

VOX POPULI VOX DEI?
ELECTORAL COMPETITION AND GOVERNMENT
RESPONSIVENESS IN ADVANCED DEMOCRACIES

Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
at the University of Leicester

by

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2016

Abstract

If elections are instruments of democracy, are governing parties more likely to address citizens' concerns when pressures from electoral competition arise? This research tests expectations from the competitive theory of democracy and argues that government responsiveness, between elections, is more likely to occur in presence of a set of electoral incentives. This dissertation's focus is on government attention to public issue priorities on three policy venues (executive speeches, public spending and legislation) across a range of policy domains in Canada, Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States. This research shows that government responsiveness to public priorities is higher in more symbolic policy venues and tends to decrease in more substantive policy venues. Similarly, electoral incentives seem to have a more beneficial effect on responsiveness in the agenda-setting stage than in the policy-making stage. This suggests that incentives from electoral competition do not have the same impact on responsiveness when government attention is considered and that theories of party competition have a delimited applicability to the study of dynamic representation.

To Giulia, who has finally found her own way

Acknowledgements

The idea of this dissertation was born when I still was a Master' student in Florence. It moved its first steps in Lucca, developed in Leicester and then in Davis, and ended, again, in Leicester. This means I am seriously in debt with too many people.

I developed my personal interest in the concept of political competition while I was working on my Master's thesis at the University of Florence, under the guidance of Andrea Lippi and Leonardo Morlino. I have been the first student doing an internship at the Istituto Italiano di Scienze Umane (SUM) and this is where I met Leonardo Morlino and Claudius Wagemann, as well as some of the former PhD students I am still in touch with. I linked the concept of political competition to the one of responsiveness when I started applying for a PhD in Italy. When I entered the PhD programme at IMT Lucca, I found again my former guide, who had recently moved there and who became my advisor. I spent there one year and a half and I regard this as one of the best periods of my life. Who has been there knows that Lucca, surrounded by its magic walls, is a tiny beautiful gem. It was like living in a bubble. Given the interdisciplinary and multicultural nature of the institute, during my stay at IMT I met very good friends and colleagues. Among the others, my mind goes, in particular, to my PSIC and MDCH cohorts. I am especially in debt with Prof Morlino, Gabriel Katz and Maria Romaniello if my journey did not end in Lucca but continued in Leicester.

The ERC-funded project on governmental responsiveness to different varieties of public opinion led by my supervisor Prof Laura Morales was the cause of my departure, together with my natural inclination for English humour. The ResponsiveGov Project was such an ideal combination with my research that I could not resist. I thank Laura for believing in me even before I started believing in me myself. Working on my project and on her project at the same time represented an incredible

opportunity for me, pushing my career perspectives of simple PhD student towards an international stage. I thank Laura and the European Union for the studentship offered to support my studies. However, I have to say that it is during the time that I have been spending as a full-time researcher in ResponsiveGov that my professional and personal relationship with Laura improved, which I hope that will last for long. Although ResponsiveGov is Laura's child, I feel like an uncle, since I was part of it since the beginning. So, I wish all the best to the project and to whatever good it is producing for us and for the whole scientific community.

In the ResponsiveGov Project I found invaluable companions: first Maarja Lühiste and Daniel Bischof, then Pietro Castelli, Francesco Visconti and Oriol Sabaté. I sincerely apologise for all the times that I bothered them with my research and I am very grateful for their advices and suggestions. Although Daniel and I have done the PhD in ResponsiveGov at the same time and we have shared together good and bad moments, I feel equally in debt with all researchers in the project for the help and support. In Leicester, I have been surrounded by nice people, inside and outside the department, who made the British grey days less grey. I cannot mention them all, but some deserve my attention: Daniela Vintila, Angeliki Konstantinidou, Elisabete Sousa, Ornella Urso, Galina Zapryanova, Anne Ablett, Sally Mallet, Emma Butler, Zoe Clapton, Bruce Edhouse, my second supervisor Ben Clements, Simona Guerra, Shane Martin, Luis Ramiro, Rick Whitaker, James Rockey, Andy Jones, Berta Barbet, Stephanie Gordon, Melvin Josse, and, especially, Max Canali, Zak Sajir and Bob Welland.

The list is not over yet, for my dissertation has been written not only in the *Perfida Albione* but also in the New World. My research visiting at UC Davis has been absolutely fantastic. On the one hand, I have been living in a wonderful house with wonderful housemates, Marilu Carter and Yohei Kato (although I should add Paul Ulbrich and Jim Armstead, with whom we had delicious dinners with lobsters accompanied by numerous bottles of Rendez-vous, an amazing Californian Chardonnay from Clarksburg). On the other hand, the Political Science Department at UC Davis is a very friendly environment, made of nice and competent people. To anybody who asks me why I am so enthusiastic about my stay at UC Davis I always reply two things: the Californian sun, lacking in England, and Jim Adams (I would like to say the vineyards too, but unfortunately I could not be a regular client due to serious university commitments). Both have been beneficial for my mood and my work.

Jim is a rare event in political science, a very good one, and I consider him as a mentor. Working with him has been fun and a real privilege. At the department, I thank in particular Walt Stone, Matthew Shugart, Amber Boydstun, John Scott, John Warner, Angus Chang, Cindy Simmons, Tzu-Ping Liu, Brian Clark, Oakley Gordon and Sam Tyler.

As I mentioned at the beginning, bear with me, I am in debt with too many people. A special thank is given to Stefano Bartolini, Sara Hobolt, Stuart Soroka, Kaare Strøm and Chris Wlezien, who I consider the sources of inspiration for my work. I thank my PhD examiners Sara Hobolt and Rick Whitaker for their excellent feedback in making the dissertation more cohesive and consistent. During my PhD, I have been presenting my dissertation chapters in several venues and many scholars, colleagues and friends have been so unlucky to encounter myself and my work. Among the others, I want to thank Christine Arnold, Leonardo Baccini, Susan Banducci, Tony Bertelli, Shaun Bevan, Andrea Bussoletti, Laura Chaqués, Michael Clark, Ruth Dassonneville, Lorenzo De Sio, Lawrence Ezrow, Pablo Fernandez, Jessica Fortin-Rittberger, Caterina Froio, Marco Giugni, Jane Green, Christopher Green-Pedersen, Bernie Grofman, Will Jennings, Peter John, Debra Leiter, Giovanni Marin, Thomas Meyer, Caitlin Milazzo, Monica Montaña Reyes, Stefano Rombi, Giulia Sandri, Antonella Seddone, Susan Stokes, Wouter van der Brug, Cees van der Eijk, Fulvio Venturino, Markus Wagner, and Stefaan Walgrave.

The research undertaken in this dissertation was also possible due to the kindness and assistance of academics and research institutes. In particular, I am grateful to Will Jennings and Shaun Bevan for sharing data on vote intentions and public priorities in the UK, Christian Breunig for sharing in advance some of the Comparative Agendas Project data on the German executive speeches, Carina Bischoff for sharing her insightful research on electoral contestability, Carmen Aparicio and Ana Raquel López of the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, Jerry Latter of Ipsos-MORI, and Ulf Jakobsson of the Swedish National Data Service.

Since I have been taught not to forget where I come from, everything ends where everything has begun: Cagliari, Sardinia. A special thought goes to my oldest friends (only in chronological order) Matteo, Giovanni, Michele R., Gianluca, Michele P., and Monica. Finally, and more importantly, my parents, my sister and Someone up there.

Last but not least, a very special thought goes to New Order, The Cure, The Smiths, and Mr David Bowie for being the soundtrack of my life during the PhD and beyond.

Post scriptum. A final thank is for my ex-girlfriend without whom I would have submitted much earlier.

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Chapter I

Introduction

On March 17, 2011, in a private conversation in the corridors of the historic Montecitorio – home of the Italian Chamber of Deputies – far from indiscreet ears, the Minister of Environment, Stefania Prestigiacomo, secretly talked to the Minister of Economy, Giulio Tremonti, and the Undersecretary to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Paolo Bonaiuti, joined by the Minister of Economic Development, Paolo Romani. The Minister of Environment freely expressed her own feelings about the fate of nuclear energy policy in Italy after the nuclear disaster of Fukushima in Japan: “It’s over, we can’t jeopardise the elections because of nuclear energy. Let’s not mess everything up” (ANSA).¹ Six days later the government announced a moratorium suspending all nuclear plans in Italy.

The anecdote of the Italian minister summarises the essence of this dissertation. The U-turn of the Italian government on nuclear energy policy was the product of a combination of factors. Whether more or less informed and knowledgeable, the large majority of the public was clearly against the construction of nuclear plants in Italy. The closeness of the local elections in May 2011, in combination with both distributions of public opinion (in polls and on the streets) and most political parties against the government’s proposal, threatened the Italian government and brought it to stop their nuclear energy plans in the country. It does not matter that the government was subsequently defeated at the local elections, less than two months after the announcement of the moratorium. What matters is that the government was afraid of losing the elections which was a crucial factor that

¹The original statement is slightly more colourful than my English translation: “E’ finita, non possiamo mica rischiare le elezioni per il nucleare. Non facciamo cazzate” (ANSA, 17 March 2011).

led the government to respond to public pressures.

As many scholars have written, elections are instruments of democracy. Yet this dissertation is not about elections and their consequences. This dissertation is about what happens during the election cycle, that is, about the incentives elections produce and whether they are taken into account by a government when it decides to respond, or not, to the public.

1.1 The Puzzle and Hamlet

Does electoral competition matter for the responsiveness of governments to public opinion? This is the main research question at the basis of this dissertation and is clearly an empirical one. However, the starting point of this research is normative and links democratic procedures to democratic substance. This normative assumption is that competition is good for democracy and that the former might have beneficial effects for the latter. This unintended responsive effect of competition is achieved by introducing Friedrich's (1963) "mechanism of anticipated reactions". Only if politicians are worried about the reactions of voters will they be "constantly piloted by the anticipation of those reactions" (Sartori 1977: 350). These are Mansbridge's (2003) anticipators. A theory of democracy based on the representative's anticipation of reward and punishment "orients government responsiveness toward fundamental needs and values of the people rather than toward ephemeral or weakly held policy preferences" (Page 1978: 221-2). Yet this mechanism of democracy is an indirect mechanism since "there is no sense in which the people's will is translated directly into law"; therefore, politicians are "obliged to respond to the electorate's preferences by anticipation" (Miller 1983: 134), and this is the key for understanding why competition is relevant.

If politicians aim to improve their chances of reelection, they are led to sympathetically respond to their (potential) voters' demands. This proposition is considered by a remarkable part of the contemporary democratic theory (Dahl 1956; Downs 1957; Pitkin 1967; Dahl 1971; Sartori 1987; Bartolini 1999; Manin, Przeworski, and Stokes 1999; Powell 2000). Yet, though at a theoretical level there is an agreement that competition is important for responsiveness, it is disputed whether competition has an impact on responsiveness on empirical grounds. We know that, in reality, politics is not only led according to competitive behaviours of the political elites, but also, and perhaps especially, by

collusive behaviours among these elites (Katz and Mair 1995; Bartolini 1999). More than that, the latter seem to be much more common than the former, at the expense of responsiveness to public opinion. Therefore, this is the first reason why it is worth assessing this relationship empirically.

The second motivation behind this research is that we have knowledge about the determinants of government responsiveness but we still do not have enough confidence about their external validity. The majority of studies on responsiveness are, in fact, country specific or compare two or three countries at most. In particular, this dissertation focuses on the electoral determinants of responsiveness and conceives the latter in terms of dynamic representation, that is, that public opinion at time $t-1$ has an effect on public policy at time t .² To the best of my knowledge, most of the studies devoted to analysing the impact of competitive incentives on government responsiveness to public opinion are from the US (Stimson, Mackuen, and Erikson 1995; Erikson, Mackuen, and Stimson 2002; Manza and Cook 2002; Canes-Wrone 2004; Canes-Wrone and Shotts 2004) with only a few non US-based or comparative efforts (Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008; Hakhverdian 2010; Soroka and Wlezien 2010; Chaqués Bonafont and Palau 2011; Bertelli and John 2012; Hakhverdian 2012; Wlezien and Soroka 2012; Pickup and Hobolt 2015; Soroka and Wlezien 2015). Yet, among these studies, there is no clear conclusion about the influence of competitive incentives on responsiveness, except probably for the impact of the proportionality of electoral systems (Wlezien and Soroka 2012; Soroka and Wlezien 2015).

If we agree that electoral competition is likely to be important for responsiveness, the follow-up question would then be what dimensions of competition really matter. Very often competition is approached in terms of competitiveness, conceived as a quantity to be maximised; in other words, as “more” or “less” competition. However, since this dissertation is about responsiveness pre-post elections, competitiveness of elections is not the focus of this work. The effort is rather to introduce a framework that accounts for the relevant incentives from party competition that can be treated as facilitating conditions for the government to respond, and this is the third and final reason that

²Some scholars look at responsiveness as a result dimension of the quality of democracy (Diamond and Morlino 2004; Lijphart 1999; Morlino, Piana, and Raniolo 2013; Morlino 2011; Powell 2004b; Roberts 2010); in this literature satisfaction with the way democracy works, confidence in (public) institutions and government popularity become proxies of responsiveness. However, such proxies have serious limitations, as they are not as much indicators of responsiveness but rather consequences of it and, more than that, they seem to be more related to the output side of the democratic process and to accountability.

motivates this work.

A final caveat needs to be addressed, that is, the Hamletic doubt of responsiveness. The study of governmental responsiveness to public opinion has been commonly engaged under two different perspectives. The first perspective looks at responsiveness in terms of *position* and investigates whether levels of/changes in citizens' preferences have an impact on levels of/changes in the government's position on a given issue. The second perspective looks at responsiveness in terms of *attention* and investigates whether levels of/changes in citizens' priorities have an impact on levels of/changes in the government's priorities on a given issue. Although some scholars may identify responsiveness with policy change, hence prioritising position and discounting attention, both are relevant for representation. In fact, beyond partisan opinions, there is no wrong answer to the normative question of what is good representation. A government is a responsive representative if it changes its policy positions in line with its citizens' preferences. However, a government is also a responsive representative if it responds to the issues its citizens prioritise by emphasising such issues in its policy agenda, legislative priorities or budget allocations. Whatever we prefer, there is no good answer a priori. This dissertation is about responsiveness not to public preferences but to public priorities, hence responsiveness is not studied in terms of position but in terms of attention.

1.2 Synopsis and Prognosis

Building on theoretical studies on political competition as a multidimensional concept (Bartolini 1999, 2000; Strøm 1992) and on classical theories of party competition (Downs 1957; Robertson 1976; Budge and Farlie 1983), I develop a stylised framework of competition for responsiveness. For doing so, Chapter 2 first disentangles the differences between competition, competitiveness and democracy, introduces the dimensions of competition, defines what responsiveness is and is not, introduces the puzzles of responsiveness, and reviews the studies that link dynamic representation and electoral competition. In Chapter 2 I select a set of conditions of competition, which I refer to as competitive incentives, the impact of which will find empirical assessment on three ways of analysing government responsiveness to public priorities: by looking at responsiveness in a more symbolic policy venue (executive speeches) as well as in more substantive policy venues (budgetary policy and legislation). The

idea of this dissertation is that different competitive incentives matter differently depending on the stage of responsiveness.

If elections are instruments of democracy and governments aim to be reelected, then this will be more likely if governments respond sympathetically to citizens' concerns and demands. Governments would then be more likely to be worried about voters' reactions if some competitive incentives are present. The economic theory of democracy (Downs 1957; but see also Strøm 1992 and Bartolini 1999) and congressional studies (Mayhew 1974; Fenno 1977) suggest that policy makers are afraid of losing the elections and, hence, electoral vulnerability would make them more responsive in order to achieve their goal. Other work based on issue ownership theories of party competition (Budge and Farlie 1983; Petrocik 1996) points to different conditions that can be understood as incentives for responsiveness. More specifically, I refer to what the literature calls the associative dimension of issue ownership (Walgrave, Lefevre, and Tresch 2012). Indeed, the fact that a party is associated with or has a good reputation on a given issue can increase the likelihood that the party will prioritise those issues at the expense of others and respond on those issues that the public also cares about. However, what parties offer is also important. Governing and opposition parties' policy proposals have serious implications not only for voters and electoral outcomes, but also for responsiveness and representation. Hence, if what parties signal is clear and differentiated, then the consequences for responsiveness may be different than if what parties signal is unclear and undifferentiated (Bartolini 2000). Finally, the electoral connection is also a very powerful incentive for governments to respond to what the public wants (Stimson, Mackuen, and Erikson 1995; Manin, Przeworski, and Stokes 1999), therefore proximity to elections is another crucial condition that may increase the likelihood of responsiveness.

Chapter 3 is devoted to the measurement of both responsiveness and the competitive incentives. On the government side of the opinion-policy link, what the government does is measured in three different ways: executive speeches, public spending and legislation. On the citizens side, public opinion is measured as public issue priorities (public preferences are only used in one empirical chapter). For what concerns the competitive incentives, the focus is on those ones for which specific expectations are provided. In particular, I develop a dynamic measure of governments' electoral vulnerability based on polling data on party support that tries to capture how vulnerable or safe governments are

between elections. For the measurement of the other variables of competition I rely on established measures.

Chapters 4 to 6 constitute the empirical part of the dissertation. Chapter 4 on rhetorical responsiveness asks whether governments (de-)emphasise certain issues in their policy agendas under some specific incentives coming from party competition. Using data on executive speeches from the Comparative Agendas Project in Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States, this chapter produces evidence that has implications for both the policy agenda of governments and government responsiveness to citizens' priorities. First, when the issue is salient to the public and the government is perceived as competent on the issue, electoral vulnerability does not have any enhancing effect on responsiveness. Vulnerability matters to the extent that the government is not associated with the issue. Second, independently their potential vulnerability at the polls, governments tend both to respond to the public and emphasise those issues in which they are perceived as competent on, but the effect of competence is greater than the effect of salience. Third, there is no evidence in the analysis that governments are more responsive when elections are approaching.

Chapter 5 on budgetary responsiveness asks whether governments respond to public priorities or to public preferences and focuses on three competitive incentives. Using data on outlays in Canada, Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States, this chapter finds that public spending does not respond to the most important problem/issue and that governments, in turn, respond to preferences in spending. However, when it comes to budget, the effects expected from electoral competition are limited. In particular, while vulnerable governments are not more likely to be responsive than safe ones, there is mixed evidence that a more differentiated political offer is a condition for responsiveness and electoral proximity seems to matter little, though more for preferences than for priorities.

Chapter 6 on legislative responsiveness provides an alternative way of analysing policy responsiveness and uses data on enacted legislation from the Comparative Agendas Project in Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States. This chapter finds that governments' electoral vulnerability seems not to have a conditional effect on legislative responsiveness and that, despite law productivity decreases when elections are approaching, legislative responsiveness seems to actually be higher

in the election year compared to other years, meaning that policy makers are willing to play the saliency card to increase their chances of reelection. At last, the chapter finds mixed results in relation to the expectation that public priorities would have a greater effect on legislative priorities when the government is associated with the issue and the issue is salient to the public.

