Mode of candidacy, electoral prospects, and the ideological deviation of candidacy-seeking politicians from their party leadership

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A B S T R A C T

Politicians who seek their parties' nomination as candidates for public office start communicating their ideological profile to the selectorate months before the party decides on who will run as candidates. However, some politicians tend to steer away from their party leadership, while others stick closer to the party line. We argue that not only the mode of candidacy but one's expected chances of winning the election during the candidate selection period are defining factors in understanding why some candidates deviate further from their party leadership position than others. We use novel data on the degree of intra-party competition among the main German parties in all 299 electoral districts and on the ideological positions of candidates, measured using their Twitter statements in the run-up to the 2021 Bundestag election, to evaluate our expectations. In line with existing studies, we find that candidates who seek only their party's nomination via lists deviate less from party leadership than candidates who seek nomination as a district candidate. In contrast to our expectations, candidates who seek their nomination in an electoral district do not deviate more ideologically from their party when they can expect to win the district seat on election day based on published polls during the candidate selection period.

1. Introduction

Political parties are the most important political actors in modern, representative democracies. Based on their internal rules, parties decide which politicians will run for public office under their label (Aldrich 1995; Hazan and Rahat, 2010). When voters wish to become more informed about a party's position during an election campaign, their first point of contact may be reading statements of the respective party's candidates in local or regional news outlets or on social media channels. Given that ideologically and programmatically cohesive parties are better evaluated by voters in contrast to parties that are perceived as divided (Greene and Haber 2015), it is – from a vote-seeking party's perspective – very important that representatives of parties, like their candidates for public office, consistently reflect the party's stances and can represent a concise picture of the party's ideals (Somer-Topcu et al., 2020; Somer-Topcu and Weitzel 2022). However, institutional configurations incentivise individual politicians seeking their party's nomination as candidates for public office to develop campaign strategies and ideological profiles that deviate from those of party leadership (e.g., Zittel and Gschwend, 2008; Baumann et al., 2017; Schürmann and Stier

2023).

It is widely known that not every party candidate "toes the party line", i.e. adheres to party positions which are usually set by the party leadership. Much literature focuses on the impact of intra-party cohesion on coalition formation and portfolio allocation (e.g., Bäck 2008; Meyer 2012; Bäck et al., 2016), party competition (König 2017), and voters' perceptions of parties (Greene and Haber 2015; Lehrer and Lin 2020). Existing research has explored different incentives for politicians to deviate from their party such as individual re-election prospects, influence on policy outcomes, and advancement in their careers (Sieberer 2010; Strøm 1997; Willumsen and Öhberg 2017; Høyland et al., 2019). What is less explored in this context is the fragile time period of candidate selection, during which parties decide who will enter the election process (Hazan and Rahat 2010; Pilet and Cross 2014; Cordero and Coller 2018). We thus ask if politicians, who seek candidacy nominations for their party, take the electoral system, candidate selection regime and chances of winning in the general election into account when communicating their ideological positions to the public during the candidate selection period.

We aim to answer this research question by arguing that – in line

with existing research – parliamentary candidates who compete for their parties' nomination on the district level should deviate more from the party line when making statements that reflect their policy positions than party list candidates. We expect this to be the case because the district level is a decentralised candidate selection regime where party leadership has only limited influence. Moreover, we seek to shed more light on the selection process of district candidates by examining the electoral prospects of candidates seeking a nomination in an electoral district. We expect that intra-party aspirants for a district candidacy who are informed of their party's leading position have incentives to cultivate an individualised campaign style. These politicians should therefore deviate more from the position of their party during the period when their party decides who will be nominated as their district candidate.

We analyse the ideological signals that intra-party aspirants for a parliamentary candidacy send to the public (and thus also to the selectorate) via their Twitter statements. We focus on the German parliamentary (Bundestag) election in 2021 to evaluate our hypotheses, which has several advantages. Firstly, the Bundestag consists of representatives elected directly in a district, those elected from party lists and candidates running both in a district and on a party list. The candidate selection regimes for district and list seats differ significantly; list candidates are nominated in state party conventions where the impact of party leadership on the candidate selection outcome is high. District candidates are selected by local party conventions in which national or state party leadership has less influence (see Reiser 2022). Secondly, data providing detailed information on the amount of competition for a party's district candidacy in the run-up to the 2021 Bundestag election is readily available. The candidate nomination study of the German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES 2022) covers information on the patterns of intra-party competition of all parliamentary parties in the 299 electoral districts for the 2021 Bundestag election. Thirdly, we can combine the information provided by the GLES nomination study (GLES 2022) with a dataset covering the Twitter accounts of all parliamentary party candidates in the German federal election of 2021 (Sältzer et al. 2021; Sältzer and Stier, 2022). We use these data sets to scrape the Twitter account contents of politicians seeking nominations and of respective party leaderships during the 2021 candidate selection period. Based on this, we estimate the positions of all politicians seeking their parties' nominations and of the respective national party leadership on the dimensions that structure the content of the Twitter statements of these actors. We find that – as shown in existing studies – candidates who seek nomination via the district tier deviate more from the party line than list tier candidates. However, there is no empirical support for our expectation that candidates seeking nomination via the district tier only deviate more from the position of their party leadership when polls during the candidate nomination period suggest that these candidates were likely to win the respective electoral district in the general election.

To derive these results, we develop our hypotheses in the next section. We then outline the research design, discuss why we focus on the German election in 2021 and present the methodological approach used to test the hypotheses. We then evaluate our expectations by presenting the results in a descriptive and multivariate manner. In the final section, we conclude the main findings, discuss the shortcomings of our analysis and provide follow-up questions for analysis in future research.

2. Candidate selection regimes and competitiveness in electoral districts

Candidate selection includes an array of formal and informal organisational structures (Rahat and Hazan 2001). While the candidate selection process has been previously called the "secret garden of politics" (Gallagher and Marsh 1988), more recent research has begun unravelling some of the motivating factors of candidate selection and renomination (Cross and Gauja 2014; Smith and Tsutsumi 2016; Spies and Kaiser 2014; Cordero et al., 2022). Great focus has been put

especially on the institutionalised aspects of candidate selection, such as how candidate selection affects the gender distribution of candidates (Kenny and Verge 2016; Norris and Lovenduski 1993) or how such distributions are influenced by additional rules and regulations, such as gender quotas (Meier 2012). Furthermore, Rehmert (2022) demonstrates that the experience of selectors in choosing candidates influences their preference for candidates with legislative experience who have exhibited commitment to the party. These factors are important in understanding the differences in who will ultimately be responsible for the party strategy for selecting candidates.

While much is known about these aspects of candidate nomination and MP renomination, we know very little about the ideology of the aspirants for candidacy and to what degree these politicians deviate from the party line. Moreover, we also do not know much about whether the ideological signals sent by the aspirants for candidacy are influenced by the characteristics of the electoral system and the candidate selection regime. Furthermore, it is unclear which role the expected degree of district electoral competitiveness plays in the ideological signals that aspirants seeking their parties' candidacy send out during the candidate selection period. In a recently published study, Cowburn and Sältzer (2024) focus on the effects of candidate selection in primaries on intra-campaign positional shifts among Democrats and Republicans in the United States. The authors find that losing Democratic candidates significantly moderated their position after their primary defeat, which indicates strategic position-taking for perceived electoral benefit. In an analysis of candidate selection in the 2013 German Bundestag election, Baumann et al. (2017) find that an increasing deviation from the party line in parliamentary speeches results in decreasing chances for the respective MPs to win higher places on the party list. This indicates that we can expect a varying degree of heterogeneity in the ideological deviation of aspirants for candidacy from the position of their party since the payoffs differ between the modes of candidacy. In her study on the selectorates' strategies in the process of candidate selection in Germany, Reiser (2022) finds that local selectorates adopt an inward-oriented selection criterion to find the best candidate for the local party branch. Thus, politicians who seek their party's nomination on the district tier maximise their chances to win the nomination when they are in line with the policy profile of the local selectorate, which does not necessarily need to be close to the position of the national party leadership.

To develop our hypotheses, we start by assuming that parties and their representatives seek to maximise support among voters so that they are more likely to win control over key cabinet posts and can implement their policy positions (Müller and Strøm 1999). Parties and their leadership follow the principles of vote-seeking, office-seeking and policy-seeking not only during election campaigns, but throughout the whole legislative period and therefore in the candidate selection period as well – for example, by introducing and deciding on bills that are in line with the interests of their (likely) voters (see, e.g., Ganghof and Bräuninger 2006; Däubler et al., 2018; Däubler 2022; Tuttnauer and Wegmann 2022). If a parliamentary party group consists of a higher number of members deviating from the party line, it will be more complicated to be selected as a coalition partner (Bäck 2008) and to form a stable government (Saalfeld 2009). Not winning control over ministerial posts implies that the respective party cannot implement its policies, which will likely result in lower vote shares in upcoming elections. Thus, it is in the party leadership's interest to have low divergence in their positions among party nominees.

