009
- Peru: 2011
- Philippines: 2010
- Poland: 2005, 2007
- Portugal: 2009
- Romania: 2009
- Slovakia: 2010
- Slovenia: 2008
- South Korea: 2008
- Spain: 2008
- Sweden: 2006
- Switzerland: 2007
- Taiwan: 2008
- Thailand: 2007
- Turkey: 2011
- Uruguay: 2009

7.4.2 Appendix 2 – Operationalization of Variables and Descriptive Statistics

***GLES* Short-term Campaign Panels 2013 and 2017:** Sampling quotas were based on sex, age and education. As the panels were online studies, it was not possible to draw a random sample. One could argue that the two panels mostly represent young and internet-oriented people as these are more present in online panels. The sample characteristics, however, show that the sampling quotas worked well and that characteristics like age are equally distributed. One still needs to acknowledge that generalizability is limited. The target population were all German citizens who were eligible to vote in the German federal election.

Vote switching: *Vote switching* focuses exclusively on switches between parties, and not between abstaining and voting. In countries where multiple elections at once have taken place, the variable focuses on the main election. The information on respondents' previous election vote choice is collected by a recall question. The accuracy of this recall question several years after the election is probably lower as a contemporary measure would be. The recall measure most likely underestimates the extent of switching as people might have tried to reduce cognitive dissonance by bringing their memory of their previous party choice into line with their current one.

Vote decision timing: Question wording in 2013 and 2017: *"When did you decide how you were going to vote in the federal election?"* Answer categories in 2013: "1. A long time before the election", "2. A few months before the election", "3. In the last few weeks before the election", "4. In the last few days before the election", "5. Not until election day". Answer categories in 2017: "1. A long time before the election", "2. A year ago", "3. A few months before the election", "4. In the last few weeks before the election", "5. In the last few days before the election", "6. Not until election day". Question wording in 2021: "*When did you decide how to vote in this federal election?*" Answer categories: "1. A long time ago", "2. A few months ago", "3. A few weeks before the election", "4. A few days before the election", "5. On election day".

Vote decision difficulty: Question wording in 2013 and 2017: *"How difficult was it for you to decide how to vote in this federal election?"* Answer categories: "1. Very difficult", "2. Fairly difficult", "3. Moderately", "4. Not very difficult", "5. Not difficult at all". Question wording in 2021: "*Did you find the voting decision for this federal election very difficult, fairly difficult, fairly easy or very easy?"* Answer categories: "1. Very difficult", "2. Fairly difficult ago", "3.

Fairly easy", "4. Very easy". The coding of this variable was reversed for all three election years, now ranging between "1. Not difficult at all" to "5. Very difficult" for 2013 and 2017, and "1. Very easy" to "4. Very difficult" for 2021.

Consider voting other party (lower house and presidential): Question wording: "*Did you consider voting for any other [party or parties/candidate or candidates]?*" Answer categories: "1. Yes", "5. No", "7. Volunteered: Refused", "8. Volunteered: Don't know".

ConSet CDU/CSU, ConSet SPD, ConSet FDP, ConSet Greens, ConSet Left, ConSet AfD: Question wording: "*You said that you want to cast your second vote for [party]. Are there any other parties for you would consider for your second vote?*" Answer categories: "(A) CDU/CSU", "(C) SPD", "(D) FDP", "(E) Greens", "(F) Left", "(H) Pirates", "(I) AfD", "(G) Other party".

Party ambivalence and leader ambivalence:
Following previous studies (Basinger and Lavine 2005; Çakır 2022; Johnson 2014; Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller 2012), the ambivalence measures take Griffin's formula of ambivalence as a starting point for the calculations of the indexes (Thompson et al. 1995):
I. Party ambivalence = (PartyA + PartyB) / 2 – (|PartyA – PartyB|)
II. Leader ambivalence = (LeaderA + LeaderB) / 2 – (|LeaderA – LeaderB|)

Party-leader disagreement: Please note that respondents may also rate two parties or two leaders equally and therefore prefer two parties or two leaders. As long as the highest rated party does not match the highest rated party of the leader, respondents will still be classified as being party-leader disagreeing.

Coalition disagreement: Question wording: "*Regardless of how likely or not such a coalition might be, how desirable do you find the following coalition governments?*"; Answers for several coalition constellations were provided on a 11-point scale ranging from "-5. Not desirable at all" to "5. Absolutely desirable".

Party identity: *Party identity* differentiates between partisans and non-partisans. It is coded as 1, if the respondent states a party affiliation and coded as 0, if not.

Age*: Age* is a continuous variable.

Gender: The dummy *gender* is coded as 1, if the respondent is a female, and coded as 0, if male.

Education: *Education* is an ordinal variable that is coded from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest) education.

Electoral system: *Electoral system* is another categorical variable with three categories. The classification is adopted from the CSES and indicates the polity's electoral formula. The order is, however, slightly adjusted. It is coded 1 for proportional systems, 2 for mixed systems and 3 for majoritarian systems.

Table A5.1: Descriptive statistics CSES Module 3

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Vote switching	36,957	0.3	0.5	0	1
No	24,939 (67%)				
Yes	12,018 (33%)				
Consider voting additional party (Lower House Election)	49,509	0.4	0.5	0	1
No	31,508 (64%)				
Yes	18,001 (36%)				
Consider voting additional party (Presidential Election)	8,852	0.2	0.4	0	1
No	7,182 (81%)				
Yes	1,670 (19%)				
Party ambivalence	61,660	4.8	3.0	-5.0	10.0
Leader ambivalence	61,749	5.0	3.1	-5.0	10.0
Party-leader disagreement	56,813	0.2	0.4	0	1
No	44,906 (79%)				
Yes	11,907 (21%)				
Index of conflict (LH election)	53,203	0.3	0.3	0	1
0 (=0 sources)	22,189 (41%)				
0.333 (=1 source)	16,392 (31%)				
0.666 (=2 sources)	12,637 (24%)				

1	(=3 sources)	1,985 (4%)				
Index of conflict (PR election)		9,705	0.3	0.3	0	1
0	(=0 sources)	4,120 (42%)				
0.333	(=1 source)	3,264 (34%)				
0.666	(=2 sources)	1,990 (21%)				
1	(=3 sources)	331 (3%)				
Party identity		70,784	0.5	0.5	0	1
No		37,188 (53%)				
Yes		33,596 (47%)				
Age		75,440	47.2	17.2	16	106
Education		73,609	3.1	1.2	1	5
Gender		75,772	0.5	0.5	0	1
Male		35,923 (47%)				
Female		39,849 (53%)				
Electoral system		75,861	1.5	0.7	1	3
Proportional		49,369 (65%)				
Mixed		16,924 (22%)				
Majoritarian		9,568 (13%)				

Source of data: CSES Module 3. *Note:* The above statistics refer exclusively to multi-party systems. The total number of observations is 75,861.