Chapter 7 discusses the main findings of the dissertation and their implications for representation, but also describes its limitations and outlines developments for future research.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework

This chapter bridges the literature on party competition and dynamic representation with its main goal being to provide an empirical framework for governmental responsiveness to public opinion. By selecting from the broad and extensive literature on party competition those dimensions that are likely to influence, directly, governmental responsiveness, this chapter aims to offer a framework that will be applied in the three empirical chapters of this dissertation. The chapter is structured as follows.

The first section is devoted to disentangling the conceptual differences among the dimensions of political competition at the basis of the competitive theory of democracy (Schumpeter 1954; Downs 1957). Such an exercise is useful to trace boundaries among these related concepts and, at the same time, highlighting competitive incentives relevant for responsiveness. However, since this dissertation is not about democracy, but about just one aspect of it, i.e., responsiveness, I refer the reader to the conceptual literature about the similarities and differences among the notions of competition, competitiveness and democracy (D'Alimonte 1989; Strøm 1992; Bartolini 1999). The second and third sections draw attention to the other main concept at the basis of this work. The second section defines the concept of responsiveness from its neighbours. Indeed, responsiveness is often confused with terms such as congruence, responsibility or accountability. The third section discusses responsiveness in relation to specific theoretical and empirical issues and its aim is to come to an empirical definition of responsiveness that will be utilised in this work. The fourth section reviews the

few studies linking electoral competition and governmental responsiveness. Finally, the fifth section proposes and discusses, in detail, the framework.

2.1 The Dimensions of Political Competition

Political competition is a multi-dimensional concept. Some dimensions of competition are therefore more relevant than others for responsiveness. Through a discussion of the literature on the concept of party competition, the goal of this section, though tedious, is to identify those dimensions that will be eligible to be considered as necessary conditions for governments to respond to the public.

Electoral Uncertainty and the Demand Side of Competition

The first task is to clarify the difference between competition and competitiveness. Sartori enlightens us when he says that “*competition is a structure*, or a rule of the game [while] *competitiveness is a particular state of the game*”. [...] “Since competition includes competitiveness as a potentiality, *competition is equal to*, and can be defined as, *potential competitiveness*. Conversely, competitiveness presupposes competition [...] and is something to be measured in outcome [...]. Thus competitiveness is one of the properties or attributes of competition” (Sartori 1976: 218, emphasis in original).

This distinction is useful, as D’Alimonte (1989: 308-9) recognizes, in order to differentiate between non-competitive and competitive party systems and within the latter, where a high level of symmetry in the distribution of votes between the main parties is present. So, whereas the concept of competition is defined in terms of the number of parties, the concept of competitiveness is linked to the distribution of votes among these parties (D’Alimonte 1989: 307). More precisely, “competition is ‘competitive’ when two or more parties obtain close returns and win on thin margins” (Sartori 1976: 218). Clearly, Sartori is interested in the direction of competition – i.e., whether it is centripetal or centrifugal – in relation to the format and mechanics of party systems.¹

A more contemporary definition which isolates both structural and behavioural elements has been given by Strøm (1990: 581): “electoral competition is the process by which parties exchange

¹See also Mair (2002), who proposes a different typology where the open or closed structure of competition is an important factor when examining party system change.

[policy] benefits (or promises thereof) derived from their control of political institutions for electoral support”, whereas “electoral competitiveness is the aggregate uncertainty of electoral contests as perceived by party leaders. Specifically, competitiveness is the degree to which electoral results are expected to vary across the set of feasible policy positions. The more electoral outcomes are expected to vary across policy positions, the more competitive the election” (Strøm 1990: 582). According to Strøm (1989: 280), competitiveness “is probably the most common way in which the concept of competition is used in party politics”.

Both Sartori’s and Strøm’s definitions relate to the competitiveness of the elections, and both somehow incorporate the concept of electoral uncertainty. However, the crucial downside of these definitions is that they refer to the uncertainty parties face at election time instead of the uncertainty about future election outcomes (Elkins 1974). The concept of uncertainty in-between elections is found in the literature and assumes different names. For Strøm (1989: 280-1) it is *performance sensitivity*, for Bartolini (2000) *incumbent vulnerability*. In the American context elite vulnerability means competition, but different terms have been adopted such as closeness, uncertainty, decisiveness of elections (Powell 1989), and changeability (Elkins 1974). Performance sensitivity is purely behavioural and “depends both on the proportion of voters open to party persuasion and on the likelihood that such persuasion will affect the aggregate results” (Strøm 1989: 281).² Vulnerability of the incumbent refers to the degree of uncertainty about electoral results, but also captures party’s perception of electoral uncertainty over time. It is when politicians perceive themselves to be more vulnerable that they are most inclined to choose policies closer to citizens’ desires (i.e. be responsive). According to Bartolini (2000: 52-3), both the dimensions of actual past record and present uncertainty should be incorporated into the idea of vulnerability. Indeed, the potential competitiveness is much more relevant than the actual one (Barry 1970: 153), hence potential vulnerability is identified as the most important dimension of competition for responsiveness.

²Note that performance sensitivity resembles one of D’Alimonte’s (1989: 304-5) conditions of competition, meaning the presence of a quota of available voters determines electoral success. This is essentially what Bartolini (1999) calls *electoral availability*. It appears clear that in the literature there is no full agreement on whether to consider this quota of available voters part of the notion of electoral vulnerability or embedded in the notion of electoral availability. The final section of this chapter concludes that electoral availability is not a necessary condition for responsiveness and Chapter 3 gives a solution to this conceptual tension in the measurement of the concept of governments’ electoral vulnerability.

The Supply Side of Competition

When parties elaborate their political offer they take on different policy positions. They can do that in many ways. Parties can either compete in a cruder and directly confrontational way, as the Downsian theory predicts, or they can compete in a more dynamic and smooth way emphasising and de-emphasising certain issues, as the saliency theory suggests. Parties can even blur their positions on issues that would penalise them. Whatever they do, parties signal something to voters. If what parties signal is clear and differentiated then the consequences for representation and responsiveness may be different than if what parties signal is unclear and undifferentiated. This is at the heart of the concept of electoral decidability coined by Bartolini (2000) and characterises the supply side (D'Alimonte 1989: 303) of party competition.

Whereas the emphasis at the basis of the Downsian theory of democracy, and its wide development in the spatial modelling tradition (e.g., Enelow and Hinich 1984; McKelvey and Ordeshook 1987; Riker and Ordeshook 1968, 1973), is on the demand side of competition, in Downs and his followers the supply side does not shine in its own light. In Downs (1957), in fact, political parties are obliged to take account of the preferences of the electors, they are involuntarily forced while pursuing their goal of vote maximization (see also Barry 1970). This is where the unintended social value of competition lies: politicians are led to sympathetically respond to the citizens' requests. Accordingly, procedural democracy can become substantial democracy (Bartolini 1999: 448).

In opposition to the Downsian theory of democracy, different theories of party competition developed and assigned greater credit to the importance of what parties in competition offer.³ These theories are based on concepts such as valence politics (Stokes 1963; Clarke et al. 2004), issue salience (Robertson 1976; Budge and Farlie 1983; Budge et al. 2001; Budge, Robertson, and Hearl 1987; Klingemann, Hofferbert, and Budge 1994), issue ownership/issue competence (van der Brug 2004; Bélanger and Meguid 2008; Green and Hobolt 2008; Petrocik 1996; Walgrave, Lefevere, and Tresch

³The exogeneity of preferences as one of the crucial assumptions of economic models of competition has been largely questioned (Zaller 1992; Dunleavy and Ward 1981; Dunleavy 1991; Meyer and Miller 2013) and studies consider that the preferences of the public are not fixed but they can be manipulated by politicians (Zaller 1992; Hill and Hurley 1999; Hakhverdian 2012; Lenz 2012). Though not the focus of this dissertation, this issue is clearly relevant for responsiveness too, for it connects to the question of whether politicians are responsive at all, whether they simulate or pander (see Jacobs and Shapiro 2000).

2012) and issue competition (Carmines and Stimson 1993; Green-Pedersen 2007).

In particular, issue ownership theory posits that parties use rhetoric to direct citizens' attention towards issues the party "owns", in the sense that the party has developed a long-term reputation for competently handling these issues (e.g., Budge and Farlie 1983; Petrocik 1996; Green and Hobolt 2008). In particular, the theory posits that mainstream, centre-right parties, notably conservative and Christian Democratic parties, enjoy public images for competence on issues pertaining to crime, national defense, and (arguably) immigration, whereas mainstream leftist parties, such as labour and social democratic parties, enjoy superior images for managing social welfare domains. Issue ownership theory implies that parties benefit when the issues they own increase in public salience, so that parties have electoral incentives to emphasise their core issues in order to direct voters' attention to these domains. Indeed, empirical research by Hobolt, Klemmensen, and Pickup (2009) documents that political parties' policy rhetoric influences citizens' issue priorities and extensive research documents that political parties emphasise their core issues (Budge and Farlie 1983; Petrocik 1996; Walgrave, Lefevere, and Tresch 2012).

Whereas other dimensions of competition such as electoral vulnerability and electoral contestability (see below) can be conceived as systemic-level dimensions – as the former focuses on governments' vulnerability and the latter on the "quality" of the political system – issue ownership involves political parties more directly and introduces a puzzle for reelection-seeking governments. Governments face, in fact, a dilemma: if they aim at being reelected, are governing parties more likely to reach this goal if they emphasise those issues the public is more concerned about or those issues they are perceived as competent on? While poorly explored in comparative research, this question is relevant and will be extensively addressed in Chapter 4, for issue ownership may undermine government responsiveness to public concerns and demands if the issues that are salient to the public are not the issues the government has a long-term reputation for.

To sum up, we can say that the supply side of competition contains two relevant dimensions: one has to do with the polarisation of the political offer on a given issue, in other words, what Bartolini (2000) calls electoral decidability; the other dimension emphasises, instead, whether parties are

perceived as competent on and cognitively associated with certain issues.⁴

The Procedural Side of Competition

The possibility to enter the race or, simply, to compete is the “politico-electoral market in which the freedom of access is guaranteed both from the demand side (the electors) and the supply side (the parties)” (D’Alimonte 1989: 303). Scholars commonly refer to this dimension of competition as *electoral contestability* (Strøm 1989, 1992; Bartolini 1999) and here is where democracy and competition overlap. Contestability “refers to *potential*, rather than actual, competition” (Strøm 1989: 279), that is, to the requirements to enter the race, the possibility of accessing the resources necessary for an electoral race, and the possibility of being represented in legislative bodies (Bartolini 1999).⁵

There are, at least, three types of barriers to entry: registration barriers that a new party has to face after its formation; recognition barriers in access to media and campaign funding; representational barriers related to the electoral system that prevents competitors from winning seats and representation. In general, high barriers may discourage new entries and the incumbent political elite would have strong incentives for collusion which may reduce responsiveness.⁶ However, low barriers may allow excessive fragmentation of the political offer leading, at the extreme, to political chaos. So, it should be desirable to strike a balance.

As discussed throughout the chapter, scholars’ attention has been primarily focused on representational barriers and, especially, on the link between proportionality of electoral systems and responsiveness (Wlezien and Soroka 2012; Soroka and Wlezien 2015). Yet, as argued in the final part of this chapter, electoral contestability, however relevant, cannot be considered as a necessary condition

⁴However, “competence” is not the only dimension of issue ownership; “associative” issue ownership is “the consequence of long-term party attention to the issue” and refers to the “spontaneous identification of parties with issues in the minds of voters, regardless of whether voters consider the party to be the most competent to deal with these issues” (Walgrave, Lefevre, and Tresch 2012).

⁵It is worth making a distinction here between contestability and competitiveness. Although there might be a possible empirical overlap among their indicators, these two concepts are theoretically different. The former is the potential or opportunity to take part in competitive interactions, the latter is the intensity of competition itself (Bartolini 1996: 218-9).

⁶This is in contrast with the theory of the cartel party (Katz and Mair 1995), which suggests the opposite, that is, high barriers encourage collusion and then discourage new entries. In Downsian theory, parties act as perfect competitors therefore no possibility of collusion among each other is considered. In Downs the mechanism preventing collusion is the threat of new parties emerging and the cost of entering the competition is supposed to be very small (Miller 1983: 148). In politics, such barriers are much higher than in the economy and can originate from different sources, such as access to registration, media, campaign funding, and representation.

for responsiveness.

These are the conditions of competition that are directly or indirectly related to responsiveness and that will be discussed in detail when the empirical framework will be introduced. The next three sections are, instead, devoted to responsiveness. In the first, the latter is defined *a contrario* clarifying what responsiveness is not; in the second, the puzzle of responsiveness is unpacked and a definition is given; the third section revises the empirical studies linking electoral competition and dynamic representation.

2.2 What Responsiveness Is and Is Not

There is little disagreement among scholars about whether the notion of responsiveness is confused with other neighbouring concepts such as accountability, responsibility or representation; however, responsiveness is sometimes conflated with the notion of congruence. Although for Pitkin (1967: 209), political representation means “acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them”, substantive representation is only one meaning of representation and representatives can act according to different styles of representation (see Eulau et al. 1959; McCrone and Kuklinski 1979; Strøm 2000).

Though strictly related,⁷ rarely is responsiveness conflated with accountability. Indeed, “accountable means subject to the obligation to report, justify and be ‘responsible’ for his/her own action before somebody else, rather responsive points to a ready and sympathetic response, to being receptive of somebody else’s requests and opinion” (Bartolini 1999: 448). So, “an accountability theory of democracy requires only a regular renewal of the mandate to rule, and it is not concerned by what politicians should be accountable for”; a responsiveness theory of democracy, instead, needs “accountability to be transformed into the need to respond” (Bartolini 1999: 448-9). This means that accountability and responsiveness are not only different notions, but also different goals of democracy.

Responsiveness is also different from responsibility and it is hard to get a representative who is

⁷The link is well highlighted in Eulau’s and Prewitt’s words: “the men who rule are responsive to the preferences of the ruled because the rulers, as elected officials, can be and are held accountable through the simple mechanism of eviction from office” (Eulau and Prewitt 1973: 446).

highly responsive and highly responsible at the same time (Sartori 1968: 469). This incompatibility had been already raised by Sartori (1987: 170), for whom responsiveness and responsibility are two intrinsic ingredients of representation, but the former is detrimental to the latter as a responsive government can also be a very irresponsible government. This is a crucial point concerning democratic theory as governments are called to act both responsibly and responsively. However, while responsibility would be associated with long run behaviour, by providing consistency and predictability (Downs 1957: 105), responsiveness deals more with the short run. This is due to the fact that public opinion can change its mind over and over again – and this implies a more responsive rather than responsible behaviour – but also because a change in the government from one election to another might imply an interruption in policy continuity.

More problematic is the difference between congruence and responsiveness, for the notion of congruence is found in the literature of representation associated with several meanings. While in Miller and Stokes (1963) and Page and Shapiro (1983) congruence is actually used as a measure of responsiveness, there are at least two other approaches in which it is defined as something different.⁸ On the one hand, congruence takes the meaning of mandate responsiveness. In Klingemann, Hof-ferbert, and Budge (1994) citizens are totally excluded, as congruence becomes the correspondence between what parties say and what governments do (essentially, what responsibility is for Downs). Hence, congruence is measured by the correspondence between party manifestos and public expenditures on certain policy domains. Is this responsiveness? It depends on whether we accept *mandate* responsiveness as a kind of responsiveness, or whether for us it is just a matter of fulfilling promises. Mandate responsiveness occurs if a politician or party makes clear campaign promises and fulfills these promises once in office (Stokes 2001). According to Roberts (2010: 38), this works prospectively as follows: (1) parties present clear and distinct programs (*programmaticness*), (2) voters understand campaigns and choose based on them (*issue voting*), (3) governing parties follow through on their promises (*promise fulfillment*). So, if we accept that the majority of citizens at elections choose a cer-

⁸Lax and Phillips (2009: 368) do not simplify the picture when they differentiate between policy “*responsive* to policy specific opinion” and policy “*congruent* with the preferences of opinion majorities” (emphasis in original). For them, responsiveness occurs when there is a positive and significant correlation between opinion and policy (if support for a policy grows, so does the probability of its adaption). Congruence, instead, occurs when policy matches majority opinion.

tain political offer among available party programs or coalition agreements, and if the government, once in office, is responsive to the mandate, then we can also accept that the government is not only directly responsive to the mandate but also indirectly responsive to the majority of citizens that chose that political offer. Yet it has to be clear that, given this indirect link, through elections, “a first preference for a party cannot be interpreted as a first preference for a specific policy” (van der Brug 2001: 115).

On the other hand, congruence is conceived as the correspondence between citizens’ issue preferences and party positions on those issues.⁹ The justification is that citizens have policy positions and the position that has the best claim to represent the “most preferred” policy is the position of the median voter. On a single issue, or a single-issue dimension, if we assume that the preferences of voters are single-peaked, the position of the median voter is the only policy that is preferred to all others by a majority of voters (Huber and Powell 1994: 292-3). Scholars tend to assume that party competition is structured along a left-right dimension, which is a summary of political positions and a political orientation that helps individuals to make political choices (Dalton 1985; Klingemann, Hofferbert, and Budge 1994; Thomassen and Schmitt 1999). This meaning of congruence adopts the distance between citizens and governments to analyse how close the latter is to the former. The closer the parties in government to the citizens on the left-right scale, the higher the congruence; conversely, the larger the distance, the lower the congruence. The point is that, in this operationalisation, congruence handles ideological positions not government outputs. As also Powell (2000) recognises, we are comparing only differences in general orientations, we are definitely not looking at specific policies or at implementation of policy positions. For this reason if we use this approach we have to be aware that we are not capturing responsiveness but congruence.

What Responsiveness Is

As Sartori reminds us, “the crux of defining consists of separating the *defining properties* (or necessary characteristics) from the *accompanying properties* (contingent or accidental characteristics)” (1984: It. ed. 2011, 190). Now, what are the defining properties of responsiveness? Firstly, responsiveness re-

⁹For a summary of the approaches used to measure ideological congruence see Powell (2009), whereas for a review of the recent contributions see Arnold and Franklin (2012).

quires the existence of two actors: the public (citizens or voters), on the one hand, and politicians (governments or representatives), on the other hand. Secondly, responsiveness is a *relationship-wise* concept linking citizens and politicians. However, this property would not differentiate responsiveness from other “neighbouring” concepts such as accountability or responsibility, so the relationship-wise element is crucial but not sufficient to distinguish responsiveness from other concepts. What is still missing is the term correspondence. However, to say that there must be a correspondence between what the people want and what the government does, i.e. a correspondence between input and output, means essentially congruence rather than responsiveness. I remind that there is congruence when the position of the citizen/voter and the position of the party/government are equivalent. Responsiveness, instead, means that someone (the government) in the current period is responding to someone else’s (the public) previous preferences/priorities. Since this dissertation is concerned about government’s issue attention and not government’s issue position, I define responsiveness as an increase in *levels* of government attention in the current period as a consequence of an increase in *levels* of public issue salience in the previous period.