We assume further that politicians who seek their party's nomination know about the preferences of their party leadership and that they take them into account when making statements during the candidate selection period. While adopting positions closer to those of party leadership should generally result in increasing one's chances of being nominated, we consider the electoral system, the associated candidate selection regime and the expected degree of electoral competitiveness as factors that mediate the incentives for candidates to stick to the positions

of their party leadership.

Existing literature shows that candidates who compete for votes in a direct, first-past-the-post system are likely to develop their own campaign strategy that can deviate significantly from the strategy of their parties, especially if their chances of winning the district seat are considered high (Zittel and Gschwend 2008). Candidate-centred electoral systems in particular create incentives to cultivate a so-called "personal vote" (Carey and Shugart 1995). MPs elected directly in a district have more leeway in parliament than those elected via the party list. District MPs have more liberty to decide which parliamentary debate they want to participate in and what positions they will take in their speeches (Proksch and Slapin 2015; Bäck and Debus 2018). In addition, Schürmann and Stier (2023) demonstrate that MPs elected under a direct mandate refer to their constituencies using regionalised wording and geographic references approximately twice as often as MPs elected under the list tier in their social media (Twitter) statements. These findings indicate that MPs who won their seat by a plurality of votes in an electoral district are less dependent on their party leadership, fear fewer consequences when adopting a distinct policy profile and should therefore be incentivised to deviate from their party programmatically in their (social) media statements during upcoming candidate selection periods.

This reasoning is supported by the finding that directly elected MPs take the specific interests of their constituents into account more in their legislative behaviour than representatives elected from a party list (e.g., Baumann et al., 2015; Reiser 2022; Schürmann and Stier 2023). These regional interests could be rooted in the specific economic situation or social structure in the respective district, which may be different from positions taken by the national party. Assuming that voters and the party selectorate on the local level favour candidates who concentrate their work on district issues and interests that might not be in line with the positions of their party (for empirical evidence see, e.g., Put and Maddens 2015), intra-party aspirants who seek the nomination as a parliamentary candidate via the district tier have more incentives to deviate from the party leadership in terms of their ideological profile.

Circumstances are different for candidates who seek nominations on the party list tier. The composition of party lists for parliamentary elections is normally decided at party conventions where the party leadership can – in contrast to candidate selection at the district level – directly set the agenda. The preferences of the party elite are then more likely to be supported by a majority, such as in the case of elections for the party chairpersons (e.g., Ennser-Jedenastik and Müller 2015). Hence, in candidate selection regimes in which the national party leadership cannot directly influence the outcome of the candidate selection process (and thus has fewer means of blocking candidates with deviating positions), aspirants for the district candidacy have incentives to develop a distinct policy profile and are therefore less likely to be in line with the position of their party leadership during the candidate selection period.

Hypothesis 1. Politicians who compete for support in decentralised candidate selection regimes will deviate more from the party leadership position than candidates who seek nomination in centralised candidate selection regimes.

As district-tier candidates are more likely to develop their own election campaign style if they consider their chances of winning the district seat to be high (Zittel and Gschwend 2008), we assume that a similar pattern exists in the period before the general election campaign and thus also during the candidate selection process. In her study on candidate selection in Germany, Reiser (2022) determines that local selectorates are more likely to choose the candidate in line with the interests of the local party branch. It is therefore likely that aspirants for candidacy want to signal ideological closeness with the local party representatives in the months and weeks before the decision on who will run as the district candidate.

The local party branch also considers the electoral safety of the

respective district seat when choosing a district-tier candidate. From a general perspective, Rutchick (2010) argues and shows empirically that polling influences party strategies. If the seat is not safe, the local selectorates prioritise the electoral goal over the local parties' organisational goal and strategically adapt the selection criteria to the opportunity structure. Following this argument, local party organisations should favour those candidates who come close to their ideological profile if the chances are high that the respective party will win the district seat. Thus, if a politician who seeks nomination via the district tier expects their party to win the district seat based, for example, on polls conducted during the candidate selection period, the aspirant should start an individualised campaign. Such a campaign should then integrate the interests of the respective electoral district and its local party branch in the months and weeks prior to when the local party branch decides who will become the district candidate. Such an individualised campaign could consist of, amongst other components, highlighting issues that reflect the specific structural or economic situation in the respective district. Adopting such a campaign focus should influence the public statements of the aspirant for district candidacy and thus her ideological profile. Based on these considerations, we expect to see a greater ideological distance between aspirants for district candidacy and their party leadership when polls indicate a victory for the candidate's party on election day in the respective district.

Hypothesis 2. Politicians seeking nomination for a district candidacy deviate more from the party leadership position if the candidates expect their party to win the district seat on election day.

3. Research design

In the following subsections, we first describe the measurement of the dependent and independent variables. Subsequently, we provide an overview of how we identify and estimate the effect of candidate selection regimes and polling predictions on candidates' ideological deviation from party positions.

3.1. Case selection and data

To evaluate our hypotheses, we focus on the case of the German Bundestag – "the oldest prototype of mixed electoral systems" (Sieberer and Ohmura 2021) – with its two electoral regimes, a first-past-the-post electoral system for the district tier and a proportional representation system for the list tier. The data in the analysis consists of two main components. The first dataset we utilise is the GLES nomination study (GLES 2022). The data comprises information on the outcomes of the district candidate selection processes for the 2021 general election in Germany and covers important information on candidates' characteristics, such as age, gender, party affiliation, district affiliation and legislative experience. In addition to this data, we collected information on the composition of the lists of the German parties that were represented in the national parliament (Bundestag) in the legislative period from 2017 to 2021. These parties include the Christian Democrats (CDU) and the Christian Social Union (CSU) which competes for votes in Bavaria only, Social Democrats (SPD), Alternative for Germany (AfD), the Left, Alliance 90/The Greens (Greens) and the Free Democrats (FDP). From both data sets, we infer which candidates compete for both, lists and districts (dual candidacies), or only for one of them. The two largest parliamentary party groups, the CDU/CSU and SPD, formed a coalition in the legislative period from 2017 to 2021. The parliamentary opposition to this 'grand coalition' between a centre-right and a centre-left party consisted of the far right-wing and anti-immigrant AfD, the ecological and progressive Green Party, the radical left populist The Left and the fiscally conservative FDP. German parties are far from being programmatically homogeneous. Instead, they consist not only of state parties which often have a distinct ideological profile (e.g., Bräuninger et al., 2020) but also of intra-party factions that represent on the one

hand the interests of specific social groups like the self-employed, women or young people and on the other hand the interests of programmatic wings of the respective party like conservative, liberal or moderate factions. These factions can play an important role in the parties' overall programmatic profile and in the allocation of cabinet posts in coalition governments (Debus and Bräuninger 2009). We therefore consider German parties and their representatives as a likely case to observe intra-party ideological heterogeneity.

For the operationalisation of the dependent variable, i.e. the candidates' ideological distance from the position of the party leadership, we rely on almost 800,000 tweets from between 19 May 2020 and 19 July 2021, thus covering the entire period of candidate nomination and selection within German parties. We measure the ideological position of the party leaders by analysing their statements on the official Twitter accounts of the respective parties. It was not possible to obtain tweets from the official Twitter accounts in the case of CDU, SPD and the Greens. In these cases, we measure the positions of the respective party leadership based on the estimated positions of the party chairs. While the Twitter statements of CDU party chair Armin Laschet were retrievable, in the case of the SPD no party chair data was available. We therefore estimate the ideological position of the Social Democrats by referring to the mean score of two key politicians within SPD leadership at this time.[1] In the case of the Greens, only one party chair – Anna-Lena Baerbock – was active on Twitter during the candidate selection period. Robert Habeck who served as the second party chair of the Greens was not active on Twitter at the time. Given that Habeck's party chair successor, Ricarda Lang, is represented in our database of Twitter statements, we refer to the statements by her and Baerbock when estimating the mean position of the Green party.

The collected Twitter statements must cover the time period prior to the start of the election campaign since we are not interested in the election campaign stage but in the nomination process. Since candidates for the Bundestag election are announced 69 days ahead of the election, tweets during the active election campaigns of each party are not included in our text corpus.[2] For scraping tweets of Twitter users with the Twitter API, either a Twitter ID or a Twitter Screen Name is necessary. Therefore, we partly derive candidates' screen names from an existing database that collected tweets by every list candidate for the 2021 Bundestag election (Sältzer et al., 2021). As our data also contains information on politicians who did not already have a list position in any election, we collected this missing data by searching their Twitter screen names manually. Altogether, our data contains information on 887 politicians who ran for nominations in an electoral district; 748 of these candidates also ran via the list. Overall, 212 candidates only ran for nomination on the list tier.