Table A5.2: Descriptive statistics GLES 2013 short-term campaign panel

Statistic	**N**	**Mean**	**St. Dev.**	**Min**	**Max**
Vote switching 2009/2013	2,205	0.4	0.5	0	1
No	1,308 (59%)				
Yes	897 (41%)				
Vote decision timing	3,815	2.3	1.3	1	5
1 A long time before E	1,534 (40%)				
2 Few months before E	750 (20%)				
3 Few weeks before E	703 (18%)				
4 Few days before E	515 (14%)				
5 Not until E day	313 (8%)				
Vote decision difficulty	2,998	2.2	1.2	1	5
1 Not difficult at all	1,123 (38%)				
2 Not very difficult	810 (27%)				
3 Moderately	582 (19%)				
4 Fairly difficult	351 (12%)				
5 Very difficult	132 (4%)				
Considering voting	4,174	0.5	0.5	0	1

additional party						
No		2,095 (50%)				
Yes		2,079 (50%)				
Party ambivalence		3,561	4.9	2.8	-5.0	10.0
Leader ambivalence		3,510	4.3	3.0	-5.0	10.0
Party-leader disagreement		3,319	0.2	0.4	0	1
No		2,710 (82%)				
Yes		609 (18%)				
Coalition disagreement		3,173	0.1	0.3	0	1
No		2,744 (86%)				
Yes		429 (14%)				
Index of conflict		3,018	0.3	0.3	0	1
0	(=0 sources)	1,194 (40%)				
0.25	(=1 source)	821 (27%)				
0.5	(=2 sources)	795 (26%)				
0.75	(=3 sources)	190 (6%)				
1	(=4 sources)	18 (1%)				
Party identity		4,177	0.7	0.4	0	1
No		1,109 (27%)				
Yes		3,068 (73%)				
Age		5,256	45.7	14.6	18	83
Education		5,230	3.3	1.2	1	5
Gender		5,256	0.5	0.5	0	1
Male		2,553 (49%)				
Female		2,703 (51%)				
Party specific variables:						
CDU/ CSU						
Considering voting this party		2,198	0.2	0.4	0	1
No		1,776 (81%)				
Yes		422 (19%)				
Party ambivalence		1,543	0.7	3.8	-5.0	10.0
Leader ambivalence		1,531	1.3	3.8	-5.0	10.0
Party-leader disagreement		4,598	0.1	0.3	0	1
No		4,242 (92%)				
Yes		356 (8%)				
Coalition disagreement		3,302	0.2	0.4	0	1
No		2,635 (80%)				
Yes		667 (20%)				
SPD						
Considering voting this party		2,135	0.3	0.5	0	1
No		1,450 (68%)				

Yes	685 (32%)				
Party ambivalence	1,468	2.7	3.6	-5.0	10.0
Leader ambivalence	1,460	1.9	3.8	-5.0	10.0
Party-leader disagreement	4,349	0.1	0.2	0	1
No	4,101 (94%)				
Yes	248 (6%)				
Coalition disagreement	3,302	0.3	0.4	0	1
No	2,465 (75%)				
Yes	837 (25%)				
FDP					
Considering voting this party	2,805	0.1	0.3	0	1
No	2,485 (89%)				
Yes	320 (11%)				
Party ambivalence	2,115	-0.3	3.8	-5.0	10.0
Leader ambivalence	2,053	0.2	3.6	-5.0	10.0
Party-leader disagreement	4,626	0.0	0.1	0	1
No	4,550 (98%)				
Yes	76 (2%)				
Coalition disagreement	3,302	0.2	0.4	0	1
No	2,636 (80%)				
Yes	666 (20%)				
GREENS					
Considering voting this party	2,644	0.3	0.5	0	1
No	1,849 (70%)				
Yes	795 (30%)				
Party ambivalence	1,959	2.5	4.0	-5.0	10.0
Leader ambivalence	1,931	1.7	3.8	-5.0	10.0
Party-leader disagreement	4,244	0.0	0.1	0	1
No	4,148 (98%)				
Yes	96 (2%)				
Coalition disagreement	3,302	0.3	0.5	0	1
No	2,193 (66%)				
Yes	1,109 (34%)				
Left					
Considering voting this party	2,514	0.3	0.4	0	1
No	1,877 (75%)				
Yes	637 (25%)				
Party ambivalence	1,837	0.4	4.1	-5.0	10.0
Leader ambivalence	1,801	1.5	4.0	-5.0	10.0
Party-leader disagreement	4,525	0.1	0.2	0	1
No	4,245 (94%)				

Yes	280 (6%)				
Coalition disagreement	3,302	0.0	0.2	0	1
No	3,190 (97%)				
Yes	112 (3%)				
AfD					
Considering voting this party	2,739	0.2	0.4	0	1
No	2,238 (82%)				
Yes	501 (18%)				
Party ambivalence	2,230	-0.7	3.7	-5.0	10.0

Source of data: GLES 2013 Short-term Campaign Panel. *Note:* The total number of observations is 5,256.

Table A5.3: Descriptive statistics GLES 2017 short-term campaign panel

Statistic	**N**	**Mean**	**St. Dev.**	**Min**	**Max**
Vote switching 2013/2017	5,333	0.5	0.5	0	1
No	2,894 (54%)				
Yes	2,439 (46%)				
Vote decision timing	12,459	2.8	1.7	1	6
1 A long time before E	4,962 (40%)				
2 Year ago	566 (5%)				
3 Few months before E	2,140 (17%)				
4 Few weeks before E	2,392 (19%)				
5 Few days before E	1,550 (12%)				
6 On E day	849 (7%)				
Vote decision difficulty	9,498	2.4	1.3	1	5
1 Not difficult at all	3,087 (33%)				
2 Not very difficult	2,378 (25%)				
3 Moderately	1,970 (21%)				
4 Fairly difficult	1,457 (15%)				
5 Very difficult	606 (6%)				
Considering voting additional party	13,253	0.5	0.5	0	1
No	6,859 (52%)				
Yes	6,394 (48%)				
Party ambivalence	10,637	5.0	3.0	-5.0	10.0
Leader ambivalence	10,851	4.6	3.1	-5.0	10.0
Party-leader disagreement	10,019	0.2	0.4	0	1
No	8,323 (83%)				
Yes	1,696 (17%)				
Coalition disagreement	8,770	0.1	0.3	0	1

No		7,728 (88%)				
Yes		1,042 (12%)				
Index of conflict		8,356	0.2	0.2	0	1
0	(=0 sources)	3,375 (40%)				
0.25	(=1 source)	2,467 (30%)				
0.5	(=2 sources)	2,106 (25%)				
0.75	(=3 sources)	373 (4%)				
1	(=4 sources)	35 (1%)				
Party identity		12,205	0.8	0.4	0	1
No		2,586 (21%)				
Yes		9,619 (79%)				
Age		22,521	46.4	15.3	18	102
Education		17,897	3.4	1.2	1	5
Gender		22,521	0.5	0.5	0	1
Male		10,579 (47%)				
Female		11,942 (53%)				
Party specific variables:						
CDU/ CSU						
Considering voting this party		7,195	0.2	0.4	0	1
No		5,536 (77%)				
Yes		1,659 (23%)				
Party ambivalence		5,516	2.3	4.0	-5.0	10.0
Leader ambivalence		5,381	1.7	4.2	-5.0	10.0
Party-leader disagreement		20,163	0.0	0.2	0	1
No		19,191 (95%)				
Yes		972 (5%)				
Coalition disagreement		8,950	0.2	0.4	0	1
No		6,783 (76%)				
Yes		2,167 (24%)				
SPD						
Considering voting this party		7,258	0.3	0.4	0	1
No		5,231 (72%)				
Yes		2,027 (28%)				
Party ambivalence		5,537	2.4	3.9	-5.0	10.0
Leader ambivalence		5,392	1.5	3.8	-5.0	10.0
Party-leader disagreement		20,079	0.0	0.2	0	1
No		19,444 (97%)				
Yes		635 (3%)				
Coalition disagreement		8,905	0.2	0.4	0	1
No		6,723 (76%)				
Yes		2,182 (24%)				

