

# All the Prime Minister's Glory? Leader Effects and Accountability of Prime Ministers in Parliamentary Elections

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## Abstract

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

*Keywords:* voting behaviour, prime minister, party leader, leader effect, personalisation

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## 1 1. Introduction

Do voters hold prime ministers accountable for the performance of their government? The personalisation of parliamentary elections and electoral impact of party leaders<sup>1</sup> has received growing attention in electoral research (Aarts, Blais and Schmitt, 2011; Bittner, 2011, 2018; Ferreira da Silva, 2018; Ferreira da Silva and Costa, 2019; Garzia, 2014; Lobo and Curtice, 2014; Poguntke and Webb, 2005; Wattenberg, 1991). However these findings raise a major concern: Do parliamentary elections become dominated by voters' perception of party leader's personality which would endanger the accountability of elected governments (Curtice and Hunjan, 2011; Huber, 2014)? Or do perceptions of leading candidates also depend on their performance in government office? Parliamentary elections dominated by voters' perception of party leaders may allow parties and elected politicians to avoid public scrutiny for their actions in office. In this article, I address these concerns by examining whether leader effects of prime ministers are confounded by voters' evaluation of government performance, therefore, voters may hold prime ministers personally accountable for their government's work and punish or reward (Key, 1966; Przeworski, Stokes and Manin, 1999) them for policy (Shabad and Slomczynski, 2011) and economic (Downs, 1957; Fiorina, 1981; Fair, 1996; Jacquart and Antonakis, 2015) performance.

I use survey data from British, Danish and German parliamentary elections to analyse whether leader effects of prime ministers are confounded by voters' evaluation of government performance. I find that in most cases, leader effects of re-running prime ministers are partially confounded by voters' evaluation of government performance. However, confounding is lower in Danish elections and I find no confounding in the British elections in which Blair competed as prime minister. I discuss how Blair's deviation may be explained by his 'presidential' leadership. Furthermore, the paper uses a case of prime ministerial replacement at the German state level as a natural experiment to support the claim that the investigated causal relationship does not work

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<sup>1</sup>In the context of this study 'party leader' refers to leading candidates in parliamentary elections, which are not necessarily formal heads of their party.

in the opposite direction. I also theorize that personal accountability of prime ministers could be moderated by the power of prime ministers over their government (King, 1994; O'Malley, 2007). The findings suggest that even if parliamentary elections have personalised, voters are likely to hold prime ministers accountable for their behaviour in office.

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

## 2 2. Electoral accountability of prime ministers

Why should voters hold prime minister personally accountable for government performance? In this section I argue that voters make their vote choice in light of past government performance and either reward or punish incumbents. In addition, voters will change their evaluation of the prime minister depending on the government's performance in office. Consequently, the effect of voters' evaluation of prime ministers on vote choice is confounded by government performance and likely to be overestimated when government performance is not considered.<sup>2</sup>

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

From the perspective of electoral accountability the increasing electoral impact of party leaders has raised concerns (Curtice and Hunjan, 2011). If vote choice is

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<sup>2</sup>Figure OA1 in the online appendix shows this relationship graphically. See King (2002) for an analogous depiction of leader effect mechanisms.

increasingly determined by the personality of party leaders, elections may not fulfil their democratic function to hold elected governments accountable for their actions in office. This is especially true if leader effects are unaffected by actions prime ministers take in office. I argue that the leader effect of prime minister do depend on their actions in office. [King \(2002\)](#) already outlines the possibility that party leaders influence vote choice because leaders are affiliated with the government and their party, rather than due to the character or personality of party leaders. While the literature has primarily analysed the confounding effect of party leader's party affiliation ([Garzia, 2012](#); [Huber, 2014](#)), the government affiliation of party leaders has received scarce attention by the literature. Studying whether voters hold prime ministers personally accountable will not only address a crucial concern, but also contribute to an understudied aspect of leader effects. [Formichelli \(2014\)](#) shows that leader effects may be confounded by the type of government coalition prior to the election, arguing that the fewer parties form the government, the easier it is for voters to process decisions made by the government and link them to parties and subsequently to party leaders. The study offers important comparative evidence of leader effects under varying government contexts. However, recent findings on the assignment of responsibility under coalition governments refine the seminal study of [Powell Jr and Whitten \(1993\)](#) who find differences in the clarity of responsibility between government types. Recent evidence ([Duch and Stevenson, 2013](#); [Debus et al., 2014](#); [Duch, Przepiorka and Stevenson, 2015](#); [?;](#) [Plescia and Kritzing, 2017](#); [Williams, Stegmaier and Debus, 2017](#)) strongly suggest that voters hold the agenda-setter accountable for government performance, which means that voters will focus on the prime minister's party when assigning accountability.