2.3 Electoral Competition and Dynamic Representation

The connection between citizens and politicians has been fundamentally studied under three perspectives: as (1) dyadic representation (Bartels 1991; Eulau et al. 1959; McCrone and Kuklinski 1979; Miller and Stokes 1963; Soroka, Penner, and Blidook 2009), (2) collective representation (Brooks 1985; Erikson, Wright, and Mciver 1989; Monroe 1979; Page and Shapiro 1983; Weissberg 1978), and (3) dynamic representation (Stimson, Mackuen, and Erikson 1995; Wlezien 1995; Erikson, Mackuen, and Stimson 2002; Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008; Soroka and Wlezien 2010; John, Bevan, and Jennings 2011; Bertelli and John 2012; Bevan and Jennings 2014). In this section, I will only concentrate on the third approach, as I am interested in governmental responsiveness, and focus specifically on those studies linking dynamic representation and electoral competition.

Work that studies the effects of electoral competition (or, to put it broadly, institutional components) on dynamic representation is rare. Stimson, Mackuen and Erikson’s (1995) seminal work can be acknowledged as the first effort to introduce a dynamic feature in the study of representa-

tion and responsiveness. Public opinion moves meaningfully over time, government officials sense this movement, those officials alter their behaviour in response to the sensed movement (Stimson, Mackuen, and Erikson 1995; Erikson, Mackuen, and Stimson 2002). Here policy responsiveness acts through two mechanisms: (1) elections change the government's political composition, which is then reflected in new policy (*electoral turnover*) and (2) policymakers calculate future (mainly electoral) implications of current public views and act accordingly (*rational anticipation*). The advantage is that there are two avenues, one acts through parties (partisanship of government) while the other is a dynamic direct component. Public opinion influences election outcomes and both have an impact on public policy.

When political institutions are added to dynamic representation the picture becomes extremely complex. Only a few studies introduce the institutional component to dynamic models. In their comparative study on Denmark, the UK and the US, Hobolt and Klemmensen (2008) classify responsiveness as *rhetorical*, when analysing executive speeches, and *effective*, when dealing with government expenditures. Citizens' priorities are captured using the so-called "most important problem" question. Assuming that issue salience is a key component of political competition, Hobolt and Klemmensen select two main institutional factors and conceptualise competition as contestability, defined as the uncertainty facing the executive in electoral contexts (for a different conceptualisation see Bartolini's (1999) and Strøm's (1989) work), and executive discretion, which refers to the constraints faced by the executive in the legislative process. Though the impact of institutional features (electoral system, separation of powers, conflict of interest between the executive and the legislature) is tested in their study, the most interesting hypothesis for my project is the one regarding electoral uncertainty: the greater the uncertainty about future electoral contests, the higher the responsiveness of the executive (Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008: 314), which is confirmed in some policy areas but not in others (see also Hakhverdian 2010).

More recently, Pickup and Hobolt (2015) use the Canadian case to continue where Hobolt and Klemmensen (2008) stopped. Motivated by the perennial debate between representativeness and effectiveness, they analyse how government majority/minority status and popularity shape the trade-off between government responsiveness and effectiveness. Looking at legislative outputs and public

expenditures, they find that minority governments are more responsive to the median voter – for minority governments would face legislative constraints that incentivize them to be responsive to the public – but less legislatively effective than majority governments. Government popularity moderates these effects in the way the competitive theory of democracy would suggest.

In parallel, Wlezien and Soroka (2012) and Soroka and Wlezien (2015) introduce the institutional component in the connection between their thermostatic model and three kinds of institutions: (1) the parliamentary/presidential dimension, (2) the central/federal dimension, and (3) the proportional/majoritarian dimension of the electoral system. According to this approach, a responsive public behaves much like a thermostat (Wlezien 1995), that is, the public adjusts its preferences for “more” or “less” policy in response to what policymakers do. When policy increases (decreases), the preference for more policy decreases (increases) (Franklin and Wlezien 1997; Wlezien 2004; Soroka and Wlezien 2010). Here, “the opinion-policy relationship suggests not just that policymakers respond to the public, but that the public adjusts its preferences over time in reaction to policy change” (Soroka and Wlezien 2004a). Soroka and Wlezien find that political institutions matter for representation and responsiveness and that they matter in different ways. In particular, in contrast with previous work (Powell 2000; but see also Golder and Stramski 2010), their results indicate that governments in proportional systems are less responsive to changing public opinion (Wlezien and Soroka 2012) and that this effect is mediated by party fragmentation (Soroka and Wlezien 2015).

Similarly to the work by Sara Hobolt and colleagues, Soroka and Wlezien (2010: 137-140) test the marginality hypothesis in the US, the UK and Canada using their thermostatic model for social domains. The authors find that the interaction between marginality and preferences is negative and significant only for the US, meaning that when vote margins increase, governmental responsiveness to public preferences decreases. They account for the negative findings for the UK and Canada suggesting that, perhaps, governments are more sensitive to vote intentions rather than vote shares and that marginality probably does not adequately capture the effects of disproportionality (Soroka and Wlezien 2010: 140).

Finally, recent work linking public and government priorities in their policy agendas, known as dynamic agenda representation, has also been open to include electoral factors and institutional

components. In particular, testing the electoral connection hypothesis for which representatives are more likely to be responsive when elections are approaching, Chaqués Bonafont and Palau (2011) find that responsiveness is higher in the first year after elections, probably because of a honeymoon effect (Green and Jennings 2014) between voters and the newly (re)elected government. Moreover, in their comparative study of the UK and the US, Bevan and Jennings (2014) find that responsiveness of policy agendas to public priorities is greater when institutions are subject to less friction, and declines as friction against policy change increases. Interestingly, using the business metaphor, Bertelli and John (2012) build a theory of public-policy investment, tested in the UK, where government responsiveness to the public is moderated by policy risk and return as well as manifesto promises and issue ownership incentives.

To sum up, with few exceptions, there is still much to explore in relation to the conditioning effects of incentives coming from electoral competition on government responsiveness. The next and final section brings the dimensions of competition back in and presents the framework for responsiveness that will be tested along the empirical chapters.

2.4 A Framework for Responsiveness

If we think of responsiveness not as a dichotomous concept (yes/no), but in terms of degrees, then we can identify a set of stages or levels of responsiveness. A similar way of approaching the issue has also been used by other scholars (Eulau and Karps 1977; Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008; Schumaker 1975; Cohen 1997).¹⁰ While Hobolt and Klemmensen (2008) distinguish between rhetorical and policy responsiveness, Schumaker (1975) elaborates five types of responsiveness (access, agenda, policy, output, impact). Cohen (1997: 26-28) is a kind of in-between since he distinguishes between symbolic and substantive policy activities of presidents, claiming that presidential responsiveness to public opinion is higher in the former and then declines as decisions become more substantive. However, he also analyses responsiveness in four presidential policy activities: problem identification in

¹⁰A different approach is used, for instance, by Powell, who defines responsiveness as “the democratic process which induces the government to form and implement policies that the citizens want” (2004*b*: 91). If we follow this definition, then any other government action which is not implementing policies would not be considered as responsive. However, this would reduce the dynamics of politics dismissing a set of intermediate situations where the government somehow reacts, though without changing its mind in terms of policy change.

agenda setting, position taking in agenda setting, policy formulation, and position taking on roll calls before Congress. Eulau and Karps (1977) propose different components of responsiveness but related to the representative level, though they also talk about policy responsiveness.

Figure 2.1 shows the stages of responsiveness. The lowest level implies what I call *input receptivity* of a given issue, which recalls what Schumaker (1975: 494) names access responsiveness and what Morales (2013) simply calls increased attention.¹¹ Empirical examples of input receptivity may be government's declarations to the media which acknowledge that the government became aware of the increase of public salience in a given issue. This can be seen as the first stage of the ladder and the prior step of a government's increased attention on the issue in its policy agenda. When the government starts talking about this issue in its policy agenda, then it indicates a concern for the issue, an openness to address it and a willingness to search for a solution for it. This stage can be called *rhetorical responsiveness*, as the government responds in words but not yet in actions. If the government reacts through legislative actions or by setting the budget, then we can talk about responsiveness in a more consistent way. However, policy responsiveness can also show different levels. For this reason, Morales (2013) introduces the distinction between moderate and substantive policy responsiveness. There is *moderate policy responsiveness* when minor aspects of the policy change or minor changes in legislation occur; we can rather talk of *substantive policy responsiveness* when there is a major policy change in line with the citizens' demands. I exclude Schumaker's types four and five (output responsiveness and impact responsiveness) as they imply responsiveness of the whole political system and not only the government's.

In the empirical part of this study, I only focus on the rhetorical responsiveness and the policy responsiveness stages (see Table 2.1 and Chapter 3 for details). I warn the reader that, if it is conceptually reasonable to distinguish between moderate and substantive policy responsiveness, the empirical approach chosen does not easily accommodate this distinction, for it is hard to consider public spending and legislation as either moderate or substantive policy reactions. This is primarily due to the fact that responsiveness is here analysed as attention rather than position.

In the light of this necessary discussion, I can move to introducing the framework adopted in this

¹¹In his Italian writings on democracy, Sartori translates responsiveness as receptivity, though here it takes the meaning of lowest stage in the ladder.

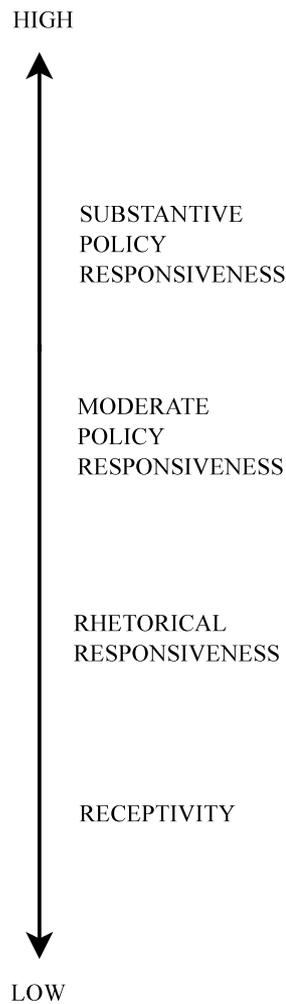


Figure 2.1: Stages of responsiveness

Source: Author's own, adapted from Hobolt and Klemmensen (2008) and Morales (2013).

dissertation. The theoretical framework stylised in Figure 2.2 builds on the so-called Friedrich's (1963) "mechanism of anticipated reactions" and argues that if governments aim to be reelected, they will be more likely to reach such a goal if they respond sympathetically to citizens' preferences and priorities (see Bartolini 1999). The argument is cynical in the very Downsian sense that governments pursue policies in order to be reelected rather than seeking reelection in order to implement policies (but see Wittman 1977; Jacobs and Shapiro 2000).¹² Only if politicians are worried about the reactions of voters will they be "constantly piloted by the anticipation of those reactions" (Sartori 1977: 350).

¹²Of course, reelection is not the unique goal of politicians, as Strøm (1990), for instance, recalls. Nonetheless, politicians could not achieve other goals unless they are able to remain in office (though see the special case of parties supporting single-party minority governments). This is particularly true for legislators (Mayhew 1974; Fenno 1977; Sulkin 2005), but the same logic can be easily applied to the incumbent government as well.

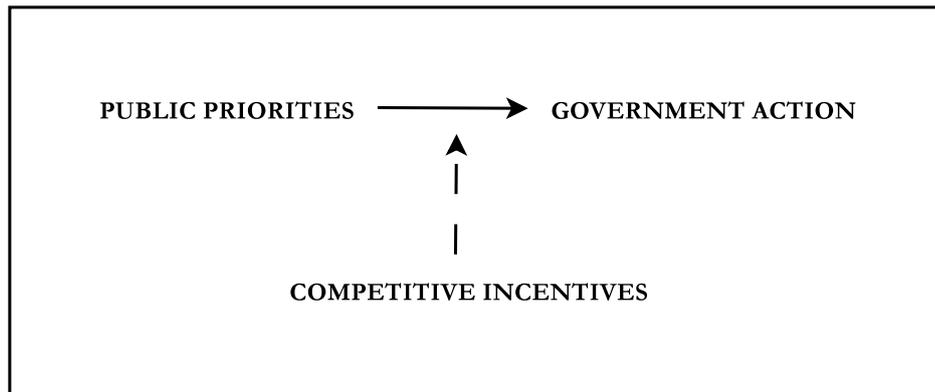


Figure 2.2: Simplified framework of electoral competition for responsiveness

Source: Author's own.

Governments would then be more likely to be worried about voters' reactions if some competitive incentives occur. Such an expectation is given by the dashed line in Figure 2.2, which captures the interactive effect of the competitive incentives on responsiveness. Note that, although responsiveness can be directional – from opinion to policy and vice versa – my project focuses on the impact of public opinion and specifically, public priorities, on government activity. This causal relationship is given by the solid line.

As mentioned previously, not all dimensions of competition are direct incentives for responsiveness. Table 2.1 enumerates these dimensions based on their status as (un)necessary conditions for responsiveness. Electoral contestability represents the procedural dimension of competition, that is, the barriers parties have to face for entering competition. Electoral availability depicts the demand side of competition, given by the fraction of voters willing to switch from one party to another. The supply side of competition includes both the positional and valence components. The former is embodied by electoral decidability, meaning how clear and differentiated the political offer is, while the latter is portrayed by issue competence, defined as the historical reputation a party is associated with on a given issue. Lastly, electoral uncertainty between elections is captured by the concept of electoral vulnerability, and electoral proximity is the final incentive for governments to respond. Each competitive incentive and its expectation for responsiveness will be briefly discussed below.

Table 2.1: Dimensions of electoral competition and status

Dimension	Necessary condition	Expected effect	Empirical test in chapter
Electoral Vulnerability	Yes	+	4, 5, 6
Electoral Decidability	Yes	+	5
Issue Competence/Ideological Proximity	Yes	-/+	4, 6
Electoral Proximity	Yes	+	4, 5, 6
Electoral Contestability	No	n.a.	n.a.
Electoral Availability	No	n.a.	n.a.

Source: Author's own.

Necessary Conditions for Responsiveness

Incumbent vulnerability is at the core of the connection between responsiveness and competition. If the mechanism of democracy stems from the potential electoral sanctions or, in other words, on the will of being reelected, and if the incumbent aims to achieve this goal, he/she will need to anticipate sympathetically voters' preferences. This mechanism will perform better if the incumbent perceives himself/herself as vulnerable (Mayhew 1974; Fenno 1977). Strøm (1989: 280-1) calls this mechanism performance sensitivity, Bartolini (2000) uses the term incumbent vulnerability, which is the one adopted here. What differentiates the notion of vulnerability from other variants of competitiveness used in the literature, such as closeness, uncertainty, decisiveness of elections or changeability, is that all these terms refer to the vulnerability of governments at the election time. The main difference with the notion of vulnerability preferred in this dissertation lies on the fact that governments can also feel vulnerable during the electoral cycle. In other words, the interest is not in the *actual* vulnerability of governments but in their *potential* vulnerability as a driver of responsiveness, simply because responsiveness occurs between elections. Though both dimensions of actual past record and present uncertainty should be incorporated into the idea of vulnerability (Bartolini 2000: 52-3), the potential vulnerability is much more relevant than the actual one.

Pressure may come on governments when elections are approaching. I refer to the behavioural element often called electoral connection (Mayhew 1974), or electoral proximity (Canes-Wrone and Shotts 2004). In fact, politicians in general are interested in reelection and concerned when elections are approaching, for elections are described as a very powerful potential driver of responsiveness (Stimson, Mackuen, and Erikson 1995; Manin, Przeworski, and Stokes 1999). In fact, politicians

will find it faster and less risky to respond to public opinion rather than to attempt to change it (see, e.g. Jacobs and Shapiro 2000). Moreover, because voters are unlikely to observe the outcome of a policy choice made shortly before an election, presidents are more likely to cater to current opinion as the next election is coming (Canes-Wrone and Shotts 2004: 693).

The third main electoral incentive is given by electoral decidability and requires a bit more elaboration. Politicians are ambiguous because it is in their rational self-interest to be so, in order to maximise support (Downs 1957: 132-139; in contrast, see Shepsle 1972). The spatial model of elections predicts that voters evaluate where parties stand on issues (Downs 1957; Enelow and Hinich 1984). In its original formulation, the spatial model of elections predicts that for parties it is rational to be ambiguous about their policies in order to maximise their support in a two-party system; parties, instead, try to be relatively unequivocal about their policies in a multi-party system, since they appeal directly only to a narrow range of voters (Downs 1957: 160, 132-139). Empirical research found that this prediction is only partially confirmed. In fact, parties do actually differentiate their policy positions from one another (Adams 2001; Budge 1994; Budge et al. 2001) and voters weight issues most heavily when there are clear differences between the parties on the issues (Alvarez and Nagler 2004).

If being broadly-appealing can be a winning strategy to gain votes (Somer-Topcu 2015), it would be instead not beneficial for responsiveness. If the political offer is unclear and undifferentiated, i.e. undecidable, and parties can blur their policy positions then it will be harder for voters to choose the offer that is rationally closer to their preferences (Key 1966; Page 1978; Alvarez and Nagler 2004; Wessels and Schmitt 2008; Lachat 2008, 2011). This is where other factors different from policy arguments can prevail for voters to decide on their political choice. Such elements can be related, for instance, to phenomena of party identification or issue competence (e.g., Campbell et al. 1960; Stokes 1966; Green and Hobolt 2008).¹³ In this case, the choice of voters will not essentially be the

¹³However, recent research on valence voting and party system polarisation shows that the two things are not unrelated. For example, Clark and Leiter (2013: 19) find that “parties’ character-based valence attributes have a greater effect on vote shares when the parties become *more* ideologically dispersed” (emphasis in original). In line with these results, Pardos-Prado (2012) finds no evidence suggesting that valence is associated with consensus; instead, party competence perceptions are positively correlated with party ideological polarisation. Moreover, Vegetti (2014) argues that, in polarised contexts, citizens are more likely to be attached to a party and hence to perceive it ideologically closer and more competent. The implication is crucial because, “when polarisation is high, the meaning of the vote choice can be reduced to nothing more than an expression of partisan loyalty” (Vegetti 2014: 240). In this sense, positional and valence ways of thinking are not contradictory (Pardos-Prado 2012) but rather two extremes on the same continuum (De Sio 2010).

consequence of the political offer or, at least, not only of that, and a retrospective evaluation will prevail (Key 1966). So far so good if we were interested in explaining patterns of voting behaviour and accountability. A step forward is required to move from an accountability to a responsiveness evaluation.