FDP					
Considering voting this party	8,155	0.3	0.4	0	1
No	5,879 (72%)				
Yes	2,276 (28%)				
Party ambivalence	6,287	1.7	3.8	-5.0	10.0
Leader ambivalence	5,959	1.8	3.8	-5.0	10.0
Party-leader disagreement	20,536	0.0	0.2	0	1
No	19,964 (97%)				
Yes	572 (3%)				
Coalition disagreement	8,889	0.2	0.4	0	1
No	6,700 (75%)				
Yes	2,189 (25%)				
GREENS					
Considering voting this party	8,277	0.3	0.5	0	1
No	5,872 (71%)				
Yes	2,405 (29%)				
Party ambivalence	6,426	1.8	4.1	-5.0	10.0
Leader ambivalence	5,840	1.3	3.7	-5.0	10.0
Party-leader disagreement	19,818	0.0	0.1	0	1
No	19,679 (99%)				
Yes	139 (1%)				
Coalition disagreement	8,913	0.4	0.5	0	1
No	5,584 (63%)				
Yes	3,329 (37%)				
Left					
Considering voting this party	7,654	0.2	0.4	0	1
No	5,886 (77%)				
Yes	1,768 (23%)				
Party ambivalence	5,860	0.8	4.2	-5.0	10.0
Leader ambivalence	5,585	1.4	4.0	-5.0	10.0
Party-leader disagreement	20,336	0.0	0.2	0	1
No	19,717 (97%)				
Yes	619 (3%)				
Coalition disagreement	8,897	0.0	0.2	0	1
No	8,490 (95%)				
Yes	407 (5%)				
AfD					
Considering voting this party	7,722	0.1	0.3	0	1
No	7,111 (92%)				
Yes	611 (8%)				
Party ambivalence	5,919	-2.5	3.1	-5.0	10.0

Leader ambivalence	5,728	-1.9	3.2	-5.0	10.0
Party-leader disagreement	20,880	0.0	0.1	0	1
No	20,717 (99%)				
Yes	163 (1%)				

Source of data: GLES 2017 Short-term Campaign Panel. *Note:* The total number of observations is 22,521.

Table A5.4: Descriptive statistics GLES 2021 rolling cross-section

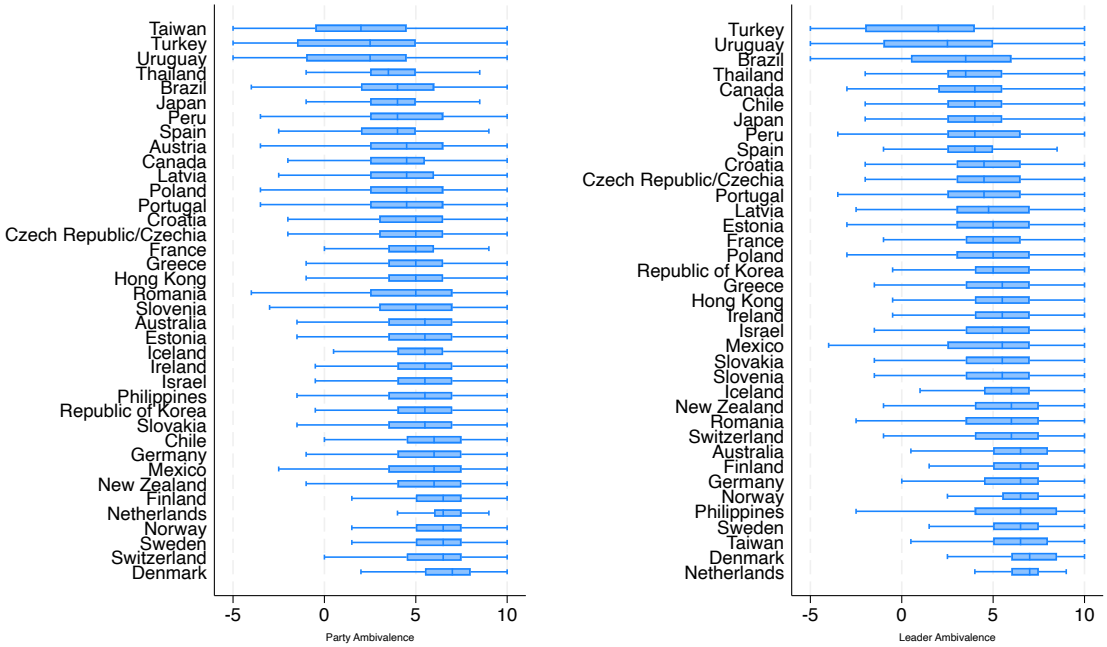
Statistic	**N**	**Mean**	**St. Dev.**	**Min**	**Max**
Vote switching 2017/2021	3,596	0.4	0.5	0	1
No	2,204 (61%)				
Yes	1,392 (39%)				
Vote decision timing	4,402	2.3	1.3	1	5
1 A long time before E	1,792 (41%)				
2 Few months before E	742 (17%)				
3 Few weeks before E	913 (21%)				
4 Few days before E	620 (14%)				
5 On E day	335 (8%)				
Vote decision difficulty	4,401	2.3	1.0	1	4
1 Very easy	1,032 (23%)				
2 Fairly easy	1,502 (34%)				
3 Fairly difficult	1,312 (30%)				
4 Very difficult	555 (13%)				
Considering voting additional party	4,047	0.6	0.5	0	1
No	1,652 (41%)				
Yes	2,395 (59%)				
Party ambivalence	6,539	6.3	2.1	-5.0	10.0
Leader ambivalence	6,533	5.5	2.4	-5.0	10.0
Party-leader disagreement	6,186	0.3	0.5	0	1
No	4,259 (69%)				
Yes	1,927 (31%)				
Coalition disagreement	6,448	0.1	0.3	0	1
No	5,738 (89%)				
Yes	710 (11%)				
Index of conflict	3,447	0.2	0.2	0	1
0 (=0 sources)	1,318 (38%)				
0.25 (=1 source)	1,324 (39%)				
0.5 (=2 sources)	688 (20%)				
0.75 (=3 sources)	114 (3%)				
1 (=4 sources)	4 (0%)				

Party identity	6,763	0.7	0.5	0	1
No	2,132 (32%)				
Yes	4,631 (68%)				
Age	6,985	55.2	16.8	18	94
Education	6,767	4.0	1.1	1	5
Gender	7,063	0.4	0.5	0	1
Male	3,890 (55%)				
Female	3,173 (45%)				
Party specific variables:					
CDU/ CSU					
Considering voting this party	4,047	0.1	0.3	0	1
No	3,633 (90%)				
Yes	414 (10%)				
Party ambivalence	3,054	3.5	3.7	-5.0	10.0
Leader ambivalence	2,897	1.7	3.7	-5.0	10.0
Party-leader disagreement	5,081	0.0	0.2	0	1
No	4,865 (96%)				
Yes	216 (4%)				
Coalition disagreement	6,448	0.2	0.4	0	1
No	5,173 (80%)				
Yes	1,275 (20%)				
SPD					
Considering voting this party	4,047	0.2	0.4	0	1
No	3,311 (82%)				
Yes	736 (18%)				
Party ambivalence	2,721	4.4	3.0	-5.0	10.0
Leader ambivalence	2,582	4.5	3.0	-5.0	10.0
Party-leader disagreement	6,149	0.3	0.5	0	1
No	4,431 (72%)				
Yes	1,718 (28%)				
Coalition disagreement	6,448	0.3	0.5	0	1
No	4,273 (66%)				
Yes	2,175 (34%)				
FDP					
Considering voting this party	4,047	0.1	0.3	0	1
No	3,561 (88%)				
Yes	486 (12%)				
Party ambivalence	3,403	2.3	3.5	-5.0	10.0
Leader ambivalence	3,219	2.1	3.5	-5.0	10.0
Party-leader disagreement	6,402	0.1	0.3	0	1
No	5,776 (90%)				