We pre-process the text corpus by excluding stopwords, numbers, punctuation and politicians' names. To exclude very rare words that are likely to lead to significant outliers in the estimation, we specified that

each token needs to be present in a minimum of 10 tweets. Politicians with fewer than five tweets are excluded from the analysis. We allow the presence of hashtags since they produce a more distinct clustering between parties. Taken together, our pre-cleaned data included 1733 politicians who had a Twitter account during the nomination period for the 2021 Bundestag election. After pre-processing the corpus, 1099 observations remain. To estimate ideology scores for each nominee, we utilise canonical correspondence analysis to compute important topic dimensions from our corpus (Sältzer 2022) using the CCA package for R (González et al., 2008). Canonical correspondence analysis provides the advantage that no prior interpretation of prespecified dimensions needs to be made since the computed factor loadings automatically define all dimensions; this is necessary because the large amount of unstructured data in our corpus makes it difficult to derive accurate dimensions. CCA conducts a multivariate analysis of tokens in our corpus and thus enables us to reduce and obtain the loadings of each feature. We then take these features and their loadings to interpret the dimensions and manually identify a general left-right and a conservative-progressive dimension that differentiates between preferences for a pluralist position and a traditionalist position on the order of society. For transparency, we present the most prevalent features of the selected dimensions for each direction (see Tables A5 to A8 in the appendix). In this regard it needs to be emphasised that the lowest and highest scoring features for the conservative-progressive dimension tend to resemble agenda conflicts between Green party's policies and AfD positions. This might be the case because ecological and populist parties from the far right are positioned at the extremes on a conflict line differentiating between progressive-cosmopolitan positions on the one side and traditionalist-parochial positions on the other in European countries (e. g., De Vries 2018). Furthermore, since the timeframe of analysis excludes the electoral campaign and was additionally shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Twitter data at hand is likely to be more unstructured which makes the dimensions fuzzier. Thus, the dimension does not explicitly depict a socio-cultural dimension but is also shaped by populist and policy-related words.

Fig. 1 shows the results of these estimations. The plot visualises where each aspirant for candidacy can be located on two extracted dimensions. Distinct party clusters emerge, and the AfD substantially differs from the remaining parties and most of their representatives in particular on the second dimension. Fig. 1 also includes selected leading members of the executive board of each party and their estimated position in the policy space. By utilising the position of each party based on official party accounts or party leaders, we can calculate the deviation of each party member from their party leadership on the two ideological dimensions under study. In cases where two individuals were identified as party leaders, we calculate the distance to the mean of both party leaders. The higher the value becomes, the higher the individual ideological distance of an aspirant for candidacy to the party leadership.

We present a few examples to indicate the face validity of the data. For example, consider the position of CDU district candidate Hans-Georg Maaβen who belonged to the right-wing of the party and launched a new party with a national-conservative policy profile in January 2024. Maaβen clearly communicated positions with content that locates him close to the candidates of the far-right AfD. Sevim Dağdelen, who was an MP of the Left party in the legislative period under study and who often criticised the progressive positions of the Left on societal issues, produces relatively low scores on the second dimension. In 2023, Dağdelen joined a newly formed left-authoritarian party (Wagner et al., 2023). The Christian democratic MP Jens Spahn, who served as the Minister of Health during the observation period, adopted right-wing positions on the first dimension but is rather progressive on the second dimension, as his support for same-sex-marriage indicates. Peter Boehringer is considered to be a representative of the far-right within the AfD and often came up with conspiracy theories in his public statements.

In addition to the effect of the candidate selection regime, we expect that aspirants seeking nomination as a district candidate from parties

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[1] We selected Lars Klingbeil who was the General Secretary of the SPD, and Hubertus Heil (the Deputy Party Chair) during the candidate selection process for the 2021 Bundestag election.

[2] We acknowledge that the period between 19 May 2020 and 19 July 2021 that we consider as the candidate nomination period might cover tweets of politicians which were published after the candidate selection process in several districts and in the case of some party lists, which increases the risk of endogeneity in the empirical analysis. Coming up with a time period that takes the party-specific nomination processes in each district into account is, however, not possible. German parties do not have to publish information on the candidate selection process at the district level and do not have to report this information to the Federal Returning Officer; because of this, collecting data on the number of aspirants for the district candidacy and their basic characteristics were very complicated. The GLES nomination study (GLES 2022) does therefore not cover the individual date when a district party reached a decision on a candidate, so we cannot come up with a party- and/or district-specific candidate selection period.
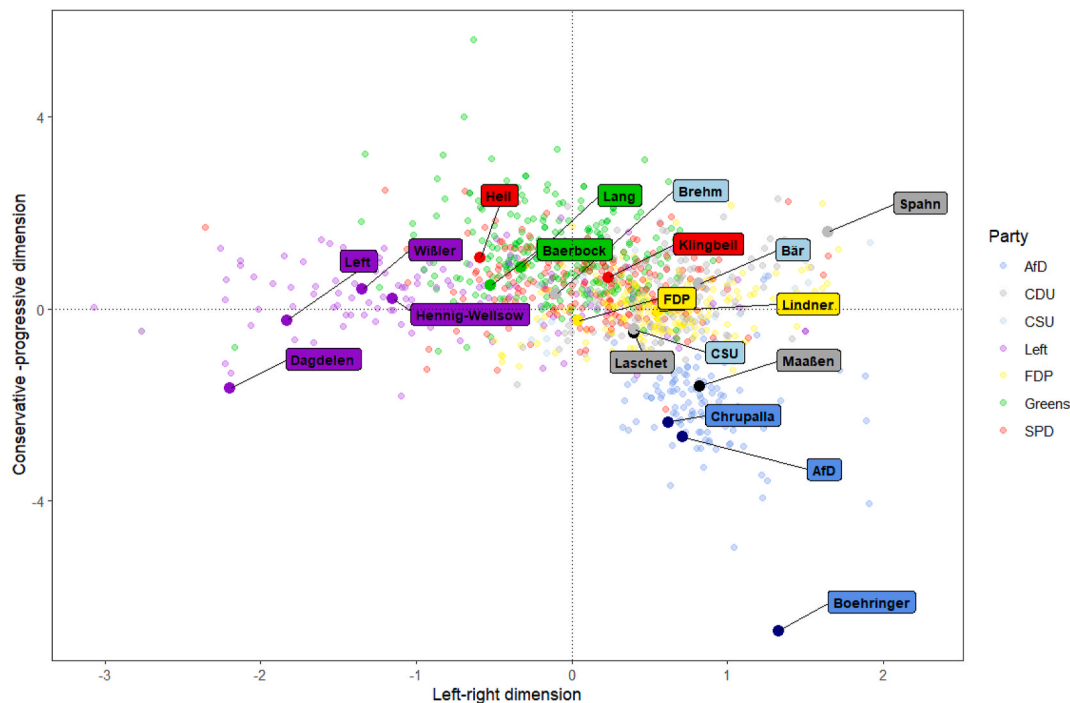
Fig. 1. Estimated positions of nominated candidates based on statements, by party
Note: This plot shows the positions of each candidate (direct and list) on a left-right dimension and a conservative-progressive dimension as a result of a canonical correspondence analysis. The highlighted names in the boxes depict important politicians within the respective parties.

leading in polling predictions on the district level will be more likely to deviate from the party line in comparison to aspirants from parties not predicted to win the seat. Ideally, we would derive the likelihood of winning a plurality of votes in a district from polls conducted in each electoral district. However, such polls are not usually conducted or at least are not published. We therefore rely on an estimation of party strength in each district, which is based on nation- and state-wide polls published during the candidate selection process. We obtain the prediction for the likelihood of winning a plurality of votes in an electoral district in the following way: we start with computing the difference between poll trends during the nomination period and the 2017 election results. In cases where multiple polling results are available, we first take the mean of the polling results before calculating the difference. Here, we rely on poll trends on the state level or on the federal level if state polls are not available. We then add this difference to the constituency election result in 2017. However, in most cases, low-level polling data is not available. Only for Mecklenburg-West Pomerania, North Rhine-Westphalia, Brandenburg, and Bavaria, were we able to rely on polls conducted at the state level. In cases where no state polling was available, we utilised polling data on the national level to obtain the results. In doing so, we obtain vote share predictions for all 299 constituencies. The results of these predictions are depicted in Fig. 2. The map shows that – in stark contrast to the final 2021 election result, in which the Social Democrats (SPD) won the most district seats – the prediction during the nomination period strongly favoured the CDU/CSU. This is in line with nation-wide polling trends during this time. While the AfD was the leading party in some parts of Eastern Germany, Alliance 90/The Greens and the socialist Left Party were only leading in a few districts across the country. Using these results, we compare whether the affiliation of a candidate to the leading party depicted in Fig. 2 is associated with a higher level of ideological deviation from the party leadership.