That voters punish or reward incumbent parties for retrospective performance on policies and economic dimensions when casting their vote is a well established finding ([Anderson, 2000](#); [Duch, May and Armstrong, 2010](#); [Fiorina, 1981](#); [Fair, 1996](#); [Green and Jennings, 2012](#); [Key, 1966](#); [Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2013, 2009](#)). Recent research furthermore emphasises that voters behave in this way across European countries regardless of differences in electoral institutions ([Dassonneville and Lewis-Beck, 2017](#)).

While scholars have focused on the accountability of the government parties [Stiers \(2018\)](#) shows that the mechanism of performance voting even extends to opposition parties.

Why will voters apply the mechanism of performance voting to the prime minister and not only hold the government party accountable? I argue that this electoral accountability extends directly to the prime minister since voters infer behaviour in governmental affairs and build expectations of performance from their evaluation of candidates ([Miller, Wattenberg and Malanchuk, 1986](#); [Clarke et al., 2004, 2011](#)). Prime minister matters to voters not simply due to their personality or appearance, but due to their influence on future government decisions and in turn future government performance. This conceptualises voters' evaluation of party leaders as a short-term factor in the voting calculus. These arguments are empirically supported by [Curtice and Lisi \(2014\)](#), who find stronger leader effects for party leaders of bigger parties and hypothesise that those differences are caused by the increased likelihood of those party leaders to become prime minister and lead the government. After all prime ministers enjoy considerable power over decision-making in their government ([Blondel and Müller-Rommel, 1993](#)). Consequently, voters should also apply a punishment/reward behaviour in their evaluation of the prime minister in light of the past performance in government, since rational voters should use past performance as the best available information for their expectation of performance in the next term ([Downs, 1957](#)). If the economy fell apart during a prime minister's term most voters would probably not believe that the prime minister and their government could put the economy together again, therefore, voters' evaluation of the prime minister constitutes an expression of the performance the prime minister and her government may provide. Such attributional evaluation has been described in studies of leader evaluation ([Calder, 1977](#); [Lord et al., 1978](#)). [Jacquart and Antonakis \(2015\)](#) show that leader evaluation is mainly based on such attributional inference from past performance. [Bittner \(2011, 2018\)](#) shows that attributes like competence, intelligence and leadership constitute an important dimension in leader evaluations.

In summary, voters consider their evaluation of the prime minister when casting their vote, because they expect the prime minister to influence government decision making and therefore government performance. Consequently, voters update their evaluation of prime minister under consideration of the actual performance the prime minister achieved in government - rewarding or punishing them. Lastly, the vote choice cast by voters will depend on government performance. This means that voters' evaluation of government performance may *confound* (Breen, Karlson and Holm, 2013; Clogg, Petkova and Haritou, 1995) the leader effects of prime ministers since it drives their vote choice as well as how they perceive the prime minister.<sup>3</sup> I accordingly formulate the following hypothesis:

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

It is possible that not all of the effect of prime ministers evaluations on vote choice is confounded by government performance and that an effect of prime minister evaluation on vote choice remains. A prime ministers personality and charismatic relationship with voters may still influence vote choice, independently from the performance vote cast by citizens, therefore, confounding may be partial and not complete.

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

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<sup>3</sup>This relationship is sometimes also described in terms of direct and indirect effect, see Breen, Karlson and Holm (2013, p. 165)

these factors in my models. I furthermore extend my models to voters' evaluation of other party leaders and parties to include expectations of their potential performance in office.

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

### 3 3. Data and case selection

I test the confounding of prime ministers leader effects by analysing British, Danish and German parliamentary elections in which a prime minister ran for re-election after completing a full term in office.<sup>4</sup> My selection encompasses seven prime ministers (Margaret Thatcher, Tony Blair, David Cameron, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, Gerhard Schröder and Angela Merkel) running in elections from 1983 to 2017. Voters will most likely have updated their evaluation of prime ministers once a prime minister runs for re-election after a complete term in office. I study the elections following their terms in office with survey data from national election studies (Heath, Jowell and Curtice, 1983, 1987; Borre et al., 2000; Clarke et al., 2003; Falter, Gabriel and Rattinger, 2015; Clarke et al., 2006; Andersen, 2007; Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, 2014; Andersen, 2012; Rattinger et al., 2012, 2014; Fieldhouse et al., 2016; Roßteutscher et al., 2018).<sup>5</sup> I furthermore restrict my analysis to the major national parties in each country.<sup>6</sup> The selected cases provide a suitable mix of parliamentary democracies to test whether prime ministers leader effects are confounded by voters' perception of government performance and encompasses both single party and coalition governments.