Yes	626 (10%)				
Coalition disagreement	6,448	0.3	0.5	0	1
No	4,607 (71%)				
Yes	1,841 (29%)				
GREENS					
Considering voting this party	4,047	0.2	0.4	0	1
No	3,289 (81%)				
Yes	758 (19%)				
Party ambivalence	2,809	3.8	4.0	-5.0	10.0
Leader ambivalence	2,652	2.8	3.8	-5.0	10.0
Party-leader disagreement	5,669	0.1	0.2	0	1
No	5,336 (94%)				
Yes	333 (6%)				
Coalition disagreement	6,448	0.3	0.5	0	1
No	4,330 (67%)				
Yes	2,118 (33%)				
Left					
Considering voting this party	4,047	0.1	0.3	0	1
No	3,736 (92%)				
Yes	311 (8%)				
Party ambivalence	3,594	1.7	3.9	-5.0	10.0
Leader ambivalence	2,303	2.2	3.4	-5.0	10.0
Party-leader disagreement	6,318	0.0	0.2	0	1
No	6,126 (97%)				
Yes	192 (3%)				
Coalition disagreement	6,448	0.2	0.4	0	1
No	5,482 (85%)				
Yes	966 (15%)				
AfD					
Considering voting this party	4,047	0.0	0.2	0	1
No	3,958 (98%)				
Yes	89 (2%)				
Party ambivalence	3,682	-3.1	2.5	-5.0	10.0
Leader ambivalence	2,729	-2.0	3.1	-5.0	10.0
Party-leader disagreement	6,728	0.0	0.1	0	1
No	6,643 (99%)				
Yes	85 (1%)				

Source of data: GLES 2021 Rolling Cross-Section. *Note:* The total number of observations is 7,068.

Figure A5.1: Distribution of party and leader ambivalence (CSES M3, MPS)



7.4.3 Appendix 3 – Regressions

Table A5.5: Regression table testing *H1* and *H2* with the CSES (using fixed effects)

	(A5-1)	(A5-2)
	Considering Voting Additional Party	
	Lower House Elections	Presidential Elections
Party ambivalence	**0.139*****	0.0145
	(0.0222)	(0.00743)
Leader ambivalence	**0.0451*****	**0.0910*****
	(0.01000)	(0.0132)
Party-leader disagreement	**0.413*****	**0.314****
	(0.0564)	(0.103)
Party identity	**-0.571*****	-0.0725
	(0.0930)	(0.108)
Age	**-0.0159*****	**-0.0126****
	(0.00208)	(0.00414)
Education	**0.111*****	**0.160*****
	(0.0174)	(0.0162)
Gender	0.0179	0.0583
	(0.0423)	(0.0847)
Electoral system (ref: proportional system)		
Mixed	**0.359*****	**-0.210*****
	(0.0767)	(0.0431)
Majoritarian	**0.279*****	**0.264*****
	(0.0365)	(0.0343)
Constant	**-1.768*****	**-2.244*****
	(0.107)	(0.0796)
Pseudo R^2	0.0510	0.06
Log likelihood	-19100.5	-3093.654
AIC	38215.0	6197.3

BIC	38273.7	6231.4
Country FE	✓	✓
Election FE	✓	✓
Country N	36	8
Election N	29	10
N	32438	6781

Source of data: CSES Module 3. *Note*: Robust standard errors in parentheses. All models include country and year fixed effects; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table A5.6: Regression table testing *H1, H2* and *H3* with the GLES

	(A5-3)	(A5-4)	(A5-5)
	Considering Voting for an Additional Party		
	2013	2017	2021
Party ambivalence	**0.246*****	**0.21*****	**0.156*****
	(0.022)	(0.015)	(0.0246)
Leader ambivalence	0.006	**0.05*****	**0.0530****
	(0.017)	(0.013)	(0.0194)
Party-leader disagreement	**0.276****	**0.194***	**0.453*****
	(0.114)	(0.077)	(0.0921)
Coalition disagreement	0.206	0.01	-0.254
	(0.129)	(0.086)	(0.146)
Party identity	-0.006	0.083	**-0.566*****
	(0.108)	(0.085)	(0.0964)
Age	-0.002	**-0.005***	**-0.0232*****
	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.00261)
Education	0.066	0.026	**0.161*****
	(0.034)	(0.024)	(0.0377)
Gender	**-0.189***	**-0.184*****	-0.00766
	(0.08)	(0.054)	(0.0790)
Constant	**-1.345*****	**-1.216*****	0.0615
	(0.237)	(0.178)	(0.298)
Pseudo R^2	0.063	0.06	0.064
Log pseudo likelihood	-1828.25	-3942.43	-1892.671
AIC	3650.5	7902.9	3803.3
BIC	3704.0	7963.2	3857.4
N	2802	6058	2997

Source of data: GLES 2013 Short-term Campaign Panel, GLES 2017 Short-term Campaign, GLES 2021 Rolling Cross-Section. *Note*: Robust standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table A5.7: Regression table testing *H1, H2* and *H3* for the 2013 German federal election

	(A5-6)	(A5-7)	(A5-8)	(A5-9)	(A5-10)	(A5-11)
	Considering Voting for an Additional Party					
	CDU/CSU	SPD	FDP	Greens	Left	AfD
Party ambivalence	**0.511*****	**0.408*****	**0.392*****	**0.415*****	**0.447*****	**0.298*****
	(0.047)	(0.042)	(0.041)	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.02)
Leader ambivalence	-0.018	0.046	-0.031	0.022	-0.031	-
	(0.039)	(0.031)	(0.039)	(0.028)	(0.034)	

Party-leader disagreement	0.151 (0.243)	**1.100**** (0.337)	0.411 (0.704)	0.495 (0.365)	**1.050***** (0.270)	-
Coalition disagreement	0.173 (0.212)	**0.721***** (0.158)	**0.871***** (0.184)	**0.359*** (0.145)	0.628 (0.374)	-
Party identity	-0.294 (0.269)	-0.131 (0.223)	0.562 (0.31)	-0.103 (0.203)	**0.471*** (0.219)	-0.188 (0.176)
Age	-0.005 (0.006)	0.001 (0.006)	0.006 (0.007)	-0.003 (0.005)	0.005 (0.006)	-0.002 (0.005)
Education	-0.031 (0.079)	0.04 (0.067)	0.01 (0.076)	**0.121*** (0.059)	**-0.145*** (0.07)	**-0.270***** (0.061)
Gender	-0.230 (0.186)	0.006 (0.157)	**-0.434*** (0.184)	**-0.287*** (0.139)	-0.077 (0.155)	-0.262 (0.133)
Constant	**-2.246***** (0.548)	**-2.836***** (0.474)	**-3.597***** (0.554)	**-2.801***** (0.413)	**-2.228***** (0.459)	-0.511 (0.368)
Pseudo R^2	0.339	0.272	0.29	0.27	0.363	0.195
Log pseudo likelihood	-375.771	-521.688	-424.504	-636.477	-515.507	-750.307
AIC	769.5	1061.4	867.0	1291.0	1049.0	1512.6
BIC	815.9	1107.0	916.2	1338.8	1097.0	1546.5
N	1280	1179	1743	1510	1529	2113