3.2. Statistical model

We estimate three OLS regression models to evaluate our hypotheses.

As indicated, candidates can be elected directly in a district to the Bundestag or via party lists at the state level. The more votes a party receives, the more candidates on the list will have chances to win a seat in parliament. To test whether list candidates ideologically deviate less than district candidates, we compare candidates who only compete on the party lists with candidates who only run in a district. Thus, in the first model which tests our first hypothesis, we exclude those politicians who ran via dual candidacy and only compare the groups that sought nomination via either list or district. However, since dual candidacy in Germany is prevalent, in a second model we compare dual candidates with candidates who only sought nominations via lists. The third model concentrates on aspirants for the district tier candidacies and on aspirants seeking their parties' nominations for both the district tier and list tier to evaluate hypothesis 2.

The dependent variable is the Euclidean distance between the estimated policy positions of a candidate and the positions of their party leadership. More precisely, the Euclidean distance between a candidate p and their party leadership q in a two-dimensional policy space is computed by the following formula:

$$d(p,q) = \sqrt{(p_1 - q_1)^2 + (p_2 - q_2)^2},$$

where p_1 is the estimated general left-right position of a candidate and q_1 is the one of their party leadership. Similarly, p_2 is the position of a candidate on the second dimension reflecting the positions of candidates on issues related to climate change and representative democracy and q_2 is the position on this dimension of their party leadership.

In addition to information on the mode of candidacy and expected party strength in the district, we include several further variables in the regression models that can be considered important for the chances that an individual politician will be (re-)nominated as a parliamentary candidate. These variables include party-level features such as whether a candidate was a member of a government party (to account for the 'costs of ruling'), a variable measuring the current total seats of the candidate's party in the Bundestag, the vote share difference between 2017 and 2021 on the district level and a variable measuring the
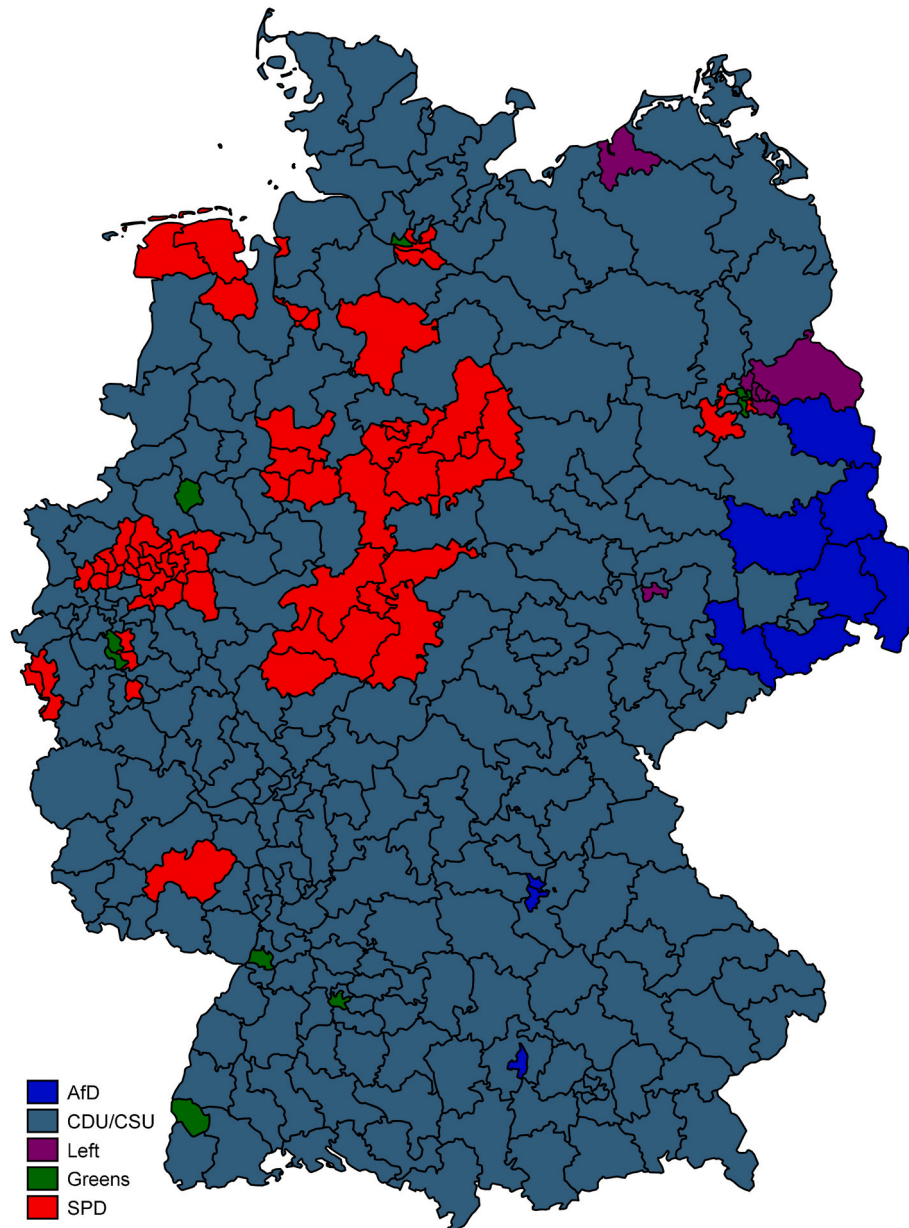
Fig. 2. Leading party in the Bundestag districts in 2021 according to polls during the candidate nomination period
Note: This figure depicts the polling predictions for all voting districts for the nomination period (January–July 2021) that are based on state and country polling data as well as prior election results in the districts.

candidates' seniority status since experienced politicians have higher chances to be nominated as their parties' candidates (Rehmert 2022). The latter is coded '1' if a candidate has ever been a member of a state parliament or of the Bundestag and '0' otherwise. Furthermore, we control for candidates' age and gender since these personal characteristics influence not only legislative behaviour (e.g., Baumann et al., 2015; Bäck and Debus 2019; Debus and Himmelrath 2022) but also candidate selection outcomes in Germany and beyond (Weeks et al., 2023; Debus and Himmelrath 2024). Given the differences in the organisational structure and candidate selection regimes between parties, we control for the party affiliation of the aspirants in all

regression models. Furthermore, we include state fixed effects to account for potential heterogeneity between the 16 German states which play an important role in the parties' organisational structure. In addition, we control for the socio-economic context, meaning the degree of unemployment and the population density, in each voting district in Models 2 and 3.[3]

3.3. Analysis

Before turning to the evaluation of the two hypotheses, we present the patterns of ideological deviation between the aspirants for candidacy

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[3] We cannot control for these two variables that describe the socio-economic structure in an electoral district in the first model, which covers only aspirants seeking the nomination via the party list or the district tier, because we cannot assign an electoral district to list-tier candidates.

and their party leadership in the candidate nomination process. Fig. 3 shows the distribution of the dependent variable. The higher the score, the further the candidates are positioned away from their party leadership's ideological position. Overall, there is a left-skewed distribution, indicating that most candidates are ideologically close to their party leadership.[4] Differentiating between the two dimensions also reveals a left-skewed distribution such that differences between aspirants for candidacy and their respective party leadership do not on average differ among the considered dimensions (see Figure A1 in the appendix).

Fig. 4 provides information on the degree of ideological deviation between candidates and their party by differentiating between the six parliamentary party groups represented in the German Bundestag between 2017 and 2021. Overall, Fig. 4 indicates that there is only moderate deviation from the position of the respective party leadership. Furthermore, the degree of deviation is similar across all parties. The values present the mean value of deviation for each party. With an average deviation score of 1.39, the Left is the party that is most dispersed in the German party spectrum. This result resonates with the recent party split from the Left, initiated by Sahra Wagenknecht (see Wagner et al., 2023). Fig. 4 also reveals the existence of significant outliers. To account for this, we estimate the regression models after excluding these outliers. We exclude the top and bottom 1% of the observations of the variable providing information on the distribution of the ideological deviation of candidates from their party leadership. The results of these robustness tests are given in Table A1 in the Appendix.