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<sup>4</sup>In case of the German election in 2005 and the Danish election in 2007 elections were called before the end of the prime minister's terms. However both prime ministers had previously completed a full term in office.

<sup>5</sup>I use the core sample of wave four of Fieldhouse et al. (2016) since the wave after the election does not include respondents' government evaluation. Respondents were asked shortly before the election in 2015.

<sup>6</sup>A list of all parties under analysis can be found in the online appendix.

Furthermore, the inclusion of different prime minister in each country provides the possibility to observe whether confounding varies within countries between prime ministers or elections. Among the selected prime ministers Blair can be identified as a clear outlier, since he is a frequently described as a presidential prime minister who dominated decision making in his government and party (Heffernan, 2005; Kavanagh, 2005). Poguntke and Webb (2005) describe such a presidentialisation of prime ministers as dominance over decision making in party and cabinet by means of an increase in leadership power resources and leadership autonomy of a prime minister, while the personalisation of the electoral process, growing complexity of the state and the internationalisation of politics makes it easier for prime ministers to achieve such autonomy.

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

#### 4 4. Analysis

Comparing leader effects in models with and without voters' evaluation of actual government performance and economic evaluation will show if prime ministers' leader effects are confounded by voters' expectation performance in office. I model vote choice as binary decision to either vote for the party of the prime minister or any other major national party using logistic regressions for each election under study. I measure voters' evaluation of prime ministers and party leaders with thermometer scales from one, 'dislike very much', to eleven, 'like very much'. This measure is available for all elections except for the British elections in 1987 and 1983. In those two elections respondents were presented with a battery of characteristics and asked whether those applied to party leaders. I use this battery to construct a variable that counts the number of positive qualities mentioned for Thatcher. The variables range from zero to seven in 1983 and zero to six in 1987.<sup>7</sup> For the candidates opposing the prime minister I generate equivalent variables and take respondents' maximum value

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<sup>7</sup>Ascribed personal qualities in 1987 are: good at getting things done, moderate, looks after all classes, capable of being strong, caring, likeable. 1983: caring, determined, likeable, tough, listens to reason, decisive, principled.



among the candidates. I operationalise voters' evaluation of retrospective government performance with thermometer scales equal to those of candidates, that captures voters' feelings towards the work of the prime minister's party in the government from one, very dissatisfied, to eleven, very satisfied, for the German elections in 2017, 2013, 2009 and 2005.<sup>8</sup> For the British elections evaluation of government performance is operationalised with a five-point Likert-scale in 2015 that ranges from 'strongly approve' to 'strongly disapprove' of the government's work. In 2005, 2001, 1987 and 1983 I create a variable summarising voters' mean satisfaction with how the government handled several issues ranging from 'very badly' to 'very well'.<sup>9</sup> For the Danish elections in 2005 and 2007 I measure retrospective government evaluation on a similar Likert-scale with a designated item on voters' overall satisfaction with the government's work. Unfortunately, the survey on the Danish election in 1998 uses a different battery on government performance and asks respondents whether the current government, a liberal government or neither is best on several issues.<sup>10</sup> I create a variable that counts how often respondents mentioned the current government over a liberal government to measure respondents' satisfaction with the government; it ranges from plus 17 (always mentions current government) to minus 17 (always mentions liberal government). I also include respondents' retrospective perception of the general economic situation to capture a further important aspect of retrospective voting, although this measure is likely to be already reflected in voters' overall performance evaluation of the government. Voters' economic perception is measured on Likert-scales from one, 'got a lot worse' to five, 'improved a lot'. In surveys in which a retrospective evaluation is unavailable I use respondents' current perception of the economy in general. Unfortunately, neither measure is available for the British elections in 1987 and 1983.

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

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<sup>8</sup>I use this party-directed measure of voters' feelings of government performance, instead of party-undirected evaluation of the government's work. I test the robustness of my findings with party-undirected evaluations, which I discuss in section six.

<sup>9</sup>I list all included issues for each election in the online appendix.