Source of data: GLES 2013 Short-term Campaign Panel. *Note*: *Leader ambivalence*, *party-leader disagreement* and *coalition disagreement* are not included in the analysis of model A5-11 because no adequate data for the AfD leader, Bernd Lucke, were available and potential coalition constellations did not include the AfD in 2013. Robust standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table A5.8: Regression table testing *H1, H2* and *H3* for the 2017 German federal election

	(A5-12)	(A5-13)	(A5-14)	(A5-15)	(A5-16)	(A5-17)
	Considering Voting for an Additional Party					
	CDU/CSU	SPD	FDP	Greens	Left	AfD
Party ambivalence	**0.468***** (0.031)	**0.406***** (0.031)	**0.443***** (0.03)	**0.473***** (0.026)	**0.444***** (0.027)	**0.456***** (0.029)
Leader ambivalence	**0.102***** (0.019)	**0.096***** (0.021)	**0.06*** (0.024)	0.018 (0.019)	0.024 (0.022)	-0.022 (0.031)
Party-leader disagreement	-0.190 (0.153)	**0.791***** (0.199)	**0.925***** (0.221)	0.531 (0.348)	**0.473*** (0.197)	0.551 (0.453)
Coalition disagreement	0.115 (0.116)	**0.754***** (0.108)	**0.997***** (0.1)	**0.619***** (0.093)	**0.908***** (0.233)	-
Party identity	-0.253 (0.186)	-0.177 (0.164)	**-0.532***** (0.154)	-0.119 (0.166)	-0.231 (0.173)	-0.110 (0.212)
Age	**-0.011**** (0.004)	**-0.009*** (0.003)	-0.004 (0.004)	0.002 (0.003)	**0.009*** (0.004)	0.001 (0.006)
Education	-0.048 (0.049)	-0.04 (0.044)	0.072 (0.042)	**0.108*** (0.041)	-0.009 (0.047)	-0.098 (0.072)
Gender	-0.081 (0.109)	**-0.199*** (0.099)	0.008 (0.095)	-0.018 (0.094)	**-0.250*** (0.108)	**-0.333*** (0.159)

Constant	**-2.544*****	**-2.273*****	**-2.427*****	**-3.221*****	**-2.720*****	**-1.989*****
	(0.378)	(0.309)	(0.313)	(0.310)	(0.343)	(0.483)
Pseudo R^2	0.317	0.268	0.346	0.308	0.349	0.338
Log pseudo likelihood	-1034.12	-1285.16	-1378.56	-1389.16	-1063.65	-602.98
AIC	2086.2	2588.3	2775.1	2796.3	2145.3	1222.0
BIC	2140.1	2642.6	2830.7	2851.5	2200.0	1272.5
N	2947	3062	3548	3381	3204	4100

Source of data: GLES 2017 Short-term Campaign. *Note*: Variable *coalition disagreement* is not included in model A5-17 as coalition constellations including the AfD did not exist in the 2017 election. Robust standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table A5.9: Regression table testing *H1, H2* and *H3* for the 2021 German federal election

	(A5-18)	(A5-19)	(A5-20)	(A5-21)	(A5-22)	(A5-23)
	Considering Voting for an Additional Party					
	CDU/CSU	SPD	FDP	Greens	Left	AfD
Party ambivalence	**0.294*****	**0.197*****	**0.353*****	**0.256*****	**0.285*****	**0.368*****
	(0.045)	(0.028)	(0.035)	(0.032)	(0.056)	(0.052)
Leader ambivalence	**0.084****	**0.066***	0.029	**0.147*****	0.08	0.01
	(0.032)	(0.026)	(0.027)	(0.028)	(0.048)	(0.062)
Party-leader disagreement	-0.236	**0.704*****	**0.863*****	**0.451***	0.292	**2.148****
	(0.423)	(0.118)	(0.190)	(0.222)	(0.360)	(0.730)
Coalition disagreement	**0.877*****	**0.490*****	**0.509*****	0.0003	**1.085*****	-
	(0.178)	(0.109)	(0.131)	(0.128)	(0.224)	
Party identity	**-0.387***	**-0.690*****	**-0.454****	**-0.408****	-0.016	-0.039
	(0.189)	(0.122)	(0.142)	(0.148)	(0.241)	(0.385)
Age	**-0.014****	**-0.018*****	**-0.008***	**-0.025*****	**-0.013***	0.005
	(0.006)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.006)	(0.011)
Education	0.0002	**0.115***	**0.226*****	0.110	0.067	0.098
	(0.088)	(0.057)	(0.068)	(0.059)	(0.103)	(0.177)
Gender	**-0.572****	**0.214***	**-0.568*****	**0.308***	**-0.449***	-0.655
	(0.183)	(0.109)	(0.132)	(0.128)	(0.213)	(0.441)
Constant	**-3.012*****	**-1.862*****	**-3.467*****	**-1.893*****	**-3.641*****	**-4.207*****
	(0.589)	(0.378)	(0.450)	(0.418)	(0.675)	(1.116)
Pseudo R^2	0.178	0.122	0.218	0.205	0.22	0.234
Log pseudo likelihood	-469.42	-1079.21	-815.51	-787.40	-369.80	-141.33
AIC	956.8	2176.4	1649.0	1592.8	757.6	298.7
BIC	1007.6	2227.4	1702.2	1643.0	807.7	345.3
N	2075	2122	2706	1946	1939	2515

Source of data: GLES 2021 Rolling Cross-Section. *Note*: Variable *coalition disagreement* is not included in model A5-23 as coalition constellations including the AfD did not exist in the 2021 election. Robust standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Figure A5.2: Average marginal effects testing *H1, H2* and *H3* for all parties