Theoretically, if party responsiveness to public opinion is understood in terms of policy and if the choice of voters is successfully deviated from their policy choice, then for parties it is no longer strictly necessary to respond to the policy preferences/priorities of the public, because if the political offer is undecidable the choice of voters cannot be interpreted in response to the political offer itself (Bartolini 2000). This makes it difficult to say whether we can still talk about policy responsiveness. Indeed, this makes it difficult to say whether we can talk about responsiveness at all: “since government actions are concealed from the citizens, there is no need to do what the people want” (Page 1976: 750). If parties are able to collude and deviate the attention on other issues that are not related to policy then the choice of voters will be hardly interpretable as policy preference and this would create a clear incentive for parties not to respond to public policy preferences.

This theoretical insights about the political offer, originating with Downs and developed by Bartolini, would be perfectly suitable if I looked at public preferences. However, this work is about public priorities, therefore, an adaptation is required to avoid a disconnection between theory and operationalisation.¹⁴ This adaptation is given by the saliency theory of party competition (Budge and Farlie 1983; Budge, Robertson, and Hearl 1987; Klingemann, Hofferbert, and Budge 1994; Budge et al. 2001), according to which parties take positions by emphasising the importance of certain issues or, better, policy areas, compared to others.¹⁵ This way of approaching party competition in terms of emphasis rather than directionality relates well with the idea that, before showing preferences, people have priorities and evaluate issues according to their perceived importance (see Wlezien 2005; Bevan and Jennings 2014: 39). That is why comparing the priorities of the public and the positions emphasised by parties does have sense.

Finally, issue ownership can also be conceived as necessary condition for responsiveness. Yet its

¹⁴The justification of this choice is well explained in the next chapter.

¹⁵This way of conceptualising party competition differs from Downs's where parties compete by opposing positions, but also differs from the directional theory of voting (Rabinowitz and Macdonald 1989), which assumes that most people have a diffuse preference for a certain policy direction and this preference varies in intensity across people.

direction is less straightforward. As I will better explain in Chapters 4 and 6, it is, in fact, reasonable to expect a trade-off between (agenda) responsiveness to the issues prioritised by the public and responsiveness to the issues on which governmental parties have a good reputation (Chapter 4). Sometimes, in fact, the issues the public cares about and the issues the government is competent on are not the same. However, it can also be plausible to expect that there might be an interactive effect between government ideology and public opinion (Chapter 6), meaning that (legislative) responsiveness to public priorities might increase on those issues the government is ideologically closer to.

Non-Necessary Conditions for Responsiveness

Electoral contestability is not a necessary condition for responsiveness (Bartolini 2000: 56). The link between these two concepts leaves room for ambiguity. While any actual barrier for entering competition is an incentive for collusion among incumbents – hence, an opportunity for reducing responsiveness – electoral contestability might have an indirect effect on responsiveness through other dimensions of competition. See, in particular, the case of electoral vulnerability, where established parties will feel more vulnerable and, hence, compelled to respond, when new challenging parties face lower barriers to access the party system. Although lower barriers mean higher representation, this does not necessarily imply an increase in responsiveness, too. Certainly, barriers created by the electoral system are the most relevant in relation to responsiveness; this finds confirmation in the large number of studies analysing how electoral institutions influence electoral outcomes and from more recent studies on governmental responsiveness (Pickup and Hobolt 2015; Soroka and Wlezien 2015). However, for the reasons just mentioned, in the empirical chapters no hypothesis theorising the linkage between this dimension of competition and responsiveness will be proposed.

Electoral availability, as well as electoral contestability, is not expected to influence responsiveness directly. Electoral availability is instead a necessary but not sufficient condition of both electoral decidability and electoral vulnerability (Bartolini 2000: 56). The availability-decidability connection is bidirectional and given by the fact that available voters are motivated by the differentiation of the political offer (and the consequent perception of different potential outcomes). Indeed, a clear and differentiated political offer is also a condition facilitating the available voters' decision (see also

Wessels and Schmitt 2006: 5). What is critical for decidability is not the number of available voters themselves, but their preferences, as long as there are “some” voters available. In turn, availability is necessary for parties to elaborate a stable political offer.

Electoral availability is also a condition of electoral vulnerability and implies what competition for votes, essentially, is. Competition exists to the extent that voters are willing to consider more than one party as an acceptable choice, that is, “when there are voters in competition” (Mair 1997: 157). As van der Eijk and Oppenhuis (1991: 56) recall, “the concept of electoral competition is, in its essence, dispositional in character”. For this reason, “actual behaviour (i.e. party choice) cannot reveal its existence; it refers only to the final result of competition” (van der Eijk and Oppenhuis 1991: 57). As it will be clear from Chapter 3, this potential component of electoral availability can be incorporated in the measurement of electoral vulnerability as one of its features (Kroh, van der Brug, and van der Eijk 2007; Orłowski 2013; Wagner 2013). If the availability relevant for decidability has a negative connotation – the lower the availability, the better for the stability of the political offer – the availability as condition of vulnerability embodies, instead, a positive element in terms of voter’s propensity to switch party – the higher the availability, the higher the vulnerability. Both are equally important.¹⁶

As for electoral contestability, no empirical expectations on a direct link between electoral availability and responsiveness will be theorised and tested. However, note that an empirical control for electoral contestability will be included in the empirical models and the underlying notion of uncertainty present in the concept of electoral availability will be taken into consideration when measuring electoral vulnerability.

2.5 From Theory to Practice

This chapter has critically discussed the literature on party competition and responsiveness and how the two concepts are linked together. The aim was to introduce all the relevant elements to get to an essential empirical framework that gives me the instruments for analysing whether electoral incent-

¹⁶Paraphrasing the distinction formulated by Sartori (1976: Ch. 10) between *domains of identification* and *dimensions of competition*, when voters are available, the dimensions of competition are open and when voters are, rather, not available, domains of identification prevail.

ives matter for governmental responsiveness to public priorities. Only the impact of those dimensions of competition defined as necessary conditions for responsiveness will be tested in the empirical chapters (4, 5, and 6). Though specific hypotheses will be presented in each chapter and counter-arguments will be formulated, the general orientation is that the presence of the selected electoral incentives (see Table 2.1) would help increase the likelihood of responsiveness. In particular, governments' electoral vulnerability and electoral closeness are considered key incentives for governments to respond. However, whether what the major competitors offer is decidable for voters and whether governing parties are perceived as competent on the issues may also have a facilitating effect on responsiveness.

The next chapter discusses how the concepts defined here are measured and which data are used in the empirical analyses to test the broader expectations introduced in the final section of this chapter. On the one hand, Chapter 3 gives an overview of how the empirical analysis is conducted and of the data collected to measure public opinion and government reaction. On the other hand, among the competitive incentives, special attention is given to how electoral vulnerability and electoral decidability are measured.

Chapter 3

Measurement and Data Overview

This chapter is devoted to explaining how dependent and independent variables are measured and with which data. The chapter develops as follows. First, a discussion recalling the stages of responsiveness introduced in the previous chapter to explain how government action (the dependent variable) is operationalised. Second, the other side of the responsiveness relationship is considered. Public opinion is, in fact, measured through public priorities and this pragmatic choice accounts for the debate between attention and position. A third section is dedicated to the competitive incentives and how they are operationalised. In particular, I am interested only in those that are directly related to responsiveness, but some room is left for those dimensions of competition that are not considered as necessary conditions for responsiveness.

3.1 What the Government Does

Government responsiveness can theoretically vary from no reaction to a high reaction in terms of substantive policy responsiveness. In my dissertation, I analyse responsiveness by focusing on two types of reaction: a more symbolic and rhetorical reaction, using issue emphases in executive speeches, and a more substantive reaction, utilising both budget allocation in government spending and legislative priorities by looking at enacted laws. This section deals with the upper side of Figure 3.1, while the lower side will be addressed next.

The debate around whether we analyse responsiveness in a more symbolic or substantive fash-

ion recalls the Hamletic doubt on the distinction between attention and position exposed in the *Introduction*. Responsiveness, in fact, has been analysed under two different perspectives. The first perspective looks at responsiveness in terms of *position* and investigates whether levels of/changes in citizens' preferences have an impact on levels of/changes in the government's position on a given issue. The second perspective looks at responsiveness in terms of *attention* and investigates whether levels of/changes in citizens' priorities have an impact on levels of/changes in the government's priorities on a given issue. My argument is that, although some scholars may identify responsiveness only with policy change, hence prioritising position and discounting attention, there is no right or wrong answer to the question of who is a good representative, for they are both relevant for representation¹.

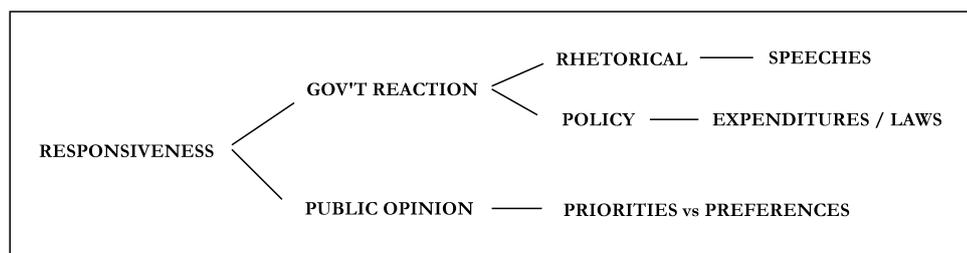


Figure 3.1: Empirical analysis of government responsiveness

Source: Author's own.

Precisely, agenda responsiveness is not simply an increase in government attention to citizens' priorities, for it can be translated into policy. In fact, there is evidence for agenda responsiveness in the US (Edwards and Wood 1999), consistency between executive agendas and legislative outputs in the UK (Bara 2005; Bevan, John, and Jennings 2011), and comparative evidence of congruence between party rhetorics and party policy outputs in parliament (Bischof 2014). Yet the issue of whether responsiveness can also be found in governments' agenda and not only in substantive policy is still controversial. While policy agenda scholars are open to apply the term "policy-opinion responsiveness" to governments' reaction in their policy agendas (see Bevan and Jennings 2010; John, Bevan, and Jennings 2011; Bertelli and John 2012), students of responsiveness/representation are, instead, more

¹Note that the boundary between attention and position is not always as clear as I have presented it. Sometimes, in fact, salience or attention means position. This is the case, for instance, of the environmental issue for a green party and, perhaps, the case of crime and public order for a conservative party.

conservative, narrowing responsiveness to policy only (Powell 2004a; Soroka and Wlezien 2010).

Since we can think of responsiveness in terms of degrees of reaction, my perspective is that attention matters as well as position and that in order to have the latter, in principle, we first need to have the former.

Rhetorical Responsiveness

Rhetorical responsiveness on the government side is measured using data on executive speeches as collected by the Comparative Agendas Project (CAP) in line with the codebook originally created for the Policy Agendas Project (PAP). The CAP is a large project that extends comparatively the PAP, which was initiated by Bryan Jones and Frank Baumgartner in the US in 1993. The CAP collects an enormous amount of data on governments' policy agendas in different policy venues (i.e., party manifestos, executive speeches, parliamentary questions, bills, laws, expenditures – together with court cases and media coverage).

Research on government agendas tells us that, given the complexity and the amount of public demand, attention is a scarce good (Kingdon 1995) which has consequences for agenda representation (Jones and Baumgartner 2004; Jones, Larsen-Price, and Wilkerson 2009). Governments cannot pay attention to all issues of public concern, therefore they will select those issues that are salient for the public (Mortensen et al. 2011) and avoid those ones the public is less concerned with, managing “the amount of risk they bear from choosing to stress some policy issues more than others” (Bertelli and John 2012: 741). The key finding from the CAP is that policy agendas behave in the way that has been called “punctuated equilibrium” (True, Jones, and Baumgartner 2007), meaning policy agendas follow a pattern of relatively stable proportions of attention punctuated by rapid changes in short periods. This finding has been used to critique incrementalism and policy heritage models.

To be clear, the CAP codes are mostly concerned with attention – devoted to different issues at different times by different actors in different venues – and not with position, and this is also one of the major critiques directed at their approach (for a detailed discussion, see Dowding, Hindmoor, and Martin 2013). I also note that the advantage of using data from the CAP is clear. Given that my dissertation is about responsiveness between elections, data covering the whole electoral cycle are the

gold standard for studying dynamic representation. However, the contingent disadvantage is that a unified CAP database is not ready as yet and data on some countries and policy venues are not publicly available at the time of writing. Given that data on the dependent variable must match the data on the independent variables, the number of available countries is markedly reduced.

In the rhetorical responsiveness chapter (Chapter 4), I look at executive speeches from the CAP. The policy content of these speeches is divided into quasi-sentences, with each quasi-sentence assigned a single unique topic code. The dependent variable is then the number of quasi-sentences assigned to each macro topic in a set of policy domains. The head of state or head of government, depending on the political system, delivers an annual formal statement on behalf of the executive, setting out the government agenda for the year ahead (Cohen 1995; Hobolt and Klemmensen 2005, 2008; Jennings, Bevan, and John 2011; Bevan, John, and Jennings 2011). Executive speeches thus have a prospective function communicating the government's general priorities as well as more specific measures that the executive intends to address in the forthcoming year. For this reason, speeches are a costly signal and "create future potential costs for the prime minister and the government, if the priorities in the speech are not followed by policy outputs" (Bevan, John, and Jennings 2011; but see also Bertelli and John 2012).

Policy Responsiveness

To analyse policy responsiveness I use both data on budgetary policy (Chapter 5) and legislative priorities (Chapter 6). Although Wlezien and Soroka (2003: 273-4) note that expenditures are not policy *per se*, so using appropriations would be better than outlays, they also acknowledge the former are not easily available comparatively. Due to such limitations, I use data on government expenditures by policy function.² To measure legislative responsiveness I use data on enacted laws from the CAP. I argue that, when studies on governmental policy responsiveness in comparative perspective exist, they mainly look at policy in terms of public spending (Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008; Soroka and Wlezien 2010; Wlezien and Soroka 2012; Soroka and Wlezien 2015), while the comparative literature on policy agenda priorities is still underdeveloped (Baumgartner et al. 2009; Green-Pedersen and

²Data are combined from a variety of sources: OECD Social Expenditure Database, SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, World Bank Development Indicators, and Eurostat.

Walgrave 2014). In particular, comparative studies using legislation as an indicator of policy responsiveness are even rarer (e.g., Bevan and Jennings 2014), when compared to single country studies (see, for instance, the chapters included in the recent volume edited by Green-Pedersen and Walgrave 2014 and in the recent article by Pickup and Hobolt 2015).

3.2 What the Public Wants

Without fully committing to the idea that polls are public opinion (Geer 1996) and that they fairly represent citizens' opinions (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Althaus 1998; Berinsky 2002), this dissertation assumes that what public opinion expresses through surveys is somewhat meaningful and reliable. Though the debate around public ignorance is a century old, going back to the battle for male universal suffrage (Schumpeter 1954), and questions surround the assumptions that people invest in information (Lupia and McCubbins 1998), have meaningful beliefs (Converse 1964) as well as informed (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996), stable and consistent preferences (Bartels 2003), and are able to connect their interests into political preferences (Bartels 2005), my design is much humbler. The focus of my dissertation is not, in fact, to investigate the accuracy of opinion polls research, but rather on how public opinion influences government's policy.

Scholars of responsiveness usually measure public opinion through survey data over time. I recall that, since this study is interested in responsiveness between elections, elections do not enact policies but, rather, elect who will enact them (Sartori 1987: 108). Therefore, elections reveal *opinions* rather than *preferences* (Sartori 1993: 75), the evolution of which is better understood across time throughout the electoral cycle.

Given this crucial distinction, public opinion is essentially measured in the literature on responsiveness in terms of preferences or priorities.³ Preferences are the gold standard, for they allow the researcher to analyse the direction of change in public opinion. Such data are common in the studies of budgetary responsiveness (e.g., Soroka and Wlezien 2010), where public preferences in spending

³Note that in parallel to the literature on government responsiveness proceeds the research on party responsiveness to voter's *preferences* (Adams et al. 2004; Ezrow et al. 2010; Adams, Ezrow, and Somer-Topcu 2011) and to voter's *priorities* (Spoon and Klüver 2014; Wagner and Meyer 2014; Klüver and Spoon 2014). This heterogeneous field of research includes studies that analyse whether parties respond to public preferences or priorities in their manifestos.

are used. However, since survey data on preferences are hard to find for time-series cross-section analyses and students of responsiveness themselves have recognised that not only citizens but also governments do not have perfect information on “how much” the public wants of a given policy (Soroka and Wlezien 2010; but see also Althaus 1998),⁴ scholars have relied on the alternative based on public priorities. In other words, they assume that if an issue is more salient to the public, the public is more concerned about it, so, want the government to invest more attention to the issue. Public priorities are then measured by using the most important problem/issue (MIP/MII) question. While some surveys ask respondents to identify the most important *problem* their country is facing, other surveys ask them to identify the most important *issue*.

Though the MIP/MII question is widely used as an indicator of public opinion both in the studies on dynamic agenda representation and government responsiveness, such a question has been criticised for several reasons. These include conceptual fuzziness between importance and salience, on the one hand, and issues and problems, on the other (see Wlezien 2005; Jennings and Wlezien 2011). Nevertheless, when comparing MIP and MII, Jennings and Wlezien (2011) find that, despite variation existing for some issues, they essentially mean the same for respondents. While the MIP/MII question might be more problematic when associated with indicators of government activity that contain policy directionality (for instance, more or less spending on a given issue), it matches quite well with government priorities and is frequently used in studies on dynamic agenda representation (Jones and Baumgartner 2004; John, Bevan, and Jennings 2011; Bevan and Jennings 2014).

Throughout my dissertation, I follow the pragmatic choice, implemented by other scholars (e.g., Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008; Pickup and Hobolt 2015), of using priorities as a proxy for preferences, relying on national survey institutes. The reader may wonder why I do not rely on Eurobarometer data, which are available for a large number of countries. The issue is that the MII question is asked across countries only since 2003. For longer time-series I then rely on national opinion polls that provide more data points. Since time-series of MIP/MII in the UK and Spain are available

⁴To be fair, Soroka and Wlezien might respond to Althaus’s (1998: 545) point – that “correcting for information asymmetries reveals that many collective policy preferences would look quite different if all citizens were equally well informed about politics” – by arguing that it may not matter for responsiveness whether the error is systematic in the aggregation, for what they care about is not the *level of* but the *change in* preferences. Following this argument, increase or decrease in preferences is more meaningful than the point estimate itself.

from Gallup/Ipsos-MORI and the CIS Barometer, respectively, in more than one data point per year (depending in which months the question has been asked) and polling institutes in these countries provide the two and three most important problems/issues combined, respectively, responses are then averaged on a yearly basis and standardised to total 100 percent to make them comparable to the Politbarometer's MIP series in Germany and the Gallup's MIP series in the US. Since data for the Gallup's MIP question in the UK are not available after 2001, Ipsos-MORI's MII data are also used. When overlapping in the period 1980-2000, the two series are combined and averaged.