<sup>10</sup>The seventeen issues are listed in the online appendix.

performance as opposition. In the German elections of 2017, 2013, 2009 and 2005 I chose a variable which measures voters' satisfaction with the work of the opposition parties or coalition partners of the prime minister's party as equivalent to the measurement of voters' evaluation of government performance.<sup>11</sup> For the Danish elections and the British elections in 2015, 2005 and 2001 voters' evaluation of opposition performance are measured with like-dislike thermometers which capture voters' general feelings towards the parties. The survey covering Thatcher's run for re-election in 1987 does include an evaluation of the opposition parties based on Likert-scales instead of thermometer evaluations. In 1983 the British survey includes a battery on four characteristics<sup>12</sup> of parties which I use to construct a zero to four scale based on the number of positive characteristics ascribed by respondents.

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

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<sup>11</sup>I use thermometer scales of feelings towards the party in general in case of Die Linke (The Left) in 2005 as no performance evaluation is available.

<sup>12</sup>The characteristics are: moderate, united, good for all classes, clear policies.

evaluation of government performance and perception of the economy. I use KHB as implemented for Stata by Kohler, Karlson & Holm (Kohler et al., 2011). I display results of the KHB analysis graphically for ease of comparison in this section. I present further information on the individual contribution of voters' government evaluation and economic perception to confounding in the online appendix in Tables OA1–OA3, as well as detailed regression results in Tables OA8–OA10 (also online appendix).

As expected, voters' evaluation of most prime ministers are highly correlated with government performance, ranging from 0.79 for Cameron in 2015 and 0.48 for Thatcher in 1983.<sup>13</sup> This already supports the theory that voters form their evaluation of the prime minister jointly with their evaluation of the government's performance and apply rewards or punishment. I further test this argument by examining longitudinal data from Germany. Figure A1 in the appendix shows that Merkel's and the government's evaluation run in parallel. The correlation between voters' evaluation of prime ministers and perception of the economy is lower and mostly varies between 0.2 and 0.3 with the highest correlation for Cameron (0.58) and the lowest for Merkel in 2009 (0.19).

Figure 1 shows the results of the KHB analysis by displaying the leader effects of prime ministers in odds ratios in the reduced models without government performance, in the full model with government performance and the estimated difference in leader effect due to the confounding of prime ministers leader effects by government performance. Nearly all of the confounding is caused by voters' government evaluation and economic perception adds little additional explanatory power. Overall evaluations of prime ministers have a significant effect on vote choice. The better voters evaluate prime ministers the more likely they are to vote for the prime minister's party. This effect holds for both the full and reduced models. None of the leader effects are fully confounded by government performance, an independent effect always remains, but partial confounding of leader effects is present in ten out of thirteen elections which largely supports H1. In all German elections leader effects of prime ministers show

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<sup>13</sup>I test whether multicollinearity biases the presented results by calculating variance inflation factor values with linear regression models including the same variables as the logistic regression models. The results do not indicate multicollinearity and can be found in the online appendix, Table A11.