3.4. Multivariate analysis

Table 1 presents the results of the regression analyses. The dependent variable in all three models measures the extent to which an applicant for a candidacy in the 2021 Bundestag election deviates ideologically from their party's leadership's position. Firstly, we aim to investigate whether candidates who seek the nomination for a district candidacy deviate more from the party line than candidates who only compete via party lists. The first model in Table 1 therefore covers only those politicians who applied for a candidacy via the district tier or the list tier. Since many candidates seek nominations via both districts and lists, adopting this perspective decreases the number of observations to 345 politicians. According to our argument, politicians seeking the nominations via the list tier should deviate less than applicants for a district candidacy because the former depend more on the party leadership. The latter, in contrast, can influence the composition of party lists because of their agenda-setting role at party conventions and are more independent, so that theyshould deviate more without having to anticipate punishment. An observation is coded '1' for candidates seeking a nomination on the party list and '0' in the case of applicants for a district candidacy. The coefficient estimated in Model 1 suggests that politicians who only seek a nomination via party lists indeed deviate less than candidates who seek a nomination on the district tier. The effect is statistically significant at a 99 percent level (see Table 1). This finding is in line with our first hypothesis and underlines the results of existing research: politicians who run as district candidates and later serve as parliamentary representatives for a district have more leeway in the political decision-making process and, thus, also deviate more from the party line.

In the second model, we account for the fact that most candidates in the German party system seek a dual candidacy, thus applying for a nomination in an electoral district and for a position on the party list. While this model includes more observations, it is also a more conservative estimate since we only include aspirants for a dual candidacy and

for a district candidacy. Aspirants for a dual candidacy find themselves in both selection regimes, thus partly depending on the party leadership for placement on the lists and partly being more independent from the party leadership as applicants for the candidacy in a district. Model 2 in Table 1 shows the results. The estimated coefficient of the variable that identifies applicants for both the list and district tier candidacies remains negative, but becomes statistically insignificant ($p > 0.05$). This result demonstrates that only applicants for a party list position deviate less from their party leadership in their social media statements during the nomination period when compared with applicants seeking a district candidacy. Once an applicant seeks a nomination for a district candidacy as well as a position on the party list, their ideological distance from the party leadership is not statistically significant compared to the politicians seeking a district candidacy only.

The second hypothesis argues that politicians who seek the nomination for a district candidacy deviate more from the party leadership position if candidates expect their party to win the district seat on election day. Model 3 in Table 1 evaluates this expectation. We analyse whether aspirants for the district candidacy of the respective leading parties (mostly Christian Democrats, see Fig. 2) deviate more than candidates of parties who are worse off in the prediction of who will win the district seat. We code the variable '1' if a candidate is affiliated with a party leading in the polling prediction on the district level and '0' otherwise. The results of model 3, which are presented in Table 1, suggest that candidates of a party leading in the predictions during the candidate selection period do not deviate significantly more from their party leadership than candidates who are affiliated with parties that were not projected to win the district seat according to the polling results during the candidate selection period. Thus, our second hypothesis is not supported.

To evaluate the robustness of this finding, we reiterate our analysis by using alternative measurements of electoral district competitiveness. We first test if a continuous measure of district competitiveness based on polling data published during the candidate selection period provides different results (Table A3). This is, however, not the case: decreasing competitiveness of an electoral district does not result in an increasing deviation of the aspirants belonging to the leading party from the position of their leadership. Secondly, we rely on two alternative measures proposed by Schulte-Cloos and Bauer (2023). The authors measure district competition in two ways. Their relational competition measurement defines a party in a voting district as competitive if the party gained at least half of the vote share of the winning party in the district in 2017. Conversely, the absolute measurement considers a party as competitive if it at least gained a vote share of 20% in a district in 2017. The correlation matrix of all competition measurements (Table A4) as well as the reiterations of Model 3 from Table 1 with the alternative competition measures (Table A3) are presented in the appendix. Furthermore, the appendix includes models with a logged dependent variable (Table A2 and Figure A3) and models in which outliers are excluded (Table A1 and Figure A2). Overall, the results remain statistically insignificant, so that we do not find evidence for the expectation that aspirants for a district candidacy start developing their own individualised campaign style – which possibly includes deviating programmatically from the party line – during the candidate selection period. We do find, however, that district tier candidates act more independently from their party leadership – not only in terms of designing their election campaign (Zittel and Gschwend 2008), but also when making statements on social media like Twitter. This result supports the findings of existing studies showing that district candidates and – once elected – MPs who won their seats based on a plurality of votes in an electoral district adopt a different campaign style that is more independent from the one of their parties and deviate more from their party leadership in their parliamentary behaviour.

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[4] As robustness checks, we estimate the models with a logarithmic version of this Euclidean distance variable to control for the skewed distribution of the dependent variable. The results are presented in Table A2 and Figure A4 in the appendix.
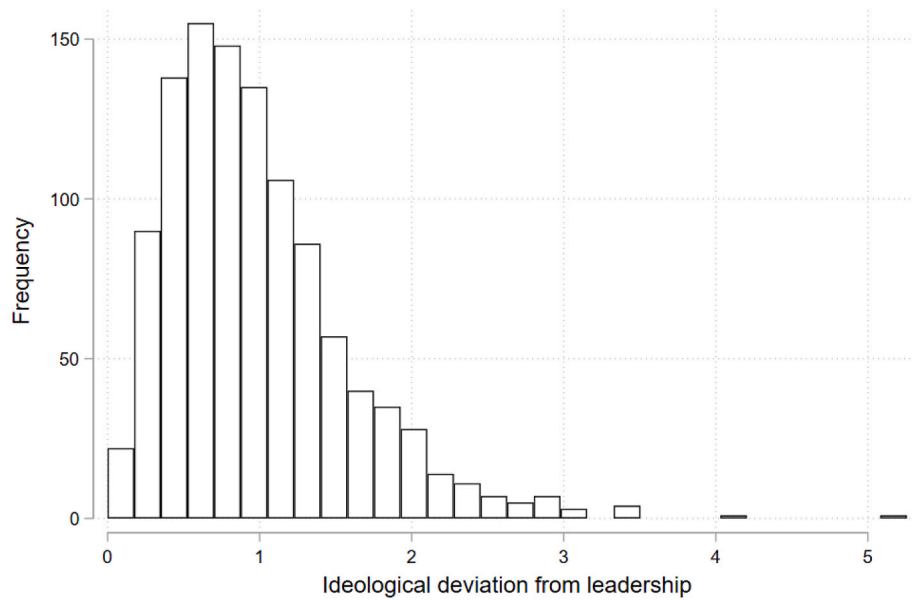
Fig. 3. Degree of deviation of aspirants for candidacies from the party leadership in the candidate selection period for the 2021 Bundestag election
Note: The figure shows the distribution of the ideological deviation of aspirants for candidacies (direct and list tier) to their respective party leadership, measured by the Euclidean distance between candidates and their respective party leadership.
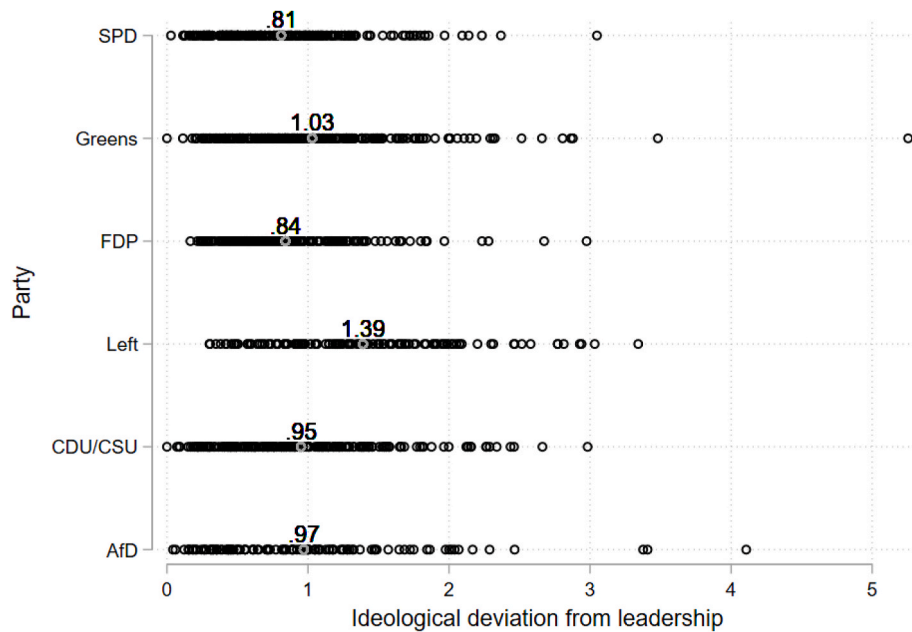

Fig. 4. Degree of ideological deviation of candidates from their party leadership, differentiated by party
Note: The figure shows the distribution of the ideological deviation between the candidacy aspirants (direct and list tier) and their respective party leadership, differentiated by parliamentary party groups. The values depicted show the mean values of deviation for each parliamentary party group.