However, in the light of recent findings suggesting that MIPs/MIIs are not good indicators of public opinion for budgetary responsiveness, because they do not allow to measure directionality but only attention (Jennings and Wlezien 2015a), in my budgetary responsiveness chapter (Chapter 5) I also measure public opinion by using relative preferences in spending. While through MIPs/MIIs it is possible to argue that, especially for valence issues such as crime, environment, but also health, higher public concern does imply more spending (Jennings and Wlezien 2015a: 19), spending preferences allows the directionality issue to be better addressed, as the public can say whether it wants more or less spending on a given issue. Data on preferences in spending are taken from the Soroka-Wlezien dataset used for *Degrees of Democracy*, but they are available only for a subset of countries.

3.3 Measuring Competitive Incentives

Electoral Vulnerability

I define incumbent vulnerability as the electoral uncertainty the government faces between elections. Reasoning on its measurement, vulnerability can be broken up into two components: (1) actual vulnerability and (2) potential vulnerability. With the former I refer to those measures based on aggregate electoral data such as indices of electoral competitiveness, the closeness of electoral result, and the frequency of turnover (Schlesinger 1955, 1960; Ranney 1965; Stern 1972; Meltz 1973; Elkins 1974; Ferejohn 1977; Patterson and Caldeira 1984; Endersby, Galatas, and Rackaway 2002; Anderson et al. 2007; Blais and Lago 2009; Grofman and Selb 2009; Kayser and Lindstädt 2015). With the latter I refer to those measures based on survey or opinion poll data such as voter's propensity to

vote (van der Eijk and Oppenhuis 1991; Tillie 1995; Kroh, van der Brug, and van der Eijk 2007) and vote intentions/presidential approvals (Stimson 1976; Canes-Wrone and Shotts 2004; Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008; Hakhverdian 2010; Green and Jennings 2012a).

Government vulnerability becomes a function of the existence of potential vote switchers. On these premises, Kroh, van der Brug, and van der Eijk (2007) identify voters who are subject to intense competition and those who are beyond competition on the basis of their probability to switch vote. When people have high preferences for more than one party, the parties involved have to compete for these voters. In other words, “the closer a voter’s preferences are for their first and second most preferred parties, the stronger the competition between these parties for their voter’s support” (Kroh, van der Brug, and van der Eijk 2007: 212). The most likely switchers are those who see their two most preferred parties as almost equally attractive (*ibidem*). Here the focus moves from party choice to party preference or the propensity to vote (PTV) for a party. The advantage of using PTV scores is that they allow capturing both identified voters beyond competition and switching voters for whom competition is intense.

The measures outlined above, however, involve relevant issues when we want to explain government responsiveness with electoral vulnerability, for two reasons. First, responsiveness occurs not at election time but between elections (Manin, Przeworski, and Stokes 1999; Narud and Esaiasson 2013) therefore using measures of vulnerability based on election data would be problematic if not misleading. Second, such measures of actual vulnerability are time invariant, artificially static for the whole election cycle, which is not the ideal solution if something better can be used. Using measures based on voter’s propensity to vote (Kroh, van der Brug, and van der Eijk 2007; Tillie 1995; van der Eijk and Oppenhuis 1991; Wagner 2013) would not be a panacea since such data come from pre-election surveys and hence not available at least on a yearly basis. What matters most is whether governments feel vulnerable before the elections. This is about uncertainty. Sometimes, the margin of victory might be larger than what surveys were anticipating and, importantly, they can change between elections. It is much better, both from a validity and degrees of freedom/variability perspective, to measure vulnerability with survey estimates for each year, rather than using the single value of the posterior elections for all the 3-5 years prior to the elections. For these reasons, I propose a measure of govern-

ments' electoral vulnerability based on opinion poll data and I test it in some advanced democracies. This means that I am not measuring the overall vulnerability of the party system and that I am instead focusing on vulnerability only from an electoral perspective (indeed, governments can be vulnerable for many other reasons not directly connected to elections).

Popularity vs. Vulnerability

As previously anticipated, other scholars have used a different measure of government's potential vulnerability, simply using vote intentions and presidential approvals as such. My approach diverges from the idea of a measure of vulnerability based only on the level of government popularity, leaving out the other major competitors. In the popularity approach, what counts is government's own popularity, no matter how the other parties are doing. I would call this the *Popularity perspective*. Probably the argument for supporting such a choice relies on the fact that parties in government do not care how their competitors are placed in the opinion polls; rather they only care about themselves and whether their own popularity goes up or down, and react accordingly. The purpose of my measure is to offer a more fine grained way of capturing the potential vulnerability governments encounter. My argument is different, in the sense that governments care about the gap separating them from the relevant opposition parties and are worried about their competitors. I would call this the *Vulnerability perspective*.

Advocates of the Popularity perspective might answer that there is no need to account for opposition parties in the measure since they are already implicitly included. In fact, they would say, if government popularity goes down, then as a consequence, opposition popularity goes up. Although both measures are closely related (their correlation is 0.75), I am not genuinely convinced by this argument, since, first of all, if government popularity goes down, it does not necessarily mean that opposition popularity is going up. In other words, vote intentions for the opposition do not increase just because those for the government are decreasing, as voters might also prefer to abstain rather than reward the opposition parties. Secondly, even if vote intentions for the government go down, the government might still be safe: vulnerability occurs when the potential success of main competitors are also included in the picture.

Government Potential Vulnerability

For decades, governments have monitored the public opinion mood through surveys and opinion polls and are worried about its reactions. This idea depends, then, on the concept of uncertainty about future election outcomes (Elkins 1974). The literature has produced several efforts to capture actual vulnerability, but its potential element has been so far underestimated. An exception is given by a recent attempt by Orłowski (2013). Building on the work by Immergut and Abou-Chadi (2010), Orłowski proposes a measure of incumbent vulnerability that depends on three main factors: (1) the fragmentalisation of the party system, (2) the partisan constellation of government and opposition, and (3) voters' willingness to switch votes. The first two factors are supposed to be central for a government's insulation from vote shifts. This is because incumbents' insulation depends, in turn, on the number of parliamentary seats held by incumbent parties, the size of government coalitions, the fragmentation and polarisation of the party system, and the disproportionality of the electoral system. Moreover, as the author recalls from Bartolini's and Strøm's work on political competition, "only when a significant share of voters is indeed willing to shift their vote between different parties in two consecutive elections, party competition will have a significant impact on policy responsiveness" (Orłowski 2013: 6). All these institutional factors plus voters' electoral availability can affect electoral vulnerability.

The advantage of Orłowski's measure of incumbent vulnerability is that both institutional and behavioural elements are taken into account. However, indicators such as seat volatility, the size of governments and governing coalitions, the fragmentation and polarisation of the party system, and the disproportionality of the electoral system are all partly time invariant, in the sense that they vary only from election to election. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that such a measure is more associated with an actual level of vulnerability.⁵ What I am, instead, interested in capturing is the potential side of incumbent vulnerability.

My measure holds the aspect of voters' willingness to shift their vote at the centre of its definition

⁵Recently, André, Depauw, and Martin (2014) have proposed two innovative comparative measures of "vulnerability to defeat" under different electoral institutions, that is, inter-party and intra-party vulnerability. Yet these measures are more likely to fall in the actual vulnerability category as they use information on votes, seats and electoral systems and are constructed to measure legislators' vulnerability.

and is based on vote intentions. There is then no need to weight the measure by the strength or size of government and opposition since it is already embedded in the vote intention's decision. Indeed, when a voter assigns her preference for a party she is already reasonably aware of the strength of her preferred party and the other relevant parties in the party system. My measure is very simple and straightforward: *governments' electoral vulnerability is computed by subtracting for each year the vote intentions for the relevant opposition parties to the vote intentions of the governing parties* (I will explain what I mean by relevant opposition in a moment). The same logic applies to presidential approvals.⁶ In this case, disapprovals are subtracted from approvals. To put it formally:

$$Vuln_{it} = \text{Vote Int Govt}_{it} \text{ (Approval)} - \text{Vote Int Opp}_{it} \text{ (Disapproval)} \quad (3.1)$$

where i is the party in government and t is the given averaged yearly value. The measure can be applied to both majoritarian and proportional systems. Though multi-party governments are more complicated in nature than single-party governments, the desire to be reelected is a common assumption. I am aware that, perhaps, bigger partners are more likely to seek reelection than smaller partners, who may prefer to implement policies they have the ownership of or influence the action of certain ministries. Sometimes governing parties are not so worried about losing votes simply because their capacity to stay in government might not even depend entirely on votes. Some parties are more driven by policy – no matter what this will result in at the next election – therefore they push through reforms which harm their election results. Given this complexity, I explicitly do not prioritise party goals and assume that all coalition members are interested in reelection to some extent.

Now, the main question becomes which parties to include. For the government the job is simple, as all parties in government should be considered. What is harder is defining what the relevant opposition is. By relevant opposition, I mean those parties receiving vote intentions the government might be vulnerable from, including those who are not direct rivals in the competition for government but also those ones that have coalition potential and blackmail potential (Sartori 1976). There-

⁶Although being approved is not necessarily the same as being popular (Stimson 1976), presidential approvals can be used as a reliable indicator of government popularity (Canes-Wrone and Shotts 2004).

fore, it would not be logical to include all opposition parties, as well as it would be misleading to include only the two main competitors. In fact, if “party A will almost always focus on party B, and vice versa” then “each may fail to respond to shifts that threaten to condemn both to a marginal position” (Mair, Müller, and Plasser 2004: 271). To define an opposition party as relevant, the party must fulfill the following criteria: (1) the party must have been in government throughout the period of reference or (2) gained at least 5 percent of the votes and 5 seats in at least two elections. Such a decision has been already applied in other studies of responsiveness (Morales et al. 2014; Parks, Bernardi, and Morales 2016) for party selection and imposing a quantitative threshold is important to make the measure transparent and reliable for comparative research.

What matters for the stability of the measure is that relevant opposition parties must be included all the time. Indeed, the partial inclusion of some parties might seriously underestimate or overestimate vulnerability in a given country. Below I show how the measure is constructed for the countries included in the analyses (Canada, Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States). Note that, due to data availability reasons, not all countries are included in all empirical chapters and for the same time period. Therefore, for the sake of comparison, here I only report the values of governments’ electoral vulnerability for the common period 1980-2010.

Given the low number of relevant parties and that usually a single-party government takes place, the UK is a good and simple example to start with. A measure based only on the difference of vote intentions between Conservative and Labour might not be extremely efficient. Since the Liberal Democrats, while in opposition, may increase the government’s electoral vulnerability, they should also be included in the measure. Panel (d) in Figure 3.2 shows vote intentions for the three major political parties in the UK. The Liberal Party is electorally dangerous for the government in at least two occasions, in the 1980s and in the 1990s. In fact, in combination with the Social Democratic Party, born from a split of the Labour Party, the Liberals attract more support in the opinion polls than either of its two big rivals in the two years before 1983 election (Butler and Kavanagh 1984: 3). For ten years the Liberals seem to be out of the game until 1993-1995 when, at the European elections, the Conservatives have the lowest vote share ever registered so far in a national election (Butler and Kavanagh 1997: 12-13). The peak in 2010 corresponds to the last election in which a

coalition government between Conservatives and Liberals is formed. To sum up, in the UK, the measure takes account of the LibDems for all the period under examination, given that the party can damage both the Conservative Party and the Labour Party when they are in government.

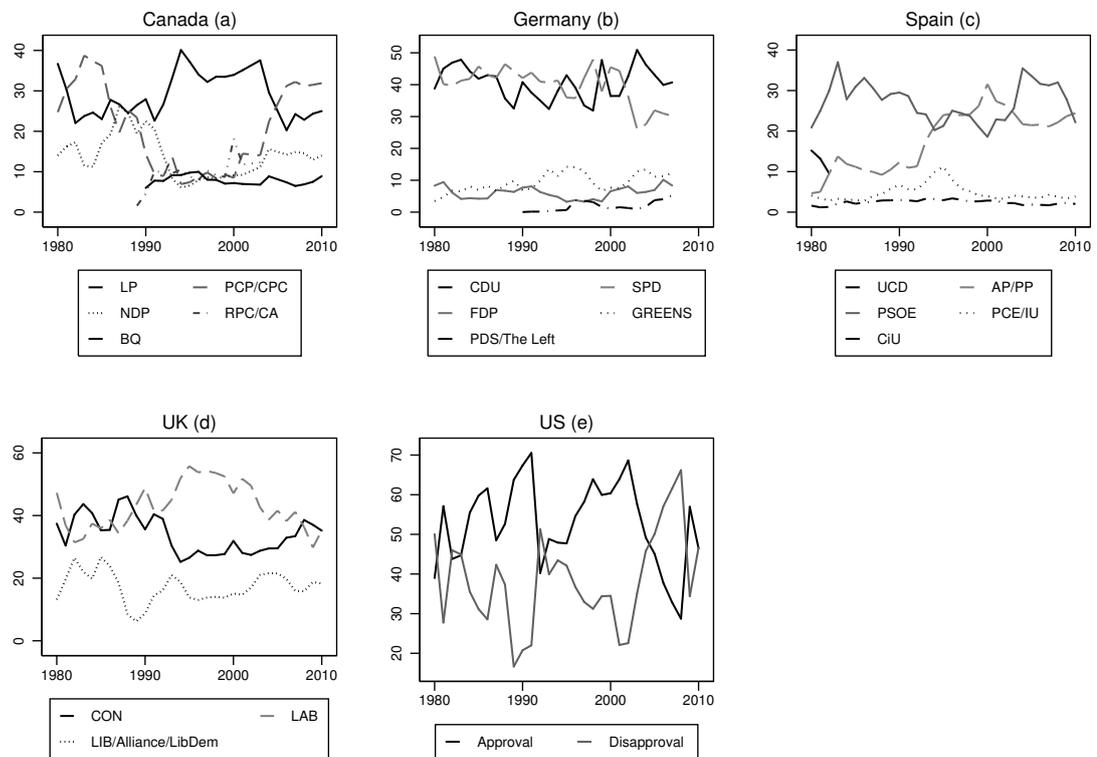


Figure 3.2: Vote intentions and government approvals, 1980-2010 (percentage values)

Note: Vote intentions for Canada, Germany, Spain and the UK; government approvals for the US.

Source: Environics Focus (Canada), Politbarometer (Germany), Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (Spain), Ipsos MORI (UK), Gallup (US).

Spain presents a similar situation to the UK's, as the main competition is between the Popular Alliance / Popular Party (AP/PP) and the Socialist Party (PSOE). Unlike the UK, Spain has a proportional representation (PR) system with low district magnitude, overrepresentation of large parties and many regional parties (Hopkin 2005). However, if the competition in the UK is conditioned by the existence of a strong centrist party (LibDem) during the period analysed, in Spain the threat does not come as much from the centre but more from the extreme and from only one side of the political spectrum. In fact, whereas there has never been a real challenger on the right of PP, the threat for PSOE comes not only from its main competitor but also from the Communist Party of Spain (PCE),

before, and from the United Left (IU), after (see panel (c) in Figure 3.2). Since the figure shows the period 1980-2010, it also includes Adolfo Suárez's Union of the Democratic Centre (UCD) that led the Spanish transition to democracy and was in government until the 1982 elections.⁷ To measure vulnerability in Spain, PCE and IU are included along with Convergence and Union (CiU).⁸

The role of the electoral system in Germany (Shugart and Wattenberg 2001; Massicotte and Blais 1999) matters to ensure both governability and a more proportional representation. Germany is in fact, defined as a mixed-member system (Scarrow 2001) allowing the formation of pre-electoral coalitions and producing a bipolar pattern conducive to high levels of cabinet durability (Saalfeld 2005). The Liberals (FDP) played a pivotal role in Germany almost in all Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) and Social Democrats (SDP) coalition governments until the 1998 election (Mair 1997: 208). The German Greens should also be included, given that not only are they able to steal votes from the SPD, but they also have experienced being in government in coalition with the SPD in 1998 and 2002 (Poguntke 2002). Vote intentions for Germany are shown in panel (b), Figure 3.2. In the measure, the Greens are included because they have been junior coalition partners of SPD governments and The Left (PDS/Die Linke) are included because they fulfill the vote/seat criteria. Due to the fact that the FDP formed coalition governments with both CDU and SPD in the past, the Liberals are also considered as relevant and, therefore, included.

A special case is given by the 2005 grand coalition in Germany (Scarrow 2012). How to deal with vulnerability when the two major parties are coalition partners in the same government? One strategy would be to consider both of them as incumbents at the same time. An alternative theoretical argument would be based on power and on the assumption that both parties dislike grand coalitions for two reasons. First, one of them will most likely lose electoral support, for one is still perceived as the smaller and weaker part of the coalition. Second, even if one is the stronger part

⁷The IU was created as an electoral coalition with PCE and several minor left-wing groups only some weeks before the 1986 general elections but its nature is still complex and undefined, since it clearly is neither a party nor a coalition (the PCE remained the only political party within IU after 2001) (Ramiro-Fernández 2004). The creation of the IU mostly lies in the electoral incentive felt by the leaders of PCE, who considered the PSOE no longer a left party, given the moderate policies the Socialist Party was promoting in government. Therefore the strategy adopted by the IU until 2000 (when IU signed an agreement with PSOE) was to avoid any alliance with the Socialist Party and stress its differences from the latter – it is not coincidence that its best results are in the period 1989-1996 (Ramiro-Fernández 2004).

⁸Note that parliamentary support from non-statewide parties to minority governments, as for instance happened in the 1990s to both PSOE and PP (Hopkin 2005: 389), is not counted in the government side of the measure because those parties are not officially in government.

of the coalition, such a situation will force it to compromise more than in a minimal willing coalition. Therefore, even the stronger part looks towards a different coalition government after the next election. According to this argument, coalition partners still perceive each other as the strongest contenders and, for this reason, computing the difference of vote intentions between the two is still a reasonable choice. However, since it is not clear which party should be considered in government and which in opposition and how to compute the measure with the inclusion of FDP and the Greens, I decided to adopt the first strategy and treat both CDU/CSU and SPD as in government.