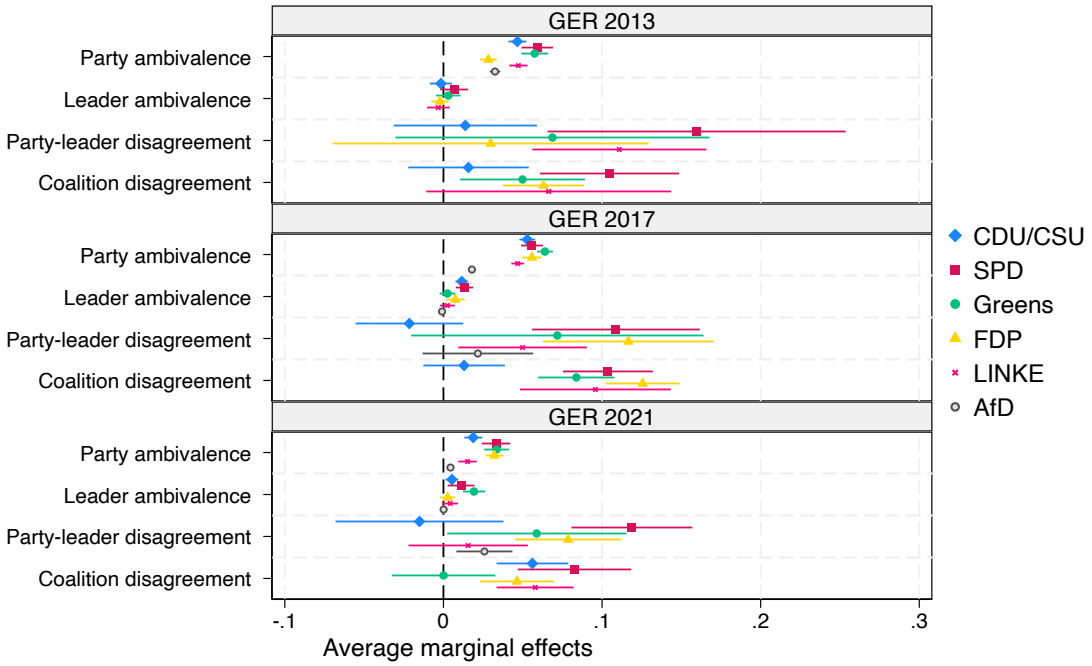


Table A5.10: Regression table testing *H4* with the GLES

	(A5-24)	(A5-25)	(A5-26)
	Vote Decision Difficulty		
	2013	2017	2021
Considering voting additional party	**0.829*****	**0.813*****	**1.503*****
	(0.103)	(0.073)	(0.0760)
Party ambivalence	0.028	0.039*	0.0306
	(0.021)	(0.017)	(0.0231)
Leader ambivalence	**0.057****	-0.023	**-0.0503****
	(0.018)	(0.015)	(0.0175)
Party-leader disagreement	**0.473*****	**0.521*****	**0.554*****
	(0.115)	(0.079)	(0.0747)
Coalition disagreement	0.057	0.017	0.0479
	(0.146)	(0.092)	(0.136)
Party identity	**-0.874*****	**-1.014*****	**-0.482*****
	(0.106)	(0.088)	(0.0756)
Age	**-0.01*****	**-0.01*****	0.00142
	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.00206)
Education	**0.111****	**0.061***	-0.00525
	(0.035)	(0.025)	(0.0328)
Gender	**0.306*****	**0.422*****	**0.241*****
	(0.083)	(0.056)	(0.0654)
cut1	-0.029	-0.921***	-0.564*
	(0.239)	(0.181)	(0.268)
cut2	1.209***	0.281	1.215***
	(0.239)	(0.181)	(0.271)
cut3	2.329***	1.320***	3.111***
	(0.24)	(0.182)	(0.277)

cut4	3.784***	2.826***	
	(0.264)	(0.192)	
Pseudo R^2	0.05	0.039	0.075
Log pseudo likelihood	-2753.018	-6055.75	-4001.623
AIC	5532.0	12137.5	8027.2
BIC	5605.4	12220.2	8100.4
N	2086	4274	3288

Source of data: GLES 2013 Short-term Campaign Panel, GLES 2017 Short-term Campaign, GLES 2021 Rolling Cross-Section. *Note*: Robust standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table A5.11: Regression table testing *H5* with the GLES

	(A5-27)	(A5-28)	(A5-29)
		Vote Decision Timing	
	2013	2017	2021
Considering voting additional party	**0.652*****	**0.569*****	**1.615*****
	(0.073)	(0.049)	(0.0752)
Party ambivalence	**0.08*****	**0.058*****	0.0268
	(0.019)	(0.014)	(0.0208)
Leader ambivalence	0.027	0.002	-0.0166
	(0.016)	(0.012)	(0.0171)
Party-leader disagreement	**0.596*****	**0.465*****	**0.392*****
	(0.106)	(0.07)	(0.0762)
Coalition disagreement	0.181	0.115	0.192
	(0.120)	(0.075)	(0.128)
Party identity	**-1.217*****	**-1.232*****	**-0.841*****
	(0.098)	(0.074)	(0.0742)
Age	**-0.019*****	**-0.019*****	**-0.0153*****
	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.00214)
Education	**0.079***	**0.091*****	-0.0554
	(0.031)	(0.022)	(0.0337)
Gender	**0.28*****	**0.283*****	0.129
	(0.074)	(0.049)	(0.0677)
cut1	-0.838***	-1.228***	-0.868***
	(0.211)	(0.153)	(0.258)
cut2	0.124	-1.039***	-0.00495
	(0.209)	(0.153)	(0.259)
cut3	1.166***	-0.213	1.176***
	(0.210)	(0.153)	(0.262)
cut4	2.563***	0.919***	2.494***
	(0.22)	(0.154)	(0.267)
cut5		2.287***	
		(0.163)	
Pseudo R^2	0.063	0.043	0.091
Log pseudo likelihood	-3585.505	-8484.148	-4314.958
AIC	7197.0	16996.3	8655.9
BIC	7273.7	17089.8	8735.2
N	2690	5870	3289

Source of data: GLES 2013 Short-term Campaign Panel, GLES 2017 Short-term Campaign, GLES 2021 Rolling Cross-Section. *Note*: Robust standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table A5.12: Regression table testing *H6* with the GLES

	(A5-30)	(A5-31)	(A5-32)
		Vote Switching	
	2013	2017	2021
Considering voting additional party	**0.776*****	**0.866*****	**0.806*****
	(0.138)	(0.09)	(0.0867)
Party ambivalence	**0.105*****	**0.06****	**0.132*****
	(0.031)	(0.022)	(0.0257)
Leader ambivalence	-0.003	-0.003	-0.0152
	(0.022)	(0.018)	(0.0195)
Party-leader disagreement	**0.325***	**0.285****	**0.215***
	(0.158)	(0.107)	(0.0905)
Coalition disagreement	**1.045*****	**0.926*****	0.0669
	(0.178)	(0.121)	(0.158)
Party identity	**-1.469*****	**-1.036*****	**-0.986*****
	(0.180)	(0.139)	(0.0971)
Age	**-0.015*****	**-0.01*****	**-0.0103*****
	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.00274)
Education	-0.084	-0.034	-0.0308
	(0.046)	(0.032)	(0.0399)
Gender	0.114	0.108	0.122
	(0.11)	(0.073)	(0.0812)
Constant	0.456	0.057	-0.452
	(0.336)	(0.259)	(0.314)
Pseudo R^2	0.112	0.065	0.078
Log pseudo likelihood	-992.582	-2202.112	-1803.38
AIC	2005.2	4424.2	3626.8
BIC	2059.5	4485.8	3686.7
N	1691	3485	2959

Source of data: GLES 2013 Short-term Campaign Panel, GLES 2017 Short-term Campaign, GLES 2021 Rolling Cross-Section. *Note*: Robust standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table A5.13: Regression table testing *H6* with the CSES (using fixed effects)

	(A5-33)	(A5-34)
	Vote Switching	
	Lower House Elections	Presidential Elections
Consider voting additional party	**1.109*****	**0.327*****
	(0.0796)	(0.0993)
Party ambivalence	**0.0324***	0.00692
	(0.0135)	(0.0102)
Leader ambivalence	**0.0341****	**0.0491*****
	(0.0108)	(0.0129)
Party-leader disagreement	**0.206****	**1.123*****
	(0.0716)	(0.324)
Party identity	**-0.911*****	**-0.378****
	(0.0760)	(0.140)
Age	**-0.00796*****	-0.00396