4. Conclusion

While one might assume that politicians are rewarded by party leadership for "toeing the party line", institutions like electoral systems, party-specific candidate selection rules or public opinion data can provide incentives for party representatives to adopt policy profiles that are not in line with those of their parties. Well-studied possibilities for signalling disagreement with the party leadership include introducing bills, voting in parliament or speaking against the party in legislative debates or in public (e.g., Proksch and Slapin 2015; Fernandes et al., 2021; Sieberer and Ohmura 2021). However, this perspective mostly focuses on members of parliament and does not consider that an important stage

of the political process takes place within parties.

The aim of this contribution was to gain a better understanding of why politicians who seek their party's nomination as parliamentary candidates deviate from the positions of their parties. We were, firstly, interested in whether politicians who seek the nomination of their party as a district candidate deviate more from the position of their party leadership than those politicians who try to win the nomination by their party via the list tier. Secondly, we argued that applicants for a district candidacy are more likely to develop an individualised campaign style (and should therefore deviate more from the party line) when they consider their chances of winning the district seat on election day to be high. In contrast to existing studies on the effects of electoral systems

Table 1
Determinants of politicians' ideological deviation from the party leadership.

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Only list vs. only district aspirants for candidacy	Dual candidacies vs. only district aspirants for candidacy	Only district aspirants for candidacy & politicians with a dual candidacy
List only	−0.163[a]		
	(0.0291)		
Dual candidacy		−0.105	
		(0.0621)	
First place			−0.0606
			(0.0464)
Gender	−0.0809	−0.0331	−0.0164
	(0.0914)	(0.0492)	(0.0554)
Seniority	0.158	0.253[a]	0.252[a]
	(0.0920)	(0.0413)	(0.0444)
Age	−0.000595	0.000316	−0.000322
	(0.00259)	(0.00183)	(0.00218)
Government	−0.119	0.0425	−0.00495
	(0.136)	(0.0516)	(0.0535)
Difference vote share	0.0561	−0.966	−0.782
	(1.364)	(0.538)	(0.683)
CDU/CSU	−0.0269	0.0408	0.127
	(0.131)	(0.0442)	(0.0642)
Left	0.512[b]	0.389[b]	0.394[b]
	(0.0250)	(0.0232)	(0.0258)
FDP	−0.0806	−0.194[a]	−0.216[b]
	(0.0742)	(0.0302)	(0.0247)
Greens	−0.0391	0.0153	0.0219
	(0.0543)	(0.0370)	(0.0374)
SPD	−0.0350	−0.183[a]	−0.141
	(0.107)	(0.0409)	(0.0620)
Unemployment rate in electoral district		−0.0143	−0.0207
		(0.0104)	(0.0118)
Population density in electoral district		−0.0000247	−0.0000255
		(0.0000224)	(0.0000211)
Constant	2.276	0.401	1.622
	(5.171)	(3.693)	(4.371)
State fixed effects	✓	✓	✓
N	345	947	887
R^2	0.210	0.153	0.149
adj. R^2	0.145	0.127	0.121

Note: The dependent variable in all regression models is the aggregated ideological deviation of aspirants for a candidacy to their party. All models are the result of an OLS regression. The party estimates use AfD politicians as a reference point. Significance levels.

*$p \leq 0.1$.
[a] $p \leq 0.05$.
[b] $p \leq 0.01$.

and candidate selection regimes, we studied the ideological signals aspiring candidates send out explicitly during the candidate selection process. To this end, we widened the empirical perspective to cover not only information on incumbent MPs who seek renomination and re-election (e.g., Baumann et al., 2017) but also information on politicians who are not yet members of a parliament and their ideological positions.

We made use of original data that firstly covers information on the amount of intra-party competition for nomination as a party's district candidate in Germany's 299 election districts for the 2021 Bundestag election (GLES 2022). Secondly, we estimated the ideological positions aspiring candidates on the basis of their Twitter statements during the time period when parties nominated their district and list tier candidates for the 2021 Bundestag election. Because of our empirical scope goes beyond incumbent MPs, we considered the social media statements of all aspirants for candidacy as an ideal source for measuring their positions and those of their party leadership. Thirdly, we used polling data from

the candidate selection period to estimate which parties would have won the district seat if the parliamentary election had taken place when parties decided on their candidates.

The results indicated very limited support for our expectations. In line with existing research, we only found robust evidence that applicants who seek their parties' nomination via the list tier deviate less from their party leadership than those politicians who seek nomination only via the district tier. This difference is no longer statistically significant when comparing politicians who seek nominations in a district with those who aim for nominations in both the district and list tier. Furthermore, there is no evidence that aspirants for district candidacy deviate more from their party position (and develop their own campaign style) if they expect to win the district seat on election day based on polls published during the candidate selection period. One reason could be that while candidates may be incentivised to provide their own policy profile for career-driven purposes (Sieberer 2010; Strøm 1997; Høyland et al., 2019), this might only become relevant in the long term and these preferences are not updated in polling results during the nomination phase. While the local party branch may take polling data into account when selecting a nominee for their district (Reiser 2022), according to the findings presented here, this does not seem to influence the candidate's congruence with party leadership.

It is important to note that the present analysis is limited to one case only, namely the candidate selection period in Germany prior to the 2021 federal election. Furthermore, the information on the patterns of intra-party competition on the district level – that is, how many and which politicians were interested in becoming their party's district candidate – was very limited. Parties in Germany do not have to report their decision-making process for district candidates to the Federal Returning Officer so the GLES nomination study (GLES 2022) does not provide detailed information on the personal characteristics of politicians who seek candidacy nor when the selection process happened in the respective electoral district. Future research should aim to obtain this information, as it would then be possible to identify an individual period when candidate selection took place. In this way, only those politicians' tweets published before the decision of the respective local party convention could be integrated into the analysis. Having information on the exact date of the parties' vote in the electoral districts would allow for a more detailed analysis of the ideological signals politicians sent to determine who lost the nomination in a district and then focus on winning a place on the party list.

Furthermore, one could adopt a dynamic perspective. When a politician does not win her party's nomination as a district candidate and then concentrates on winning a place on the party list, she should position herself close to the party leadership in her social media statements to increase her chances of winning a (safe) place on the list. Future research should therefore try to collect more detailed data on intra-party competition at the district level that would additionally decrease the risk of endogeneity, which we cannot rule out in the present findings because of the limitations in the available data.

Given these limitations and the empirical focus on the case of Germany in 2021 only, we are reluctant to draw generalisable conclusions regarding electoral system effects and polling information effects on the ideological distances between candidates and their party leadership. Future studies on candidate selection and intra-party policy conflict should therefore adopt a long-term perspective to identify robust trends and patterns in candidates' strategies to win their parties' nominations. A worthwhile strategy could be developing a panel design so that it is possible to study if members of parliament who deviated from the party core in terms of both legislative decision-making (Sieberer and Ohmura 2021) and also public statements face opposition from their party leadership that prevents these incumbents from seeking re-nomination as candidates via the list tier. However, this would require a huge effort in terms of data collection, not only with regard to information on the number of aspirants who seek nomination by their party on the district and list tiers, but also on these politicians' ideological positions.

While the findings presented in this paper demonstrate that social media statements can be a fruitful source for measuring ideal points of politicians in and outside the parliament, access to such data on, for example, Twitter is restricted, especially when aiming to collect new data backwards in time.

Declaration of interest: none (for all authors).