Canada is a difficult and contradictory case since it combines a disproportional electoral system (first-past-the-post) and single-party governments with a high level of electoral fractionalisation (Johnston 2008). If until the early 1990s the Canadian case can reasonably fit into the label of a “two-party-plus” system (Epstein 1964), the 1993 electoral earthquake and the results of the 1997 and 2000 elections indicate “a transformation into a genuine multiparty system” (Scotto, Stephenson, and Kornberg 2004: 464). The domination by a centrist party – the Liberal Party – inducing centrifugal tendencies elsewhere in the system and other peculiar features brought Johnston (2008) to define Canada as a case of polarized pluralism. In the 1993 election the Conservatives suffered a humiliating defeat (from 169 to just 2 seats in Parliament, with an electoral volatility of 42 percentage points) in favour of the Liberals, and the Bloc Québécois becomes the Official Opposition (Carty, Cross, and Young 2000; Endersby, Galatas, and Rackaway 2002). In the following elections, the Liberals retain majority status but lose several seats and the biggest change in Parliament is the substitution of the Reform Party for the Bloc Québécois as the Official Opposition. Besides this change in the Canadian party system, scholars tend to agree that after 1988 electoral competitiveness declines until the 2004 elections and that the Liberals in this period are never seriously vulnerable (Johnston and Baumann 2007; Scotto, Stephenson, and Kornberg 2004). This also confirmed by opinion polls, where only in the period 1988-1991 vote intentions for the Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party get closer to those for the Liberals. In 2004 the Liberal-Conservative gap reduces but still stays high (more than 7 percentage points). Panel (a) in Figure 3.2 shows the vote intentions for the five parties: Liberal Party (LP), Progressive Conservative/Conservative Party (PCP/CPC), Bloc Québécois (BQ),

New Democratic Party (NDP) and Reform Party/Canadian Alliance (RPC/CA).⁹

As described above, given the high fragmentation of its party system, Canada is the most complex case in the sample. Five parties have been selected, but only two of them (Liberals and Conservatives) have traditionally formed single-party (minority) governments. The fact that in the 1980s the number of parliamentary parties was significantly low and only three parties (LP, PCP, and NDP) were gaining seats made some scholars suggest that a successful cartel was formed among these parties (Young 1998). However, the political scene changed in 1992 when the three major parties supported the constitutional Charlottetown Accord, basically creating space for the Reform Party and the Bloc Québécois (Young 1998: 343). The 1993 electoral earthquake, a disaster for both PCP and NDP, is the consequence of such a disclosure. In the light of this, NDP, RPC and BQ are added as relevant opposition parties for the period of their existence. Appendix A shows in detail how the measure of vulnerability has been constructed for each year in every country.

Finally, the US are the least problematic case as pure two-party system formed by the Democratic Party and the Conservative Party. To calculate the measure of incumbent vulnerability government approvals are used. The measure is then simply the difference between approvals and disapprovals. Government approvals for the US are shown in panel (e), Figure 3.2.

Table 3.1 summarises how the measure of vulnerability is constructed by government (for all available years see Appendix A) and Figure 3.3 plots the measure for each country in the period 1980-2010. A threshold of 5 percent above which governments can be said to be safe has been graphically imposed to facilitate the reading of the figure. The level of vulnerability changes considerably across countries and time. Not surprisingly, Liberal governments in Canada (panel a) since the early 1990s appear to be largely out of reach and the trend goes for Conservative governments too, though smoothly declining. Germany (panel b) is the case with the lowest variation, where most governments lie close to the 5 percent threshold. The 2005 grand coalition is the only exception, given that the summed vote intentions for CDU/CSU and SPD exceed enormously those for FDP and Greens. While Spain (panel c) presents governments that are both vulnerable and safe, including the Liberals

⁹During the selected period, there have been few major party changes. The Progressive Conservative Party, dissolved in 2003, formed a new party called Conservative Party with the Canadian Alliance (previously Reform Party), the latter running only for the 2000 federal election.

for the whole period increases government's vulnerability in the UK (panel *d*). In fact, if Thatcher is perceived utterly vulnerable, only Blair seems to be genuinely safe in the UK. Governments in the US (panel *e*), since the 1980s on, show high levels of popularity with only a few cases where the government was seriously contested. The only case of strong vulnerability is the Bush government in mid-2000s, although Obama, elected in 2008, seems to be on the edge.

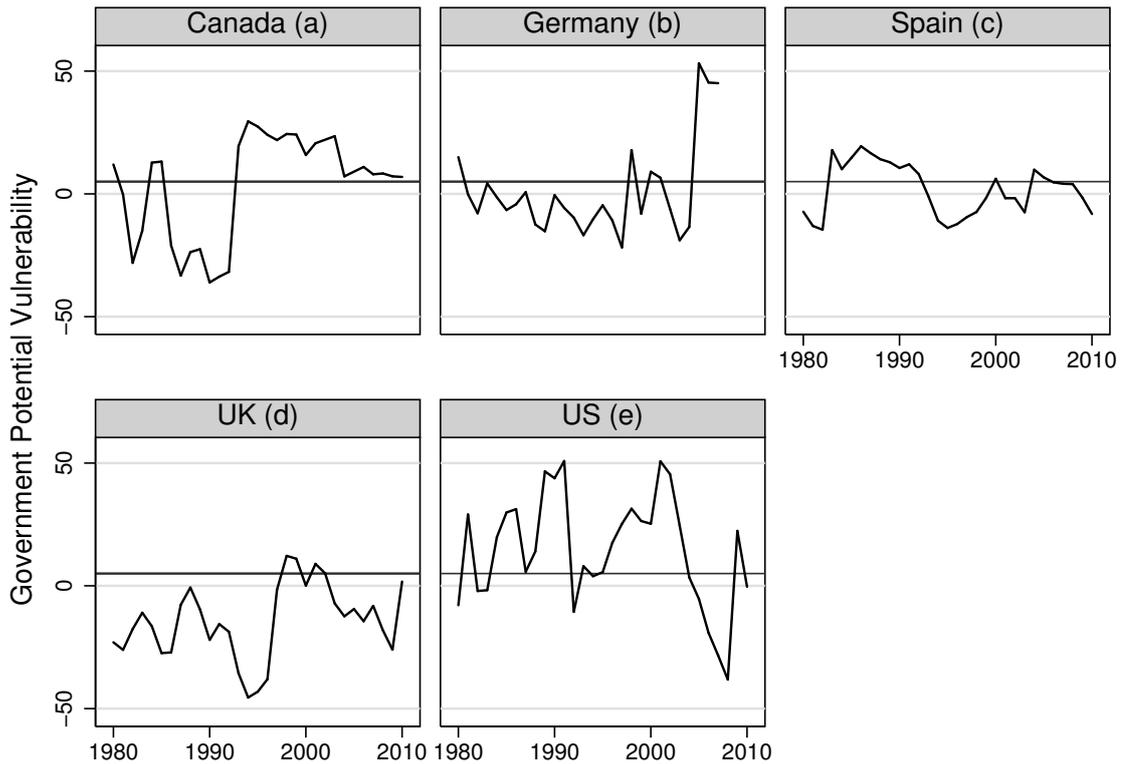


Figure 3.3: Governments' electoral vulnerability, 1980-2010 (percentage values)

Source: Environics Focus (Canada), Politbarometer (Germany), Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (Spain), Ipsos MORI (UK), Gallup (US).

Table 3.1: Measure of electoral vulnerability by government, 1980-2010

Year	Canada		Germany		Spain		United Kingdom		United States	
	Gov't	Opp	Gov't	Opp	Gov't	Opp	Gov't	Opp	Gov't	Opp
1980	LP	PCP + NDP	SPD + FDP	CDU/CSU + GREENS					REP	DEM
1981					UCD	AP + PSOE + PCE + CiU				
1982			SPD + FDP	CDU/CSU + GREENS	PSOE	UCD + AP + PCE + CiU				
1983			CDU/CSU + FDP	SPD + GREENS			CON	LAB + SDP/LIB Alliance		
1984	PCP	LP + NDP							REP	DEM
1985										
1986					PSOE	AP + IU + CiU				
1987			CDU/CSU + FDP	SPD + GREENS			CON	LAB + SDP/LIB Alliance		
1988	PCP	LP + NDP							REP	DEM
1989					PSOE	PP + IU + CiU				
1990							CON	LAB + LD		
1991			CDU/CSU + FDP	SPD + GREENS + PDS/LINKE			CON	LAB + LD	DEM	REP
1992										
1993	LP	PCP + NDP + RPC + BQ			PSOE	PP + IU + CiU				
1994			CDU/CSU + FDP	SPD + GREENS + PDS/LINKE						
1995										
1996					PP	PSOE + IU + CiU			DEM	REP
1997	LP	PCP + NDP + RPC + BQ					LAB	CON + LD		
1998			SPD + GREENS	CDU/CSU + FDP + PDS/LINKE						
1999										
2000	LP	PCP + NDP + CA + BQ			PP	PSOE + IU + CiU			REP	DEM
2001							LAB	CON + LD		
2002			SPD + GREENS	CDU/CSU + FDP + PDS/LINKE						
2003	LP	PCP + NDP + CA + BQ								
2004	LP	CPC + NDP + BQ			PSOE	PP + IU + CiU			REP	DEM
2005			CDU/CSU + SPD	FDP + GREENS + PDS/LINKE			LAB	CON + LD		
2006	CPC	LP + NDP + BQ								
2007							LAB	CON + LD		
2008	CPC	LP + NDP + BQ			PSOE	PP + IU + CiU			DEM	REP
2009			CDU/CSU + FDP	SPD + GREENS + PDS/LINKE						
2010							CON + LD	LAB		

Note: The year corresponds to the time when a government took office. See Appendix A for full party names and country/year availability.

Due to comparative constraints, the table excludes the Canadian LP 1984a and PCP 1993a governments for which only the Prime Minister changes.

Electoral Decidability

The theoretical implications outlined in the previous chapter constitute the basis to construct a measure of electoral decidability that stems from party policy positions. The issue of measuring the policy position of political parties is well explored in political science and important volumes have been recently published evaluating the advantages and drawbacks of different approaches and proposing more or less innovative solutions (e.g. Laver 2001*b*; Benoit and Laver 2006; Meyer 2013). My goal is to find (1) a measure of decidability that tells how much the political offer on a certain policy issue is differentiated between government and opposition and (2) this measure must be comparable across space and time. In order to fulfill these two criteria I rely on a measure of decidability based on party manifesto data from the Comparative Manifestos Project. The reason for this choice will be explained as follows.

Why CMP Data?

A variety of methods can be used to measure party policy positions including expert surveys, mass surveys, elite surveys, roll call votes, manifesto analysis (Mair 2001; Benoit and Laver 2006: 58, Table 3.1). Given its dynamic effort, this work requires the availability of data that change over time and across countries. For this reason, the best candidate becomes inevitably the Comparative Manifestos Project (CMP) which analyses party manifestos for 56 countries throughout the post-war period (Volkens et al. 2014). Within the project, trained human readers code manually the content of party manifestos into a predefined 56-category coding scheme using “quasi-sentences” as the unit of analysis.

Although it is well known that few voters actually read party manifestos, they are nevertheless official party documents published during election campaigns (Laver 2001*a*: 72). They state the official party issue positions binding party leaders and making them accountable to voters and members for failure to implement policies pledged in the manifesto. The principle alternative to party manifestos are expert judgements of party positions (Castles and Mair 1984; Laver and Hunt 1992; Inglehart and Huber 1995; Benoit and Laver 2006; Bakker et al. 2012). Yet few of these major expert surveys locate party positions over policy issues other than the left-right “super issue” (e.g. Laver and Budge 1992),

which makes it harder to have enough cross-time variation. Related to this point, as urged by Mair (2001: 19), expert surveys should be taken as snapshots of the moment they are run, since party positions are not fixed and it would be implausible to conceive them to be the same over time. Lastly, as a general concern, not all expert surveys are wholly reliable as they are the product of subjective observation and experienced students may not necessarily be also experts, therefore “expert surveys should [not] always be treated as ‘expert’ surveys” (Mair 2001: 24).

CMP data are not full of grace either. Their advantages and disadvantages are well known to the scientific community despite their wide use by scholars of parties and representation. This is not the venue to debate in detail the limitations involving the CMP data, both in terms of theory and methodology. I therefore refer to more precise and attentive analyses (Budge 2001; Laver 2001a: 72-73; McDonald and Mendes 2001; Pelizzo 2003; Benoit and Laver 2006: 64-69; Meyer 2013: Ch. 3; Zulianello 2013) and limit the discussion to those aspects that are relevant for a measure of decidability based on such data.

Firstly, to measure how much the political offer on a given policy issue is decidable party positions on that issue are required. The question then becomes whether CMP data are collected in a way such that allows to measure party positions. According to the authors themselves (Budge et al. 2001), the CMP data are grounded in the “saliency theory” of party competition, which builds on the theory of “selective emphasis” previously developed by Robertson (1976). In line with the theory, data are collected under a saliency criterion operationalised as the relative emphasis given to the issue in the party manifesto. As Laver (2001a: 73) well explains, saliency theory assumes a strong relationship between party position and party emphasis which legitimises CMP data on “*policy emphasis* to estimate *substantive party positions*” (emphasis in original).¹⁰ In fact, as McDonald and Mendes (2001: 91) write, “[i]n most instances, the [CMP] categories are easily interpretable as policy options [and] [f]ifty-four of the fifty-six categories involve clear value statements”. In their classification, 13 out of 56 policy categories are coded as either positive or negative, such as “more or less protectionism” or “more or less centralisation” (McDonald and Mendes 2001: 93, Table 7.1). In substance, as Benoit and Laver (2006: 66) conclude, “the CMP coding scheme is not in practice a ‘pure salience’ scheme”

¹⁰It is the equation “direction equals emphasis” (Laver 2001a: 73) that brought Pelizzo (2003) to argue that CMP data measure direction rather than position.

but more a positional coding scheme.

The flexibility of the CMP data, at least for some categories, is just that they allow to construct measures of salience as well as position. For example, summing up the pro / con categories of a given issue tells us the relative emphasis the manifesto devotes to that issue, rather subtracting the positive category from the negative category of a given issue gives us the party position on that issue.¹¹ Probably the best solution would be the one implemented by Wagner (2012), who uses expert surveys to measure party issue positions and CMP data to measure party issue salience, however his analysis is only cross-sectional which makes the choice more viable. Yet, since in my case time is involved, a measure based on party positions is extrapolated using CMP data rather than expert surveys. Using respondent's perception of party location is also problematic because people are usually asked to place parties on a left-right scale rather than on specific issues. Electoral surveys sometimes ask these questions but inconsistency is high as issues can change across countries and elections. This is why the CMP data become a one-way choice for data are widely available over time and across party systems.

A Measure for Decidability

Though the concept of electoral decidability is potentially broader and more than one indicator can be proposed to capture its sub-dimensions, I focus on the key aspect of the concept, which refers to the dispersion of the political offer on a given issue in a given party system. The literature provides valuable measures which have been applied to other research questions. Except for one measure (Sommer-Topcu 2015) that uses the different logic of perceived disagreement, all the others are based on the Taylor and Herman (1971) index, which is nothing different than the variance. Nevertheless, some authors refer to this concept as the dispersion of the political offer (Alvarez and Nagler 2004; Ezrow 2007; Wagner 2012), while others talk of party system polarisation (Sartori 1976; Sani and Sartori 1983; see also Dalton 2008; Lachat 2008; Pardos-Prado and Dinas 2010), that is, in terms of ideological spread of parties on a left-right scale, and some others of policy extremism (Ezrow 2008; Wagner 2012). Though these concepts – differentiation/dispersion of the political offer, ideological

¹¹As Zulianello (2013) recalls, it would be more precise to talk in terms of policies rather than issues, given that the CMP categories can be much broader than specific issues. Yet, maybe wrongly, often in the literature they are used interchangeably, even though they do not mean exactly the same thing.

polarisation and extremism – do not necessarily mean the same thing, they are essentially measured in the same way with some variation.

These measures are presented in Table 3.2 and are variations of the statistical concepts of variance and standard deviation. While the measures of polarisation are essentially an adaptation of Hazan's (1995) index, the other measures of party system, dispersion and policy extremism, are a development of Alvarez and Nagler's (2004) measure of party system compactness. The exception is given by Somer-Topcu's (2015) measure of ambiguity, which applies a measure of perceptual agreement developed by van der Eijk (2001) that can be used as a proxy to measure party positions.¹² Such measures are either based on voters' perception of party positions or on experts' assessment of party positions. Only one measure relies on coding of party manifestos and uses CMP data, which I recall does not include any information from voters about their issue positions or their perceptions of party issue position.

While some of these measures are weighted by party size, some others are not and both sets of authors provide arguments in favour of weighting as well as not weighting. The reason for weighting is that small parties *de facto* would have no political influence therefore their policy proposals would “not enlarge the menu of policy choices available to voters in any meaningful sense” (Ezrow 2007: 186). The opposite perspective underlines that weighting would be arbitrary and that the policy influence of a party is not necessarily correlated with its votes or seats. Moreover, even small parties can fulfill the function of channeling voters' policy preferences, regardless of the parties' influence on government policy outputs.

Since I also rely on data from the Comparative Manifestos Project, I apply Ezrow's (2007) version of party system dispersion not to the left-right ideological position – as he does – but to specific policy categories. Given that Ezrow's measure is a variation of Alvarez and Nagler's party system compactness, I first briefly review this measure, then I explain Ezrow's development and finally my application to the CMP policy categories.

¹²The idea behind implies that higher perceived disagreement on whether to locate a given party means that the party is more ambiguous about its position. van der Eijk (2001) shows that such a measure would be preferable than using standard deviations around party's average perceived opinion which might be a biased measure for agreement.

Table 3.2: Recent comparative measures of dispersion, polarisation and extremism

Study	Measure	Weight	Data
Hazan (1995)	Left-Right Polarisation	Yes	Respondents' Party Placement
Alvarez and Nagler (2004)	Party System Compactness	Yes/No	Respondents' Party Placement
Ezrow (2007)	Party System Dispersion	Yes/No	Party Manifestos
Dalton (2008)	Ideological Polarisation	Yes	Respondents' Party Placement
Ezrow (2008)	Party Policy Extremism	Yes/No	Expert Surveys
Lachat (2008)	Party System Polarisation	Yes	Expert Surveys
Pardos-Prado and Dinas (2010)	Electoral Polarisation	Yes	Respondents' Party Placement
Wagner (2012)	Ideological Distinctiveness	Yes	Expert Surveys
Wagner (2012)	Positional Extremeness	No	Expert Surveys
Somer-Topcu (2014)	Ambiguity	No	Respondents' Party Placement

Source: Author's own.

Alvarez and Nagler's measure of party system compactness aims to overcome the common problem in survey research that respondents do not perceive the questions or the scale in the same way. For this reason, they develop "a measure of the dispersion of the parties relative to the voters, not a measure of the dispersion of just the parties on some abstract scale" (Alvarez and Nagler 2004: 48). Thus their measure relies on surveys allowing voters to place the parties in their own countries. The point of reference is then the dispersion of the voters in the issue space calculated as the standard deviation of respondents' self-reported positions on the k^{th} issue (σ_k). To tell how far apart any two parties j and l are on an issue k , the absolute distance between them is computed, where P_{jk} and P_{lk} denote the placement of the j^{th} and l^{th} parties on the k^{th} issue, respectively. The basic measure of compactness would then be (Alvarez and Nagler 2004: 49):

$$CP_k = \frac{\sigma_k}{\max_j |P_{jk} - P_{lk}|} \quad \forall j, l. \quad (3.2)$$

The larger the value of CP_k , the greater the ratio of dispersion of the voters to the dispersion of the parties, that is, the more compact the issue space.