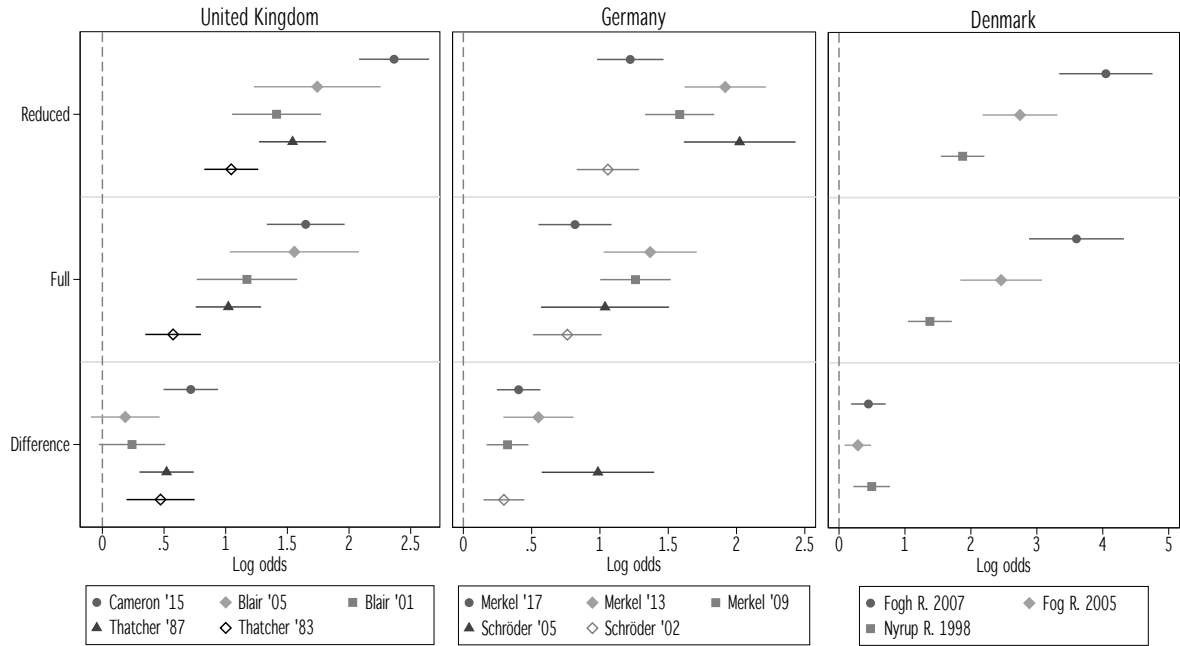


Figure 1: Confounding of prime ministers leader effect on vote choice by voters' evaluation of government performance (95 % confidence interval) by country. The lower sections display the difference between the reduced and full model calculated with KHB.

significant confounding by government performance, with confounding-percentages ranging from 48 to 33%. Leader effects are also significantly confounded in the British elections in which Cameron and Thatcher ran for re-election.<sup>14</sup> In these cases confounding-percentages similarly range from 30% to 45%. Leader effects are also confounded in two out of the three Danish elections. However, the difference in leader effects in these elections are also close to being insignificant at the 5% level. With 10%, the percentages are also considerably lower compared to British and German elections. Nystrup Rasmussen's leader effect shows no significant confounding by government performance.

I find that in deviation from the other studied British prime ministers, Blair's leader effects are not confounded by government performance. This is surprising as confounding in the other British elections is more substantial than in most German elections. Furthermore, the description of Blair as a presidential prime minister

<sup>14</sup>Replacing voters' intention with their recalled vote after the general election in 2015 as the dependent variable yields identical results. Confounding is significant on the 0.1% level with a percentage of 28%. Results can be found in the online appendix.

seems at odds with the insignificant confounding by voters' evaluation of government performance. What may explain this deviation?

The contrary findings for Blair may be caused by this presidential position in which he had quite extensive control over decision making in his cabinet and party (Heffernan, 2005; Kavanagh, 2005). At first one would expect H1 to entail that if prime ministers have extensive control over decision making in their government, their leader effects will be confounded to a large extent. In such a case voters should most likely consider prime ministers in their calculus, because of their extensive influence over government decision-making. However, it may be the case that if a prime minister were to succeed in such a presidentialisation, the evaluation of the prime minister becomes the dominant factor in voters' calculus and their evaluation of past government performance would have no effect on their vote choice. Rather deciding whether to re-elect the government party voters would ask themselves whether to re-elect the prime minister. In turn the leader effect of a presidential prime minister would not be confounded, because voters' retrospective government evaluation has no effect on vote choice.<sup>15</sup> I explore this argument in Figure A2 in the appendix by comparing the influence of voters' evaluation of government performance between models which include Blair's thermometer evaluation and which exclude the variable. In all elections except in the two elections in which Blair ran for prime minister government evaluation has a significant effect on vote choice. However, the exclusion of Blair's evaluation leads to a significant effect of government performance on the vote choice in both of these elections. This means that voters rather decided to re-elect or not re-elect Blair rather than the government as a whole.<sup>16</sup> The results therefore tentatively support an addition to H1, which would need to be tested with several presidential prime ministers. Unfortunately, this is complicated by the extremely limited population of such prime

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<sup>15</sup>The correlation of voters' evaluation of Blair with their evaluation of past government performance itself is not lower than for other prime ministers (0.63 in 2001; 0.56 in 2005).

<sup>16</sup>Was Blair therefore not held accountable for his government's performance? This would depend on whether voters still updated their evaluation of Blair by attribution of actual performance under his term of prime minister. The fact that Blair's approval significantly reduced over his time in office (Evans and Andersen, 2005), partially due to his government's support of the Iraq war, suggests that Blair was still held responsible for actions taken in office.

ministers.