	(0.00184)	(0.00243)
Education	-0.0381	-0.0361
	(0.0213)	(0.140)
Gender	-0.0572	0.238
	(0.0342)	(0.151)
Electoral system (ref: proportional system)		
Mixed	**0.800*****	-
	(0.0630)	
Majoritarian	**1.000*****	**4.073*****
	(0.0582)	(0.0562)
Constant	**-1.539*****	**-1.533*****
	(0.103)	(0.214)
Pseudo R^2	0.138	0.279
Log likelihood	-11451.69	-1717.642
AIC	22919.4	3443.3
BIC	22983.2	3467.9
Country FE	✓	✓
Election FE	✓	✓
Country N	29	8
Election N	37	10
N	21506	3490

Source of data: CSES Module 3. *Note*: Robust standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

7.4.4 Appendix 4 – Robustness Checks

7.4.4.1 Robustness Check I: Replication of CSES Analyses with Multi-Level Models

Table A5.14: Regression table testing *H1* and *H2* with the CSES (using multilevel effects)

	(A5-35)	(A5-36)
	Considering Voting Additional Party	
	Lower House Election	Presidential Election
	Original (A5-1)	*Original (A5-2)*
Party ambivalence	**0.139*****	**0.0155***
	(0.0223)	(0.00730)
Leader ambivalence	**0.0454*****	**0.0908*****
	(0.0100)	(0.0131)
Party-leader disagreement	**0.413*****	**0.309****
	(0.0561)	(0.104)
Party identity	**-0.571*****	-0.0749
	(0.0929)	(0.110)
Age	**-0.0159*****	**-0.0127****
	(0.00207)	(0.00397)
Education	**0.112*****	**0.160*****
	(0.0175)	(0.0169)
Gender	0.0173	0.0576
	(0.0422)	(0.0853)
Electoral system (ref: proportional system)		
Mixed	0.239	**-0.461***

	(0.493)	(0.219)
Majoritarian	**-0.613*****	**-0.214***
	(0.128)	(0.102)
Constant	**-0.925*****	**-1.763*****
	(0.202)	(0.0761)
Random effects		
Country variance	0.293***	4.97e-33
	(0.0793)	(5.28e-32)
Election variance	0.0364	0.0637**
	(0.0190)	(0.0230)
Quality indicator		
Log pseudo likelihood	-19179.756	-3104.9002
AIC	38383.5	6219.8
BIC	38484.2	6253.9
Wald chi2	255.51	.
Country N	36	8
Election N	29	10
N	32438	6781

Source of data: CSES Module 3. *Note*: Robust standard errors in parentheses. All models are random intercept models at the election level; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table A5.15: Regression table testing *H6* with the CSES (using multilevel effects)

	(A5-37)	(A5-38)
	Vote Switching	
	Lower House Election	Presidential Election
	Original (A5-33)	*Original (A5-34)*
Consider voting additional party	**1.107*****	**0.330*****
	(0.0793)	(0.0996)
Party ambivalence	**0.0322***	0.00724
	(0.0133)	(0.0102)
Leader ambivalence	**0.0347****	**0.0492*****
	(0.0109)	(0.0128)
Party-leader disagreement	**0.208****	**1.119*****
	(0.0715)	(0.323)
Party identity	**-0.910*****	**-0.380****
	(0.0761)	(0.140)
Age	**-0.00792*****	-0.00401
	(0.00184)	(0.00235)
Education	-0.0372	-0.0350
	(0.0215)	(0.140)
Gender	-0.0573	0.236
	(0.0341)	(0.151)
Electoral system (ref: proportional system)		
Mixed	**-0.903***	-
	(0.423)	
Majoritarian	-0.0556	**3.437*****
	(0.173)	(0.598)
Constant	**-0.494***	-0.877

	(0.211)	(0.806)
Random effects		
Country variance	0.239*	0.531
	(0.102)	(0.661)
Election variance	0.161*	0.223
	(0.0819)	(0.134)
Quality indicator		
Log pseudo likelihood	-11520.925	-1730.1155
AIC	23065.8	3468.2
BIC	23161.6	3492.9
Wald chi2	1231.04	.
Country N	29	8
Election N	37	10
N	21506	3490

Source of data: CSES Module 3. *Note*: Robust standard errors in parentheses. All models are random intercept models at the election level; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

7.4.4.2 Robustness Check II: Alternative Operationalization of the Sources of Conflict

In this first attempt to examine the impact of a combined measure of the three sources of conflict on the likelihood of voting for an additional party, this article creates a very simple measure. *Index of conflict* is an index consisting of four values for the CSES and five values for the GLES, since *coalition disagreement* is not available for the CSES. In a first step, two new dummies are created based on *party ambivalence* and *leader ambivalence*. These dummies contain information on which respondents are classified as party (or leader) ambivalent (coded as 1) and which are not (coded as 0). For the classification of respondents as ambivalent or not ambivalent, a rather conservative approach is used in this article by using the highest third of *party (leader) ambivalence* to classify them as ambivalent. Thus, the cutoff is not theory-driven and does not refer to the actual values of these two variables, but is merely a first attempt to categorize respondents in order to create such an index. In a second step, an index is calculated by first adding up all the values of *party ambivalence (dummy)*, *leader ambivalence (dummy)*, *party-leader disagreement* and *coalition disagreement,* and then dividing it by 4 for the GLES and 3 for the CSES. For the CSES, *index of conflict* can take the values 0, 0.333, 0.666 and 1. For the GLES, the variable consists of 0, 0.25, 0.5, 0.75 and 1. For example, a respondent who can be classified as party ambivalent and party-leader disagreeing would receive a value of 0.666 for the CSES and 0.5 for the GLES.

The results are presented in Table A5.16 and A5.17 and visualized in Figures A5.3 and A5.4. In both tables, we find strong significant effects for the *index of conflict* on considering voting for an additional party for both the CSES and the GLES. Figure A5.3 (based on Table A5.16) shows that a voter in lower house elections who holds both sources of conflict is about

25 percentage points more likely to consider voting for an additional party than a respondent who does not hold any internal conflicts. This is very similar for presidential elections, although the results are slightly smaller with a 20 percentage point difference. For the GLES in Figure A5.4 (Table A5.17), we find an even stronger effect. In 2013, a respondent who indicates all three sources of conflict is about 35 percentage points more likely to consider voting for an additional party than a voter who indicates no conflict. For 2017, the difference is around 30 percentage points and for 2021 it decreases further, but is still around 20 percentage points.

From the international perspective of the CSES and the German national one from the GLES, these findings support the general assumption that somebody who is confronted with multiple sources of conflict between parties or leaders, as well as coalition expectations, is increasingly more likely to consider voting for an additional party. This partly also strengthens the support of hypotheses H_1, H_2 and H_3. More broadly, this highlights the crucial role that parties, leaders and coalitions signals can play in influencing voters' electoral behavior and decisions.