The authors also propose a second measure based on the former, which takes into account party size, as minor parties might alter the compactness measure. This second measure accounts for the vote shares of the major parties in each election and the relative position of all viable parties in the issue space (Alvarez and Nagler 2004: 50). The vote-weighted compactness is given by:

$$VWCP_k = \frac{\sigma_k}{\sum_{j=1}^N V_j |P_{jk} - \bar{P}_k|} \quad (3.3)$$

where \bar{P}_k is the weighted mean of parties on the issue and V_j is the j^{th} party's vote share.

Ezrow essentially bases his measures of party system dispersion on a simplified version of Alvarez and Nagler's measures. The unweighted party system dispersion is, in substance, "the standard deviation of all of the parties' policy positions that are reported by the Comparative Manifestos Project for a given election" (Ezrow 2007: 186) while the weighted party system dispersion is given by:

$$WPSD = \sqrt{\sum_{j=1}^N VS_j (P_{jk} - \bar{P}_k)^2} \quad (3.4)$$

where \bar{P}_k is the weighted mean of all the parties' left-right ideological positions in country k , P_{jk} is the ideological position of party j in country k , and VS_j is the vote share for party j .¹³

I explain my application of Ezrow's measure using the issue of education as an example. The CMP assigns two categories for education: "education expansion" (per506) and "education limitation" (per507). To get the actual party position on the issue, I subtract the negative category from the positive category in absolute terms in order to avoid negative values: $|\text{per507-per506}|$. Then I proceed with the computation as Ezrow (2007) explains in note 9, p. 186. Using his example of the 1983 elections in Great Britain, the unweighted party system dispersion with four parties (Labour, the Social Democrats, the Liberals and the Conservative Party) is calculated as:

$$UPSD = \sqrt{\frac{(3.74 - 5.17)^2 + (5.07 - 5.17)^2 + (5.07 - 5.17)^2 + (6.81 - 5.17)^2}{4}} = 1.09 \quad (3.5)$$

where 5.17 represents the mean party position, and 3.74, 5.07, 5.07, 6.81 represent the positions of the four parties, respectively.

Following Ezrow's example once again, the weighed party system dispersion is calculated as:

¹³Note that Hazan's and Dalton's measures are very similar to Ezrow's, as Hazan uses the variance instead of the standard deviation while Dalton divides the WPSD by the number of parties.

$$WPSD = \sqrt{.289 \times (3.74 - 5.17)^2 + .122 \times (5.07 - 5.17)^2 + .144 \times (5.07 - 5.17)^2 + .445 \times (6.81 - 5.17)^2} = 1.31 \quad (3.6)$$

where the parties' deviations from the weighted party mean (5.46) are weighted by their vote shares.

Ezrow's measure as well as the others reported in Table 3.2 are weighted only by party size. Yet how much parties emphasise an issue in their manifestos can also matter. For this reason, I include a third version of party system dispersion weighted by salience. In essence, it is sensible to empirically test all the three versions of this measure: unweighted party system dispersion (UPSD), vote weighted party system dispersion (VWPSD), and salience weighted party system dispersion (SWPSD). The three measures will be tested in Chapter 5, because both arguments for weighting and not weighting are convincing.

However, someone may argue that, in the eyes of voters, it is sufficient for the political offer on a given issue to be decidable between government and opposition and not across the whole party system, for what matters is that voters are able to understand what the main competitors are offering. Note that, although electoral competition should lead to constant and smooth adaptation of parties' preferences to voters' demands (Downs 1957), parties actually change their positions slowly (Budge 1994; Walgrave and Nuytemans 2009), so one should not expect governments to quickly adapt their positions to changes in public opinion. Following this argument, the assumption is that party preferences are quite stable during the electoral cycle but can change from one election to the other. For these reasons, if electoral decidability does matter for responsiveness, I would expect a weighted measure to have a greater impact than an unweighted measure.¹⁴

¹⁴In Appendix C, I will also provide additional analysis by using a different measure only based on the change in the distance between the government and the biggest competitor.

Other Competitive Incentives

Issue competence is measured in terms of government's relative advantage on the issue. The measure used in Chapter 4 is strongly dependent on data constraints. In fact, it is really hard to find survey data across countries and over time such as to build a reasonably long time-series of issue competence. For this reason, I choose Petrocik's (1996) definition of issue ownership emphasising in my measure the importance of citizens' perception of party issue competence from a *historical* perspective rather than focusing on how such a perception changes from one election to another. Since the question wording in the surveys differs across and within countries, only the questions asking to rate both the government and the main opposition party are considered. The measure is then constructed averaging competence on a given issue (issues have been recoded in line with the major topics used for the dependent variable) by decade. Given that opinion polls may contain some measurement error, the party leading the government is considered as competent if the difference with the main opposition party is higher than 3 percent. A dummy variable for issue competence is then constructed to capture whether the government has an advantage on the issue compared to its main opponent. I am aware of the existence of more elegant and sophisticated measures of issue competence (see, for instance, the ones recently proposed by Green and Jennings 2012*a,b*), but the inclusion of a dummy variable capturing a party's historical advantage on the issues by decade gives an idea of whether the government is perceived as competent over time (see Pope and Woon 2009; Egan 2013).

A rougher variant of this measure of issue competence called issue ideological proximity is used in Chapter 6. The difference between the measure used in the rhetorical responsiveness chapter and the one used in the legislative responsiveness chapter is due to the fact that, in the latter, I am more focused on whether the government is more likely to produce legislation which is closer to its ideological position, rather than legislation on issues for which is perceived as more competent. Therefore, I use a dummy variable which is equal to government partisanship.

Electoral proximity is also measured in a dichotomous way, but its construction changes across chapters. Since in the rhetorical responsiveness chapter (Chapter 4) I can rely on the date of the speech, I can propose a more fine grained measure based on the distance between the delivery of the speech and the election day. Since, in the other chapters, I do not have information about the date in

which the budget has been approved and when the law has been introduced, I simply use a dummy variable for the election year as a proxy of electoral proximity.

Finally, though electoral contestability is not conceived as a necessary condition for responsiveness, where appropriate, I will use a measure that captures its most related component to responsiveness, given by the barriers parties face for being represented. The electoral system is clearly the most relevant factor here, as other studies of responsiveness already show. I will, hence, use a measure of disproportionality of the electoral system based on Gallagher's (1991) Least squares index.

Chapter 4

Rhetorical Responsiveness

4.1 Introduction

Democratic governments need to talk about issues, they are reactors to their environment. They cannot leave the public agenda open to the media and the opposition (Soroka 2002; Green-Pedersen and Stubager 2010; Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2010). In reality, unlike opposition parties, which are freer than government parties to focus on the issues they have an advantage on, the government agenda is essentially a mix of its manifesto, the needs of governing, events and the opposition agenda (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2010). Democratic governments also seek re-election. But, what do they do when they are vulnerable? Governments face three puzzles. The first puzzle posits that governments can either focus on those issues that are salient to the public – as research on responsiveness and government agendas would suggest (e.g., Burstein 2003; Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008; Jennings and John 2009) – or they can emphasise those issues on which they have a good reputation – as issue ownership would predict (e.g., Budge and Farlie 1983; Petrocik 1996; Green and Hobolt 2008). The second puzzle is even more intriguing. When governments are competent on the issue and the issue is also more important to the public, I expect the conditional effect of electoral vulnerability not to have any enhancing effect on government issue emphasis: governments are likely to emphasise that issue in their agenda. However, what happens when the government is not competent on the issue? I argue that, in this situation, governments are more likely to emphasise those issues

that are salient to the public when they are electorally vulnerable rather than when they are electorally safe. Finally, the third puzzle relates to the pressure arising from upcoming elections: if elections are considered as a powerful incentive to respond, are governments more likely to emphasise those issues the public is more concerned with or those ones they “own” when elections are approaching?

To date, I am unaware of comparative studies that jointly consider how government agendas react to public priorities and issue ownership and how government electoral vulnerability influences agenda responsiveness. That is what I present here. Using data on issue emphases in executive speeches, based on codings from the Comparative Agendas Project, and survey data on public issue priorities, vote intentions and issue competence in four advanced democracies – Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States – my analysis produces two main findings. First, when the issue is salient to the public and the government is perceived as competent on the issue, electoral vulnerability does not have any enhancing effect on responsiveness. Vulnerability matters to the extent that the government is not associated with the issue. Second, governments tend both to respond to the public and to emphasise those issues on which they are perceived as competent, independently of their vulnerability. However, my analysis suggests that governments rely much heavily on the issues they have a good reputation on. No evidence is, instead, found that governments increase issue emphasis either in those issues salient to the public nor in those issues they are competent on when elections are approaching.

My results pertain to governing parties’ electoral strategies and to mass-elite linkages. The finding that governing parties adjust their policy agendas by emphasising both the issues that are salient to the public and the issues they own, but relying much more on the latter, independently of their potential vulnerability at the polls, resolves the first dilemma. Issue salience and issue ownership are already sufficient conditions for government agendas to respond and governments use both strategies. This reflects the fact that, in reality, government agendas respond to the needs of governing (e.g., Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2010). The finding that government electoral vulnerability influences agenda responsiveness to public priorities only when the government is not competent on the issue contributes to the research on government responsiveness (Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008; Soroka and Wlezien 2010). Unlike previous studies which find that electoral vulnerability is an

important incentive *per se* for governments to respond to public concerns, my analysis suggests that the role of vulnerability is more niche than mainstream and occurs only in specific circumstances.

4.2 Vulnerability, Issue Ownership, and Electoral Connection

From research on government responsiveness and government agendas we learned at least two major lessons. Responsiveness is more likely to occur for those issues that are salient to the public (e.g., Miller and Stokes 1963; Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008; Jennings and John 2009; Soroka and Wlezien 2010) and varies by agenda (e.g., Jones, Larsen-Price, and Wilkerson 2009; Bevan and Jennings 2014). Research on government agendas also tells us that, given the complexity and the amount of public demands, attention is a scarce good and this has consequences for agenda representation (Kingdon 1995; Jones and Baumgartner 2004; Jones, Larsen-Price, and Wilkerson 2009). Governments cannot pay attention to all issues the public is concerned about, therefore they will select those issues that are most salient for the public (Mortensen et al. 2011) and ignore those ones the public is less concerned about, thus managing “the amount of risk they bear from choosing to stress some policy issues more than others” (Bertelli and John 2012: 741).

However, issue ownership theories (Budge and Farlie 1983) tell us a different story, that is parties give priority only to those issues for which they have a historically good reputation for competence (Petrocik 1996). Parties which own the issue and have a good reputation on it will be more likely to emphasise that issue in their political agenda. Indeed, parties tend to increase the salience of an issue they hold an advantageous position on and ignore or try to mute those issues that do not benefit them (Rovny 2012), simply because they will not be credible in the eyes of voters and this would only be a safe road to an electoral defeat.¹

If an issue is salient to the public and the government has a good reputation on the issue, the government faces no selection problems. If governments are not under electoral pressure, in line with issue ownership theories, there is reason to believe that governments would prioritise those issues the public is more concerned with. But what happens, between elections, when the government is under

¹However, cases of “issue trespassing” and “issue convergence” are also documented (e.g., Damore 2004; Sigelman and Buell 2004), when parties in government will try to challenge their competitors on an issue they do not have a good reputation on in order to gain votes.

pressure? In that case, I argue that governments face a first policy agenda dilemma: do they respond to public concerns – prioritising salience over ownership – or do they choose to emphasise those issues they have a good reputation on – prioritising ownership over salience?

The conditional effect of government electoral vulnerability on government responsiveness finds recognition in both theoretical (e.g., Sartori 1987; Strøm 1992; Bartolini 1999, 2000) and empirical studies (e.g., Manza and Cook 2002; Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008; Hakhverdian 2010; Pickup and Hobolt 2015). Whereas the former argue that electoral vulnerability has a beneficial effect on responsiveness, the latter suggest that the vulnerability thesis finds support in different institutional arrangements and state that electoral pressure or uncertainty is a powerful incentive increasing government responsiveness to citizens' (preferences and) priorities.

According to the research on responsiveness, which emphasises the importance of public issue salience as an incentive for governments to respond, I would expect that, when vulnerable, governments will emphasise in their agendas those issues that are salient to the public and adjust their agendas accordingly. Yet the alternative argument supported by issue ownership theories is also plausible. According to issue ownership, vulnerable governments will go for the safe option and emphasise in their agendas those issues they have a good reputation on in order to reacquire popularity. This argument is plausible because popular governments would have a wide range of issues on which they are rated positively, therefore they are freer to respond to public concerns than unpopular governments (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1994; Green 2011). As both arguments expressed are reasonable, I present them more formally as competing hypotheses:

H_{4.1a}. The Issue Salience Hypothesis. Vulnerable governments will be more likely to emphasise, in their policy agendas, those issues the public is more concerned with.

H_{4.1b}. The Issue Ownership Hypothesis. Vulnerable governments will be more likely to emphasise, in their policy agendas, those issues they have a good reputation on.

The arguments presented above relate to the fact that governments would face a trade-off when called to choose between salient issues and owned issues. However, should I expect any influence of

government electoral vulnerability on government issue emphasis when the trade-off is not existing, namely when the issue is salient to the public and the government is competent on the issue? There is, in fact, a tendency for issues to receive more attention by the government, when the government does well on that issue and when the public cares about it (Walgrave and De Swert 2007; Walgrave and Lefevere 2013). In this case, I would expect vulnerability not to have any enhancing effect on government issue emphasis, for issue competence and issue salience already incentivise the government to increase attention on that issue. I argue, instead, that there might be room for an enhancing effect of vulnerability when the issue is salient to the public but the government is not perceived as competent on.² To put it formally:

H4.2. The Enhancing Vulnerability Hypothesis. Government electoral vulnerability has an enhancing effect on government issue emphasis when the issue is salient to the public and the government is not competent on the issue.

Finally, I ask whether the competing issue salience and issue ownership expectations are still valid when governments face an additional pressure, namely, electoral proximity. Are governments more likely to emphasise those issues they are competent on or those issues that are more salient to the public when elections are approaching? While extensive research documents that political parties emphasise their core issues (Budge and Farlie 1983; Petrocik 1996; Walgrave, Lefevere, and Tresch 2012) and this can be a winning card for governments that aim at being reelected, there is not much comparative evidence (see, however, Jennings and Wlezien 2015b; Bischof 2015) outside the American context (e.g., Kuklinski 1978; Canes-Wrone and Shotts 2004) that governments respond to the public when elections are coming, which makes it worth testing empirically the competing electoral proximity hypotheses:

H4.3a. The Electoral Proximity Hypothesis. Governments are more likely to emphasise, in their policy agendas, those issues the public is more concerned with when elections are approaching.

H4.3b. The Electoral Proximity Hypothesis. Governments are more likely to emphasise, in their

²Note that, as Walgrave, Lefevere, and Tresch (2012) stress, competence is not the only dimension of issue ownership.

policy agendas, those issues they have a good reputation on when elections are approaching.

4.3 Data, Measurement, and Model Specification

This chapter tests the hypotheses aforementioned in four advanced democracies: Germany (1987-2004), Spain (1982-2007), the United Kingdom (1970-2010), and the United States (1970-2012). The reason of the case selection is twofold. On one hand, time-series data on the dependent variable need to be matched with data on the independent variables, and this limits the sample size considerably. On the other hand, the chosen cases are good to assess agenda responsiveness because they all display high clarity of responsibility (Powell and Whitten 1993; Hellwig and Samuels 2007; Hobolt, Tilley, and Banducci 2013) and high electoral identifiability (Strøm 1990; Shugart and Carey 1992), given that the features of the electoral system, though differing to some extent, help produce clear and identifiable governments. Indeed, the UK and the US are both single member district (SMD) countries, Spain is a proportional representation (PR) system with low district magnitude and overrepresentation of large parties (Hopkin 2005) and Germany a mixed-member system (Scarrow 2001) allowing the formation of pre-electoral coalitions and producing a bipolar pattern conducive to high levels of cabinet durability (Saalfeld 2005).

Rhetorical responsiveness on the government side is measured using data on executive speeches as collected by the Comparative Agendas Project (CAP) following the codebook created by the Policy Agendas Project. The policy content of these speeches is divided into quasi-sentences, with each quasi-sentence assigned a single unique topic code. The dependent variable is then the number of quasi-sentences assigned to each macro topic in a set of policy domains.³ Table 4.1 shows the CAP major topics used in the analysis for each country. While the most prominent topic in all countries is given by defence and international affairs, there is significant variation across policy agendas (Green-Pedersen and Walgrave 2014). For instance, whereas law, crime and education are extremely import-

³Note that the dependent variable is in raw numbers and not in percentage. This is due to data availability constraints. In fact, the German data on the CAP speeches are not publicly available yet and I am using the data in this chapter with kind permission of the German CAP team. The drawback is, however, that I can access only a subsample of all policy domains, which makes it impossible to compute the percentage based on the total number of quasi-sentences in a speech. For this reason, I have also tested my hypotheses by estimating a count model. These analyses, which support my findings in the chapter, are available upon request.

ant in Spain, the German policy agenda devotes more space to social welfare and the environment.⁴

Public issue salience is measured using the most important problem/issue (MIP/MII) question, which gives citizens the opportunity to state their priorities. Data on citizens' priorities have been recoded in line with the Policy Agendas Project codebook to make them more comparable. Electoral vulnerability represents the most relevant incentive of electoral competition for responsiveness. I recall that governments' electoral vulnerability is computed by subtracting the vote intentions for the relevant opposition parties from the vote intentions for the government parties. Government's relative advantage on issues represents the other main electoral incentive that this chapter considers. The measure is constructed by averaging competence on a given issue (issues have been recoded in line with the major topics used for the dependent variable) by decade. Given that opinion polls may contain some measurement error, the party leading the government is considered as competent if the difference with the main opposition party is higher than 3 percent. A dummy variable for issue competence is then constructed to capture whether the government has an advantage on the issue compared to its main opponent. For details about data and measures of the dependent and the main independent variables, please refer to Chapter 3.

Table 4.1: CAP Major Topic codes used in the analysis, raw means

Major Topic	Germany (1987-2004)	Spain (1982-2007)	UK (1970-2010)	US (1970-2012)
3. Health	5.6	5.0	2.0	16.4
6. Education	11.6	15.3	3.2	14.8
7. Environment	13.3	2.1	1.6	4.7
12. Law and Crime	10.8	36.7	6.1	13.8
13. Social Welfare	18.2	5.3	2.4	13.7
14. Housing	3.7	3.3	2.0	3.2
16/19. Defence/International Affairs	96.3	51.9	23.1	72.1

Note: The cells contain the mean value of each policy domain for the period considered in each country.

Source: Comparative Agendas Project.

⁴Note that I decided to exclude the Macroeconomics major topic from the analysis because parties are not perceived as competent or not competent over the whole macroeconomic topic, but they are rated differently on issues such as unemployment, inflation, economic situation, and taxation, and this is highly problematic for the measure of issue competence adopted in this chapter.