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

## 5 5. Robustness checks

I check the robustness of my presented findings by means of a natural experiment and alternative model specification. Where available I re-fitted models with respondents' perceived distance from parties instead of positions based on CHES data. The presented results remain robust with the exception of the Danish election in 2005 which no longer shows significant confounding. This reiterates the conclusion that for Danish prime ministers confounding is substantially weaker and may not always occur. I furthermore re-fit models on German elections in which party-targeted evaluation of performance have been used with non-targeted evaluation of government performance measured by thermometer evaluations. Results are presented in the online appendix and show significant confounding, with the exception of the 2009 election in which confounding of Merkel's leader effect is considerably reduced. What could explain the less robust confounding of Merkel's evaluation in 2009? [Zohlnhöfer \(2011\)](#) shows that most German voters were satisfied with the response of the Union to the economic crisis, but far less satisfied with the crisis response of the coalition partner, the SPD. The results suggest that in this context voters' evaluation of the government was quite differentiated and they did not held Merkel accountable for the SPD's policies in government. As regards the economic context, in combination with the first-time coalition consisting of the two biggest political parties, voters' allocation of accountability seems to deviate slightly. Since all other German governments under study also included governments' led by coalitions this is likely to be an exception due to the special political context. I present all these findings in the online appendix.

What if the true causal relationship worked in the opposite direction? If parliamen-

tary systems have personalised, voters may evaluate the government more positively not because of actual government performance, but because the government is led by a charismatic prime minister from which voters simply assume good performance. Such findings would support the personalisation thesis and question the democratic accountability of elected governments. In this section I provide a robustness check for my assumed causal relationship using a natural experiment. I test if voters' evaluation of government performance changes when the prime minister is replaced as-if-randomly between elections and no changes occur with regard to the composition of governing parties.<sup>17</sup> This ensures that changes in government evaluation are very unlikely to be due to changing issue positions of the governing party. The German states provide such a case: The replacement of the prime minister of Lower Saxony Christian Wulff in 2010 by David McAllister. The case has two advantageous qualities. Firstly, Wulff did not leave the government due any issue connected to his government, but was nominated as president by the federal government. The previous president Horst Köhler resigned before the end of his term following a controversial speech. Therefore, the treatment, the replacement of Wulff, can be considered to have occurred as-if-random, as the government in Lower Saxony did not self-select into treatment and the assignment to treatment can not plausibly have influenced voters' evaluation of the government in Lower Saxony. One can therefore consider Wulff's replacement to be a natural experiment. Secondly, McAllister was already known to citizens in Lower Saxony, being a member of the state parliament and head of the CDU on the state level since 2008. Voters were therefore already familiar with him. At that time he was the likely prime ministerial candidate for the next election, which he went on to be in 2013. Changes in the evaluation of his person due to him being previously unknown to voters are unlikely.

Figure 2 shows the evaluation of Wulff, McAllister and the government over time. Wulff was evaluated more favourably than McAllister before becoming president with

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<sup>17</sup>In addition this may also partially test a reverse causation for economic perception since economic performance influences government satisfaction (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2013).

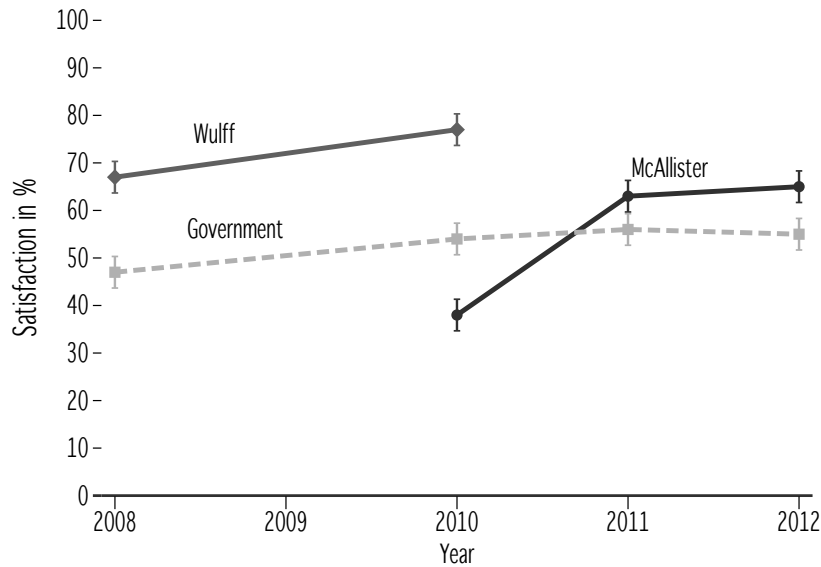


Figure 2: Satisfaction with the work of politicians and the government in Lower Saxony. Percentage of respondents who are very satisfied or satisfied (margin of error 3.1 %), Infratest dimap (2012).