Table A5.16: Regression table testing *H1* and *H2* with the CSES (using fixed effects)

	(A5-39)	(A5-40)
	Considering Voting Additional Party	
	Lower House Elections	Presidential Elections
Index of conflict	**1.180*****	**0.999*****
	(0.136)	(0.152)
Party identity	**-0.586*****	-0.09
	(0.09)	(0.114)
Age	**-0.017*****	**-0.013*****
	(0.002)	(0.004)
Education	**0.123*****	**0.173*****
	(0.018)	(0.021)
Gender	0.007	0.054
	(0.042)	(0.084)
Electoral system (ref: proportional system)		
Mixed	**0.700*****	**-0.155*****
	(0.043)	(0.019)
Majoritarian	**0.576*****	**0.340*****
	(0.024)	(0.055)
Constant	**-1.348*****	**-2.052*****
	(0.123)	(0.066)
Pseudo R^2	0.113	0.051
Log likelihood	-19290.417	-3122.792
AIC	38590.8	6255.6
BIC	38632.8	6289.7
Country FE	✓	✓
Election FE	✓	✓
Country N	36	8

Election N	29	10
N	32438	6781

Source of data: CSES Module 3. *Note*: Robust standard errors in parentheses. All models include country and year fixed effects. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table A5.17: Regression table testing *H1, H2* and *H3* with the GLES (2013, 2017, 2021)

	(A5-41)	(A5-42)	(A5-43)
	Considering Voting for an Additional Party		
	2013	2017	2021
Index of conflict	**1.618*****	**1.355*****	**1.161*****
	(0.162)	(0.115)	(0.189)
Party identity	0.069	0.135	**-0.542*****
	(0.105)	(0.082)	(0.095)
Age	-0.001	**-0.004***	**-0.024*****
	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.003)
Education	**0.083***	**0.044***	**0.160*****
	(0.033)	(0.023)	(0.037)
Gender	-0.132	**-0.145****	0.018
	(0.078)	(0.052)	(0.078)
Constant	**-0.502***	-0.233	**1.209*****
	(0.215)	(0.160)	(0.251)
Pseudo R^2	0.03	0.02	0.05
Log pseudo likelihood	-1879.843	-4111.511	-1922.656
AIC	3771.7	8235.0	3857.3
BIC	3807.3	8275.3	3893.4
N	2802	6058	2994

Source of data: GLES 2013 Short-term Campaign Panel, GLES 2017 Short-term Campaign, GLES 2021 Rolling Cross-Section. *Note*: Robust standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Figure A5.3: Average predicted effects of the *index of conflict* (CSES)

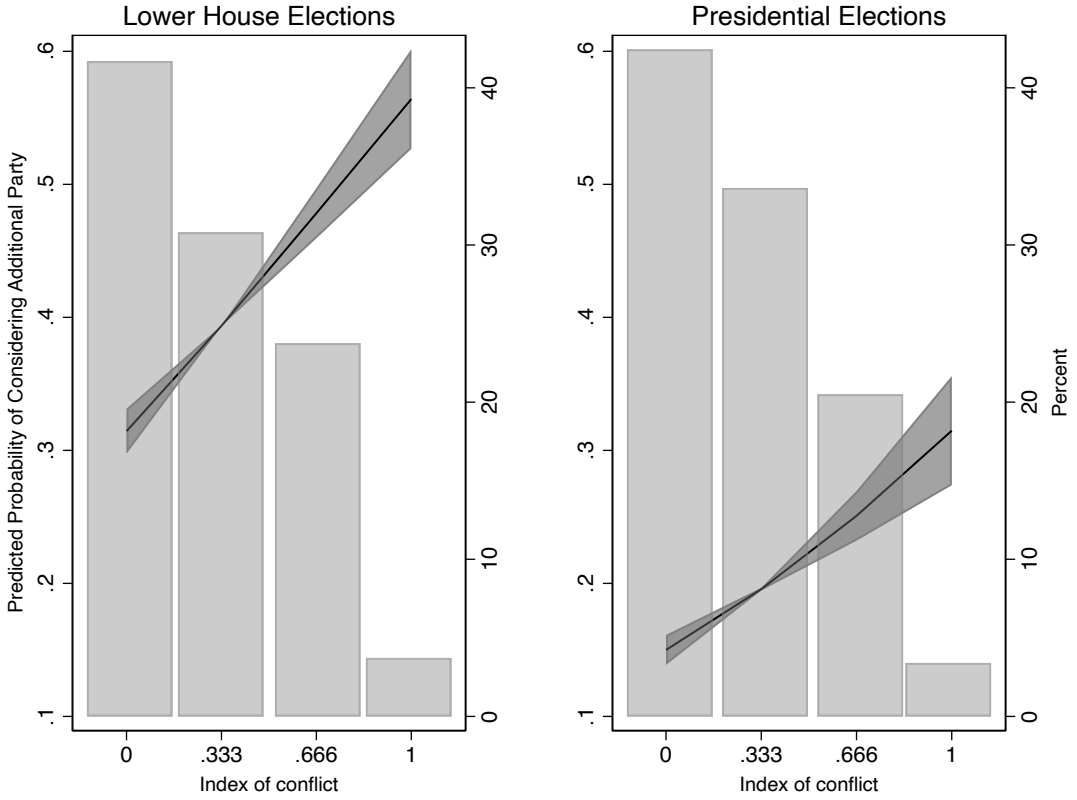
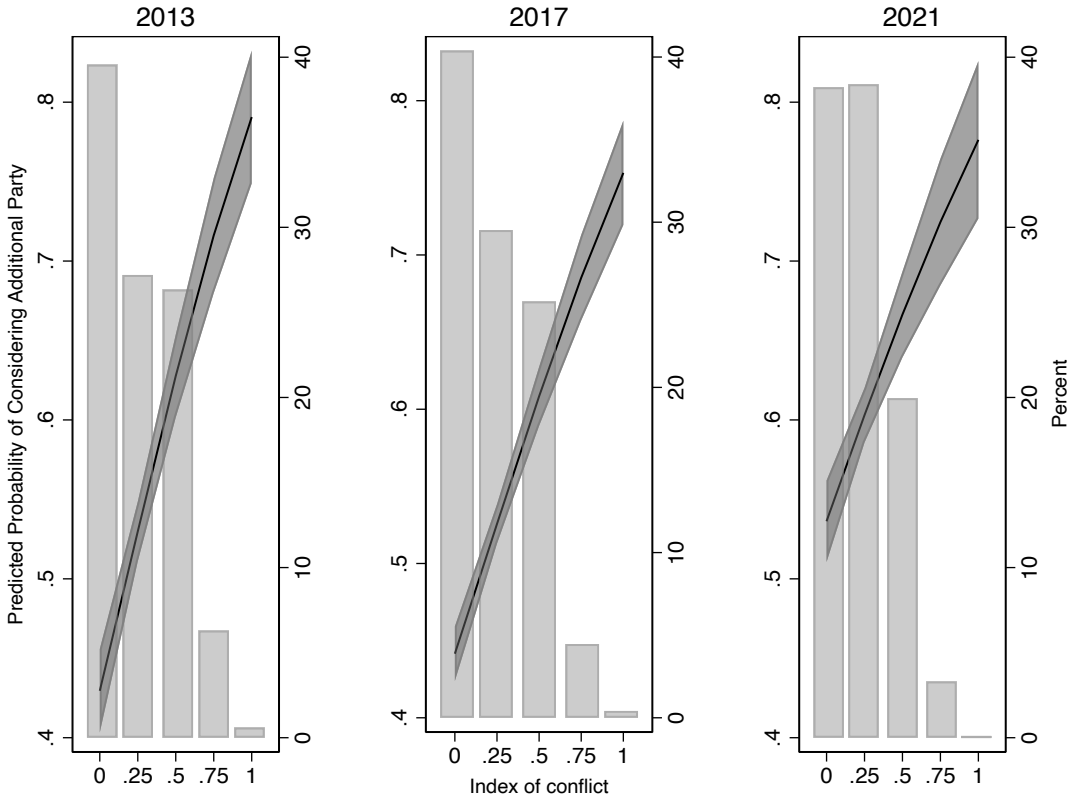


Figure A5.4: Average predicted effects of the *index of conflict* (GLES)



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