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Marc Debus: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Software, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Johannes Lattmann:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Software, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Sarah Wagner:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Software, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare the following financial interests/personal relationships which may be considered as potential competing interests:

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Data availability

The data used in the manuscript along with the replication material are available in the Harvard Dataverse (https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/KYQBHT).
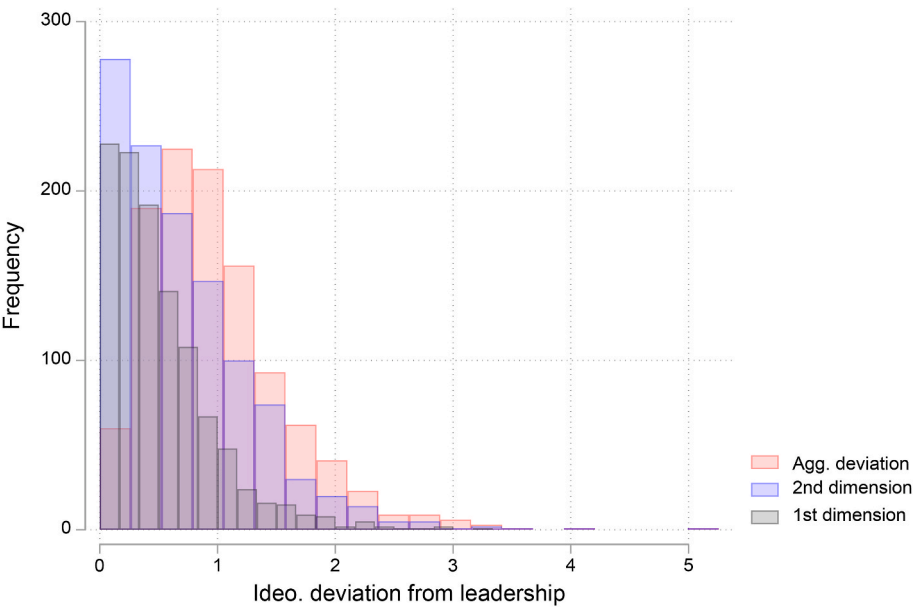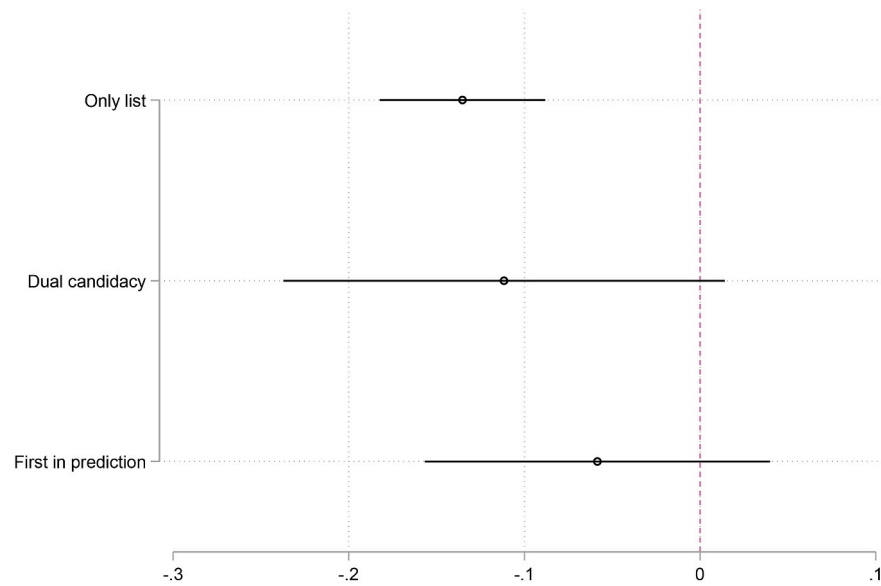
Appendix

Fig. A1. Ideological deviation, differentiated by ideological dimensions

Comment: Bars indicate 95 percent confidence interval.

Fig. A2. Determinants of politicians' ideological deviation from the party leadership, with top and bottom 1% of the observations based on the variation of deviation excluded

Table A1
Determinants of politicians' ideological deviation from the party leadership, with top and bottom 1% of the observations based on the variation of deviation excluded
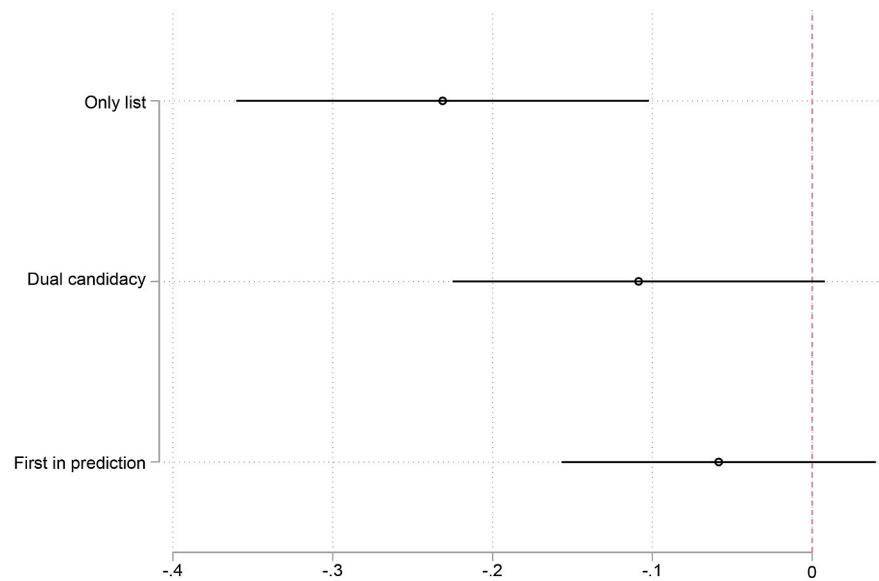
	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Only list vs. only district aspirants for candidacy	Dual candidacies vs. only district aspirants for candidacy	Only district aspirants for candidacy & politicians with a dual candidacy
List only	-0.135***		
	(0.0184)		
Dual candidacy		-0.112	
		(0.0489)	
First place			-0.0585
			(0.0382)
Gender	-0.0879	-0.0786	-0.0608
	(0.0935)	(0.0547)	(0.0599)
Seniority	0.189	0.234**	0.235**
	(0.0745)	(0.0358)	(0.0408)
Age	-0.000120	0.000990	0.000969
	(0.00236)	(0.00204)	(0.00253)
Government	-0.103	-0.00900	-0.0645
	(0.139)	(0.0632)	(0.0597)
Difference vote share	0.371	-0.698	-0.508
	(1.178)	(0.557)	(0.636)
CDU/CSU	-0.0405	0.151	0.224*
	(0.137)	(0.0641)	(0.0703)
Left	0.446***	0.422***	0.403***
	(0.0234)	(0.0245)	(0.0254)
FDP	-0.0756	-0.122*	-0.162**
	(0.0724)	(0.0325)	(0.0276)
Greens	-0.0384	0.0577	0.0406
	(0.0567)	(0.0380)	(0.0391)
SPD	-0.0846	-0.0856	-0.0546
	(0.130)	(0.0656)	(0.0714)
Unemployment rate in electoral district		-0.0132	-0.0148
		(0.00849)	(0.00968)
Population density in electoral district		-0.0000193	-0.0000215
		(0.0000204)	(0.0000195)
Constant	1.335	-0.928	-0.941
	(4.709)	(4.063)	(5.029)
State fixed effects	✓	✓	✓
N	342	931	873
R^2	0.190	0.163	0.152
adj. R^2	0.123	0.137	0.124

Note: The dependent variable in all regression models is the aggregated ideological deviation of aspirants for a candidacy to their party. All models are the result of an OLS regression. The party estimates use AfD politicians as a reference point. Significance levels:

Comment: Bars indicate 95 percent confidence interval.

Fig. A3. Determinants of politicians' ideological deviation from the party leadership, with logged dependent variable

Table A2

Determinants of politicians' ideological deviation from the party leadership, with logged dependent variable

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Only list vs. only district aspirants for candidacy	Dual candidacies vs. only district aspirants for candidacy	Only district aspirants for candidacy & politicians with a dual candidacy
List only	-0.231**		
	(0.0502)		
Dual candidacy		-0.109	
		(0.0453)	
First place			-0.103
			(0.0444)
Gender	-0.0831	-0.0388	-0.0122
	(0.102)	(0.0607)	(0.0717)
Seniority	0.187*	0.293***	0.288***
	(0.0644)	(0.0280)	(0.0379)
Age	-0.00264	0.000762	0.000455
	(0.00316)	(0.00174)	(0.00231)
Government	-0.151	-0.115	-0.171
	(0.0897)	(0.0808)	(0.0819)
Difference vote share	-1.279	-1.592	-1.097
	(1.631)	(0.661)	(0.677)
CDU/CSU	0.156	0.271*	0.377*
	(0.135)	(0.0878)	(0.0944)
Left	0.522***	0.460***	0.467***
	(0.0412)	(0.0252)	(0.0284)
FDP	0.0359	-0.0967*	-0.108*
	(0.0882)	(0.0354)	(0.0275)
Greens	0.0978	0.0983*	0.105*
	(0.0831)	(0.0372)	(0.0401)
SPD	0.189	0.0477	0.0906
	(0.113)	(0.0900)	(0.102)
Unemployment rate in electoral district		-0.00792	-0.0130
		(0.00691)	(0.0101)
Population density in electoral district		-0.0000145	-0.0000163
		(0.0000269)	(0.0000254)
Constant	5.138	-1.662	-1.102
	(6.342)	(3.505)	(4.691)
State fixed effects	✓	✓	✓
N	343	946	887

(continued on next page)

**Table A2** (*continued*)

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Only list vs. only district aspirants for candidacy	Dual candidacies vs. only district aspirants for candidacy	Only district aspirants for candidacy & politicians with a dual candidacy
R^2	0.204	0.150	0.144
adj. R^2	0.141	0.124	0.116

Note: The dependent variable in all regression models is the aggregated ideological deviation of aspirants for a candidacy to their party. All models are the result of an OLS regression. The party estimates use AfD politicians as a reference point. Significance levels:

[*] $p \leq 0.1$;

[**] $p \leq 0.05$;

[***] $p \leq 0.01$.