67 % being satisfied with him in 2008 and 77 % in January 2010 shortly before he was nominated as president of Germany. In contrast, McAllisters achieved a significantly lower score (36 % satisfaction) than Wulff before he took office in 2010. His evaluation increased considerably, to 63 %, in the year after becoming prime minister of Lower Saxony. Citizens' evaluation of McAllister, even in the year after taking office, was lower than citizens' evaluation of Wulff in 2008. If voters evaluate the government based on the prime minister, a drop in government satisfaction should be visible after McAllister took office. Instead government evaluation remained stable. When Wulff left office in 2010 government satisfaction was at 54 %. After McAllister became prime minister government satisfaction increased slightly to 56 %. The result of this natural experiment supports the assumed causal relationship.<sup>18</sup> Government evaluation does not change under as-if-random prime-ministerial replacement, instead the natural

<sup>18</sup>One may argue that the results are inconclusive since the observed variable measures satisfaction with the work of Wulff and McAllister and therefore does not include an evaluation of their personality, like in overall thermometer feelings. However if the causal relationship worked from the prime minister's personal characteristics to government evaluation, then satisfaction ratings of party leader's work would also reflect these characteristics, since the same causal relationship should hold for their own person.



experiment rather supports the argument that the evaluation of prime ministers is attributional and that prime ministers benefit from good government evaluation.

## 6 6. Conclusion

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

The findings also suggest that the extent of the presented indirect effect may vary with prime ministerial power. In general prime ministers enjoy influence over the government's agenda, but prime ministerial power varies between countries (King, 1994; O'Malley, 2007). British and German prime ministers enjoy considerable control over their cabinet (King, 1994; O'Malley, 2007), which makes the confounding of leader effects by government performance most likely. In contrast, Danish prime ministers enjoy less influence over their government. The presented smaller indirect effects in the three Danish elections suggest that in countries in which prime ministers have less influence over government decision making, voters might also assign them lower responsibility for government performance. This lesser influence is likely to reduce the confounding of prime ministers leader effects. Consequently, the degree to which prime minister are personally held accountable for government performance may vary between political systems, depending on the institutional power of prime ministers. Future studies may test this hypothesis with a selection of countries representing the full variation on this dimension.

Furthermore, findings presented in this study should be extended to other countries and prime ministers, to ensure their stability. Especially, analysing prime ministers

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

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

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## 7 Appendix

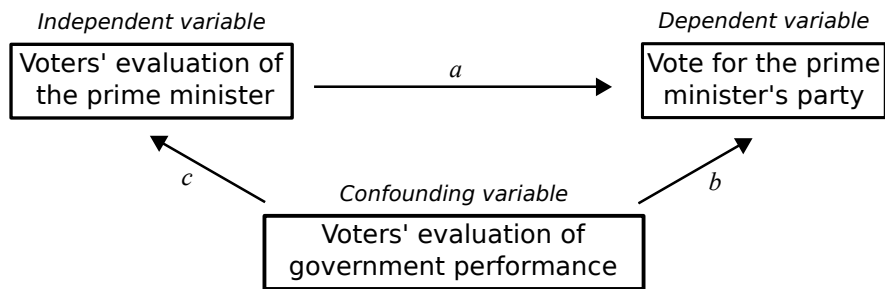


Figure A1: Voters' mean evaluation of Merkel and mean satisfaction with the federal government on a scale from -5 to +5 over time. Data: ([Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, 2017](#))