Fig. A4. Distribution of logged ideological deviation from the party leadership
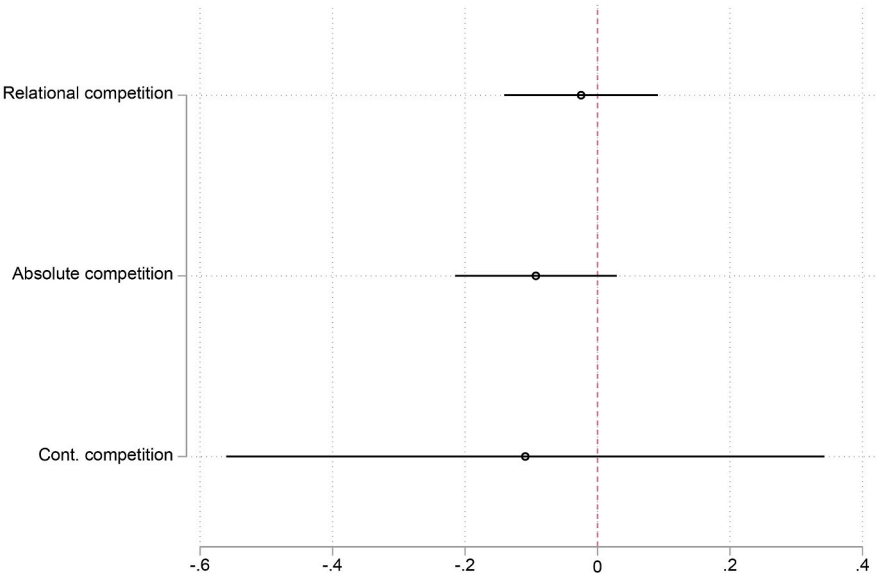
Comment: Bars indicate 95 percent confidence interval.

Fig. A5. Determinants of politicians' ideological deviation from the party leadership, with alternative measurement for competitiveness

Table A3

Impact of competition on ideological deviation from the party leadership, with alternative measurement for competitiveness

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Only district aspirants for candidacy & politicians with a dual candidacy	Only district aspirants for candidacy & politicians with a dual candidacy	Only district aspirants for candidacy & politicians with a dual candidacy.
Rel. comp.	-0.0248		
	(0.0451)		
Abs. comp.		-0.0931	
		(0.0475)	
Cont. comp.			-0.109
			(0.176)
Gender	-0.0177	-0.0167	-0.0202
	(0.0559)	(0.0559)	(0.0539)
Seniority	0.256**	0.256**	0.259**
	(0.0463)	(0.0450)	(0.0452)
Age	-0.000266	-0.000222	-0.000313
	(0.00217)	(0.00214)	(0.00218)
Government	0.00334	-0.00216	0.00494
	(0.0509)	(0.0492)	(0.0563)
Difference vote share	-0.970	-0.625	-1.169
	(0.629)	(0.436)	(0.620)
CDU/CSU	0.112	0.155	0.0939
	(0.0721)	(0.0863)	(0.0625)
Left	0.396***	0.387***	0.395***
	(0.0245)	(0.0245)	(0.0253)
FDP	-0.223***	-0.223***	-0.220***
	(0.0262)	(0.0289)	(0.0224)
Greens	0.0174	0.00827	0.0233
	(0.0365)	(0.0386)	(0.0357)
SPD	-0.136	-0.113	-0.158
	(0.0715)	(0.0752)	(0.0662)
Unemployment	-0.0205	-0.0207	-0.0233
	(0.0105)	(0.0100)	(0.0108)
Population density	-0.0000247	-0.0000243	-0.0000274
	(0.0000231)	(0.0000210)	(0.0000244)
Constant	1.505	1.430	1.645
	(4.337)	(4.283)	(4.383)
State Fixed	✓	✓	✓
N	887	887	882
R^2	0.148	0.149	0.150
adj. R^2	0.120	0.122	0.122

Note: The dependent variable in all regression models is the aggregated ideological deviation of aspirants for a candidacy to their party. Rel. comp. describes the relative competition measurement, Abs. comp. describes the absolute competition measurement and Cont. Comp. shows the continuous competition measurement. All models are the result of an OLS regression. The party estimates use AfD politicians as a reference point. Significance levels:

*$p \leq 0.1$;

** $p \leq 0.05$;

*** $p \leq 0.01$.

Table A4

Correlation matrix of all competition measurement variables

	Relational competition	Absolute competition	Continuous competition	Polling prediction
Relational competition	1.0000			
Absolute competition	0.8966	1.0000		
Continuous competition	−0.6806	−0.6107	1.0000	
Polling prediction	0.5244	0.5568	−0.2508	1.0000

Table A5

Most prevalent authoritarian words in conservative-progressive dimension (top 15 words)

Term (German)	Translation (English)	Value
boehringer	boehringer	−14.951349
#afdwählen	Vote AfD	−7.694801
#chebli	#chebli	−7.568024
innenpol	Domestic policy	−7.126973
#niewiedersozialismus	Socialism – never again	−7.114154
geldleistungen	Cash benefits	−7.100805
#abernormal	But normal	−7.054730
#deutschlandabernormal	Germany but normal	−7.046204
#grenzöffnung	Open borders	−7.033797

Table A5 (*continued*)

Term (German)	Translation (English)	Value
#nurnochafd	Only AfD	−7.020006
#altparteien	Established parties	−6.999846
#nurdieafd	Only AfD	−6.925123
münzenmaier	münzenmaier	−6.881494
#dexit	#dexit	−6.864179
medienskandal	Media scandal	−6.784073

Table A6
Most prevalent progressive words in conservative-progressive dimension (top 15 words)

Term (German)	Translation (English)	Value
#bürgerenergie	Citizen energy	6.386723
#wärmewende	Turning point - heating	6.177935
bergstraße	bergstraβe	6.159401
wärmewende	Turning point - heating	5.449543
#grundsatz2020	Principle 2020	5.081072
zwischenziel	Interim goal	4.962256
#euclimatelaw	#euclimatelaw	4.909111
#solarpflicht	solarduty	4.817449
eu−klimaziel	EU climate goals	4.787944
#solardeckel	Solar cover	4.732981
#vollgasindiekrise	Full throttle into the crisis	4.640275
ambitionierteste	Most ambitious	4.563128
wärmepumpen	heatpump	4.545697
#shell	#shell	4.531615
#fightfor1point5	#fightfor1point5	4.529567

Table A7
Most prevalent left-wing words in left-right dimension (top 15 words)

Term (German)	Translation (English)	Value
rüstungsindustrie	Defense industry	−3.898867
#sozialwohnungen	Social housing	−3.898608
#dividenden	dividends	−3.892888
selahattin	selahattin	−3.891067
#worldagainstracism	#worldagainstracism	−3.886154
sanktionsfreie	Sanction free	−3.873521
#wohnungslosigkeit	homelessness	−3.863880
unternehmensspenden	Coporate donations	−3.858848
rüstungsprojekte	Armament plans	−3.852927
linken−fraktionschef	Left faction leader	−3.850069
#machtdaslandgerecht	Make the country fair	−3.846173
#ramstein	#ramstein	−3.844416
#jetzt	now	−3.843606
#waffenexporte	Weapon exports	−3.841957
andra	andra	−3.831617

Table A8
Most prevalent right-wing words in left-right dimension (top 15 words)

Term (German)	Translation (English)	Value
verkehrsunfall	Traffic accident	2.994044
#geld	money	2.991652
durchschnittsalter	Average age	2.986840
ramelows	Ramelows	2.978833
lieberknecht	Lieberknecht	2.976512
mutationen	mutations	2.974274
#ehre	honour	2.973303
stiko	STIKO	2.972053
#bürgermeister	mayor	2.967874
harvard	harvard	2.960965
erstimpfungen	First vaccination	2.944108
moderna	moderna	2.940163
#handwerker	handyman	2.937890
ecmo	ecmo	2.933376
#merkelruecktritt	Merkel resignation	2.931945

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