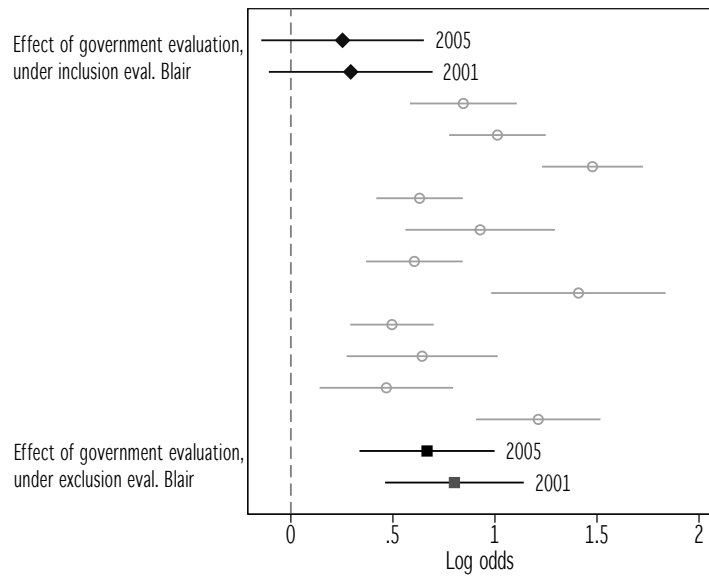


Figure A2: Effect of voters' government evaluation on vote choice with 95% confidence intervals. Black coefficients present results from elections in which Blair competed; results from other elections are displayed in grey.

## 8 Online appendix

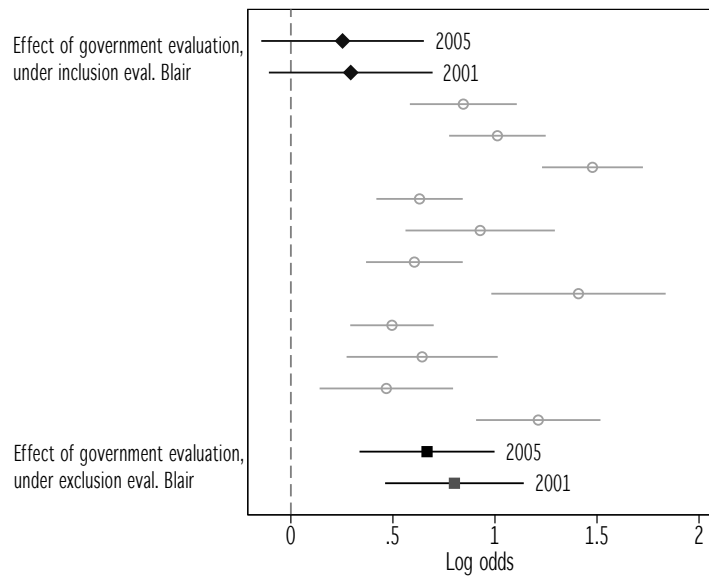


Figure OA1: Theorised causal relationship between the variables of interest. Voters' evaluation of government performance influences their evaluation of the prime minister, as well as their vote choice, therefore the effect of evaluations of the prime minister is confounded by government performance.

Table OA1: KHB results – United Kingdom

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

Exponentiated coefficients; 95% confidence intervals in brackets

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

Table OA2: KHB results – Germany

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

Exponentiated coefficients; 95% confidence intervals in brackets

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

Table OA3: KHB results – Denmark

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

Exponentiated coefficients; 95% confidence intervals in brackets

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

Table OA4: KHB results – United Kingdom with alternative left-right distance

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

Exponentiated coefficients; 95% confidence intervals in brackets

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

Table OA5: KHB results – Germany with alternative left-right distance

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

Exponentiated coefficients; 95% confidence intervals in brackets

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



Table OA6: KHB results – Denmark with alternative left-right distance

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

Exponentiated coefficients; 95% confidence intervals in brackets

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

Table OA7: KHB results – Germany with non party specific government eval.

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

Exponentiated coefficients; 95% confidence intervals in brackets

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

Table OA8: British elections - Full regression results

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

Exponentiated coefficients; Robust standard errors in parentheses

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

Table OA9: Denmark – Full regression results

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

Exponentiated coefficients; Robust standard errors in parentheses

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

Table OA10: German elections - Full regression results

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

Exponentiated coefficients; Robust standard errors in parentheses

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

The following parties have been included in the analysis:

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

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

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

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

2001 includes: asylum seekers, crime, economy, education, European Union, inflation, National Health Service, pensions, taxes, transport, unemployment, improvement of living conditions in general and handling of the foot & mouth epidemic. 2005 includes: crime, asylum seekers, health service, terrorism, economy and taxation. 1987 includes: prices, unemployment, taxes, health, crime, education, defence. 1983 includes: Falklands, inflation, unemployment, taxes, standard of living, strikes. 1998 includes: economy, unemployment, state surplus, protecting Denmark's interest in the EU, environment, law and order, ensuring co-decision, freedom, tax burden, refugee policy, families, elderly issues, health care, education, protection, social expenses, equality.

Table OA11: Variance inflation factors

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