The data suggest that there is synchronic and diachronic variation in issue competence (see Appendix A). In the UK, for instance, some issues that were closer to the Conservative Party in the 1970s - such as health, education or housing - tend to be associated with the Labour Party in the subsequent decades. However, there are also changeable issues such as crime and environment or stable issues such as defence, which has always been associated with the Conservative Party. Issue stability seems to be more evident in the US, where some issues are quite stable over time and are never stolen. For instance, education, health, environment and welfare have always been associated with the Democratic Party and the same can be said for the Republican Party on issues such as defence and crime. According to the data at my disposal, Spain registers high issue instability over the decades as well as Germany, where only a few issues are closely associated with one of the two major parties over time.

To test whether responsiveness to citizens' priorities increases during the election year, I created two dummy variables, one including the executive speeches made up to 6 months before the general elections and another one including those speeches made up to 12 months before the elections. This variable accounts for the fact that the election year differs from country to country and from one election to another. In fact, a dummy variable for the election year would not work well since some speeches are made right after the elections.

Finally, I add standard controls for unemployment rate and inflation, since government's responsiveness can be driven by economic conditions rather than public opinion; for the proportionality of the electoral system (by using Gallagher's LSq index) to control for the fact that responsiveness can differ across electoral institutions (Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008; Wlezien and Soroka 2012), and for the possibility that presidents in their second term may not be responsive because they cannot be reelected.

The Model

This chapter uses time-series cross-sectional data from four countries in seven policy domains. Instead of estimating issue-specific models, as done in other research on responsiveness and dynamic representation, to test my hypotheses I reshape the data and stack them in terms of issues as well. In this sense, the unit of analysis is no longer the combination of a panel variable (country) and a

time variable ($\text{year} \times \text{parliamentary term}$), but it becomes the combination of $\text{policy} \times \text{country} \times (\text{year} \times \text{parliamentary term})$. Figure 4.1 provides a graphical example with two countries and two policy domains of how the data matrix changes after being stacked. The advantages of changing the structure of the data in this way are that this might lead to more robust results increasing the number of cases and the variance in salience (not just over time, but across issues).

Original Data Matrix

Country	Year	Speech_defence	Speech_health
Spain	1987	1	5
Spain	1988	2	6
UK	1987	3	7
UK	1988	4	8

Stacked Data Matrix

Policy	Country	Year	Speech
Defence	Spain	1987	1
Defence	Spain	1988	2
Health	Spain	1987	5
Health	Spain	1988	6
Defence	UK	1987	3
Defence	UK	1988	4
Health	UK	1987	7
Health	UK	1988	8

Figure 4.1: Structure of stacked data matrix

Source: Author's own adapted from Figure 2 in van der Eijk et al. (2006: 441)

To estimate TSCS models, pure OLS can be problematic (Beck and Katz 1995) because it assumes errors to have the same variance (homoskedasticity) and errors to be independent of each other over time (no serial correlation) and across unit (no spatial correlation).⁵ The pooled models are estimated with panel corrected standard errors (PCSE) (Beck and Katz 1995), which controls for panel heteroscedasticity and contemporaneous correlations of the errors and fitted with the Prais-Winsten

⁵Unit-root tests based on Augmented Dickey-Fuller tests reveal that data are stationary and in all instances reject the presence of unit root at the 95 per cent confidence level. However, the Wooldridge (2002) test for serial correlation for TSCS data confirms the presence of serial correlation in the data. Finally, Breusch-Pagan and White tests report heteroskedasticity in the data. For these reasons, the model needs to account for these issues.

method to test for serial correlation (Plümper, Troeger, and Manow 2005: 342). The assumption is that, within panels, there is first-order autocorrelation (AR(1)) and that, as a robustness check, the coefficient of the AR(1) process is specific to each panel. TSCS data are seldom independent along the time dimension within units and the Prais-Winsten estimator is one way to deal with serial correlation in the data and is suggested for small samples (Fortin-Rittberger 2014). This choice is preferable to lagged dependent variable (LDV) models as “the elimination of serial correlation by inclusion of the lagged residuals gives more appropriate coefficients than the inclusion of a lagged dependent variable” (Plümper, Troeger, and Manow 2005: 342-3), which would also absorb more time-series dynamics leaving less variance for the substantive explanatory variables (see also Achen 2000). Given this discussion, in the chapter I estimate my models with PCSE and Prais-Winsten estimator with country dummies.⁶

I begin by estimating a basic model where government electoral vulnerability is not included and government issue emphasis is only a function of public issue salience and government issue competence:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Speech}_{(it)} = & \alpha + \beta_1[\text{Salience}_{(it-1)}] \\ & + \beta_2[\text{Competence}_{(it-1)}] + \beta_3[\text{Controls}_{(it)}] + \epsilon \end{aligned} \quad (4.1)$$

To test the Issue Salience Hypothesis (H1a) and the Issue Ownership Hypothesis (H1b) – namely whether governments devote more attention to the issues the public is concerned about or to the issues they have an advantage on, depending on the level of their vulnerability – I propose a model that includes an interaction term between public issue salience and vulnerability, $[\text{Salience}(t - 1) \times \text{Vulnerability}(t - 1)]$, and an interaction term between issue competence and vulnerability, $[\text{Competence}(t - 1) \times \text{Vulnerability}(t - 1)]$. The model is presented in equation 4.2, where α and ϵ represent the intercept and the error term:

⁶Note that models have also been reestimated including the LDV and country dummies and results are reported in Appendix B. This specification does not alter the substantive validity of the results.

$$\begin{aligned}
Speech_{(it)} = & \alpha + \beta_1[Saliency_{(it-1)}] + \beta_2[Vulnerability_{(it-1)}] \\
& + \beta_3[Competence_{(it-1)}] + \beta_4[Saliency_{(it-1)} \times Vulnerability_{(it-1)}] \\
& + \beta_5[Saliency_{(it-1)} \times Competence_{(it-1)}] + \beta_6[Controls_{(it)}] + \epsilon
\end{aligned} \tag{4.2}$$

In the analysis I reversed the sign of electoral vulnerability – namely, positive values denote higher levels of vulnerability, whereas negative values denote higher levels of safety – to ease the interpretation of the coefficients. A positive coefficient β_4 on the interaction between salience and vulnerability would denote that an increase in public priorities on a given issue in the current year – compared to the previous year – is associated with an increase in issue emphasis in government speeches conditional on government vulnerability, i.e., that the government responds to public priorities in the previous year when vulnerable. Similarly, a positive coefficient β_5 on the interaction between competence and vulnerability would denote that being competent on a given issue in the previous year is associated with an increase in issue emphasis in government speeches conditional on government issue competence, i.e., that the government responds to its own issues in the previous year when vulnerable.

To estimate the Enhancing Vulnerability Hypothesis (H2), a model is required such as dealing with the possibility that vulnerability matters differently for issues on which the government is not associated (that is, where the competence is low). Therefore, a model theorising the relationship between competitive incentives should require the following adjustment:

$$\begin{aligned}
Saliency^C &= Saliency \quad \text{if} \quad Competence = 1 \\
Saliency^{NC} &= Saliency \quad \text{if} \quad Competence = 0
\end{aligned} \tag{4.3}$$

where $Saliency^C$ denotes those issues for which the government is viewed as competent whereas $Saliency^{NC}$ denotes those issues for which the government is not viewed as especially competent. So, I split the sample into two groups and estimate two different models in the following way:

$$\begin{aligned}
Speech_{(it)} &= \alpha + \beta_1[Saliency_{(it-1)}^C] + \beta_2[Vulnerability_{(it-1)}] \\
&+ \beta_3[Saliency_{(it-1)}^C \times Vulnerability_{(it-1)}] + \beta_4[Controls_{(it)}] + \epsilon
\end{aligned} \tag{4.4}$$

$$\begin{aligned}
Speech_{(it)} &= \alpha + \beta_1[Saliency_{(it-1)}^{NC}] + \beta_2[Vulnerability_{(it-1)}] \\
&+ \beta_3[Saliency_{(it-1)}^{NC} \times Vulnerability_{(it-1)}] + \beta_4[Controls_{(it)}] + \epsilon
\end{aligned} \tag{4.5}$$

To evaluate the Enhancing Vulnerability Hypothesis, the key coefficients are those on the interaction between $[Saliency^C(t-1) \times Vulnerability(t-1)]$ variables and between $[Saliency^{NC}(t-1) \times Vulnerability(t-1)]$ variables. A positive coefficient β_3 on the interaction between salience and vulnerability (equation 4.4) would denote that an increase in public priorities on a given issue in the current year – compared to the previous year – is associated with an increase in issue emphasis in government speeches conditional on government vulnerability when the government is competent on the issue. Similarly, a positive coefficient β_3 on the interaction between salience and vulnerability (equation 4.5) would denote that an increase in public priorities on a given issue in the current year – compared to the previous year – is associated with an increase in issue emphasis in government speeches conditional on government vulnerability when the government is not competent on the issue.

To evaluate the Electoral Proximity Hypothesis, the key coefficients are those on the interaction between $[Saliency(t-1) \times Proximity(t)]$ variables and between $[Competence(t-1) \times Proximity(t)]$ variables.

$$\begin{aligned}
Speech_{(it)} &= \alpha + \beta_1[Saliency_{(it-1)}] + \beta_2[Competence_{(it-1)}] \\
&+ \beta_3[Proximity_{(it)}] + \beta_4[Saliency_{(it-1)} \times Proximity_{(it)}] \\
&+ \beta_5[Competence_{(it-1)} \times Proximity_{(it)}] + \beta_6[Controls_{(it)}] + \epsilon
\end{aligned} \tag{4.6}$$

A positive coefficient β_4 on the interaction between salience and electoral proximity would de-

note that an increase in public priorities on a given issue in the previous year is associated with an increase in issue emphasis in government speeches conditional on electoral proximity, i.e., that the government responds to public priorities in the previous year when elections are closer. Similarly, a positive coefficient β_5 on the interaction between competence and electoral proximity would denote that being competent on a given issue in the previous year is associated with an increase in issue emphasis in government speeches conditional on electoral proximity, i.e., that the government responds to its own issues in the previous year when elections are closer.

Note that, in order to avoid endogeneity issues, public issue salience and the competitive incentives are averaged not by calendar year but by speech date.⁷ However, since governments might need more time to account for public issue priorities and that its effect on policy can be delayed, in line with other studies on governmental responsiveness (e.g., Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008; Soroka and Wlezien 2010), we estimate our models with public priorities, issue competence and electoral vulnerability at time $(t - 1)$.

Finally, in the empirical analyses years when a new government emerged whose ideology differed from the previous government, such as Schroeder I in 1998 in Germany and Cameron I in 2010 in the UK, are omitted. This is because in these years the lagged levels of government electoral vulnerability and government issue competence pertain to different governments. However, successive governments with the same Prime Minister are considered as the same.

4.4 Empirical Results

I evaluate my competing hypotheses (H1a and H1b) in a three-step fashion. Table 4.2 reports the parameter estimates for the models given by equations 1 and 2 above. I first present the model without including electoral vulnerability (Model 1). Then I add electoral vulnerability (Model 2) and estimate the interactions between public issue salience and vulnerability, [$Saliency(t - 1) \times Vulnerability(t - 1)$], and between issue competence and vulnerability, [$Competence(t - 1) \times$

⁷This is also because the presidency literature (for an overview, see Cohen 1997: 165-6) finds support for the reverse causal link, that is, presidential responsiveness to public opinion may boost presidential popularity. The only exception is Germany, for which information about the date of the speeches is not available for data are not public yet, therefore the calendar year is used to calculate yearly mean values.

$Vulnerability(t - 1)]$.

Model 1 shows that, independently of their own electoral vulnerability, governments emphasise in their policy agendas those issues that are salient to the public and those issues they have a good reputation on. Although both variables are positive and statistically significant, the size of the effect differs considerably and is much larger for those issues the government is perceived as competent on compared to those issues the public is more concerned about, where the magnitude of the effect is 9 quasi-sentences at 2. This pattern holds when electoral vulnerability is included in the analysis (Model 2) and interacted with issue salience and issue competence (Model 3). The estimates on both variables are near zero and statistically insignificant. These estimates disconfirm both our Issue Salience and Issue Ownership hypotheses that, when vulnerable, governments either rely on those issues that are salient to the public or on those issues they are competent.

So far, my analysis shows that governments seem to alter their agendas as communicated via executive speeches in response to issue salience and issue competence but not in response to the degree to which both of these are conditioned by their electoral vulnerability. Table 4.3 reports the analysis for an enhancing effect of electoral vulnerability on agenda responsiveness. Hypothesis 2, in fact, tests the possibility that vulnerability matters differently for issues the government is not associated with. It is reasonable to expect issues to receive more attention when the government does well on those issues and the public cares about them, as some literature on issue ownership suggests. What I argue is that electoral vulnerability would influence agenda responsiveness to public priorities when the government is not competent on the issue – $Salience^{NC}$ – rather than when the government is competent – $Salience^C$.

Column 2 reports the model for those cases where the issue is salient and the government is competent. In such cases electoral vulnerability seems not to have an enhancing effect: when the issue is salient to the public and the government is competent on the issue, electoral vulnerability does not have any interactive effect on government issue emphasis. The coefficient of the interaction term is, indeed, not significant. This seems to be in line with my expectations. More interesting is the case in which the issue is salient to the public but the government is not competent (column 3). In such a situation, the interactive effect of vulnerability is negative and significant at conventional levels

Table 4.2: The Issue Salience Hypothesis vs The Issue Ownership Hypothesis

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Dependent Variable: Issue Emphasis in Executive Speeches			
Salience (t-1)	1.821*** (0.365)	1.857*** (0.360)	1.927*** (0.378)
Competence (t-1)	8.955*** (2.877)	8.800*** (2.874)	9.196*** (3.062)
Vulnerability (t-1)		0.104 (0.106)	-0.046 (0.117)
Salience (t-1) × Vulnerability (t-1)			0.015 (0.013)
Competence (t-1) × Vulnerability (t-1)			0.010 (0.139)
Unemployment (t)	0.651 (0.571)	0.513 (0.550)	0.632 (0.586)
Inflation (t)	-0.119 (0.422)	-0.294 (0.414)	-0.180 (0.454)
LSq (t)	-0.352 (0.770)	-0.262 (0.784)	-0.382 (0.806)
US 2nd Term (t)	-1.316 (6.351)	-2.106 (6.433)	-1.667 (6.478)
Constant	3.022 (6.510)	3.736 (6.272)	2.920 (6.717)
N	575	575	575
R ²	0.18	0.18	0.19

Models with AR₁ autocorrelation structure

Panel-corrected standard errors in parentheses and country dummies (Germany reference category)

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

($p < 0.01$). Governments tend to emphasise those issues important to the public when they are vulnerable and not competent.⁸ To better understand this effect, I follow Brambor et al's advice (2006) and plot the marginal effects of the interaction. Figure 4.2 shows that the more the government becomes vulnerable, the more it tends to respond to the public when it is not competent on the issue. This suggests that there is room for my Enhancing Vulnerability Hypothesis.

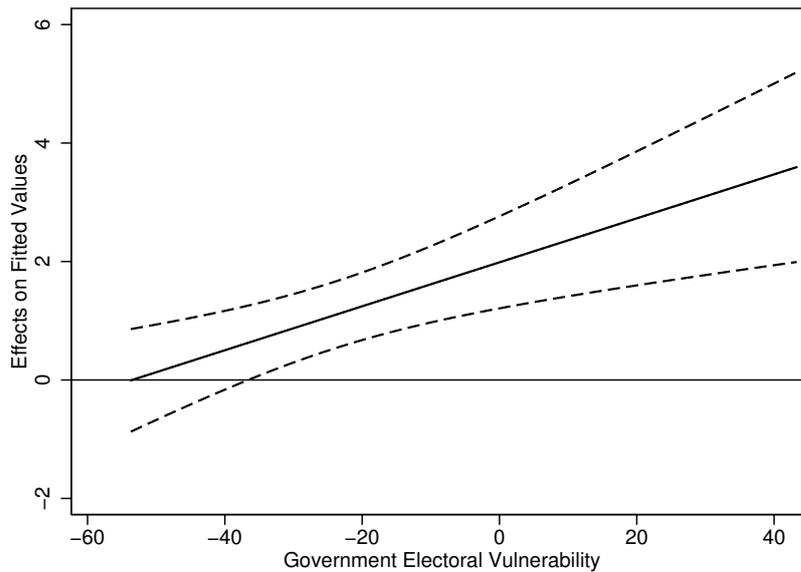


Figure 4.2: Effect of electoral vulnerability on agenda responsiveness

Note: Marginal effect of public priorities on government emphasis at different levels of government electoral vulnerability when the issue is salient to the public and the government is not competent on the issue (based on Table 4.3, Model 5). Dashed lines are 95 percent confidence interval.

Table 4.4 presents the results for the electoral proximity hypothesis. To test this hypothesis, I recall, I have created two variables that disentangle the executive speeches made under electoral campaign from the ones made when the electoral campaign has not yet started. One variable captures the speeches delivered up to six months before the general election takes place, while the other also includes those delivered up to twelve months before the election. The analysis shows that governments seem not to increase rhetorical responsiveness by emphasising issues the public is concerned with nor to rely on their own issues when elections are not very close and parties have not entered the electoral campaign yet (Model 7). What the analysis suggests is that governments tend to be slightly less

⁸Appendix B reports the same analysis estimated by using a three-way interaction among salience, competence and vulnerability instead of subsetting by issue competence. The interaction is, indeed, statistically significant and confirms the difference between competence and not competence.

Table 4.3: The Enhancing Vulnerability Hypothesis

	Model 4	Model 5
Dependent Variable: Issue Emphasis in Executive Speeches		
Salience C (t-1)	2.274*** (0.455)	
Vulnerability (t-1)	0.179 (0.156)	-0.076 (0.111)
Salience C (t-1) × Vulnerability (t-1)	-0.010 (0.014)	
Salience NC (t-1)		1.987*** (0.397)
Salience NC (t-1) × Vulnerability (t-1)		0.037*** (0.011)
Unemployment (t)	0.264 (0.597)	0.387 (0.969)
Inflation (t)	0.147 (0.579)	-0.555 (0.516)
LSq (t)	0.155 (0.903)	-0.084 (1.060)
US 2nd Term (t)	2.684 (7.214)	-4.390 (7.964)
Constant	22.89* (11.79)	0.081 (8.508)
N	296	279
R ²	0.35	0.14

Models with AR1 autocorrelation structure

Panel-corrected standard errors in parentheses and country dummies (Germany reference category)

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

responsive to public priorities when elections are approaching and also to emphasise less the issues on which they are competent (Model 6), though the slope of the interaction terms is still positive.⁹ The interactions are plotted in Figure 4.3, which shows the effect of public priorities on government emphasis at different levels of electoral proximity (left-hand graph) and the effect of issue competence on government emphasis at different levels of electoral proximity (right-hand graph). The slope of the coefficients of the electoral proximity dummy is positive in both cases but slightly lower for electoral proximity equals 1, namely, when elections are much closer.

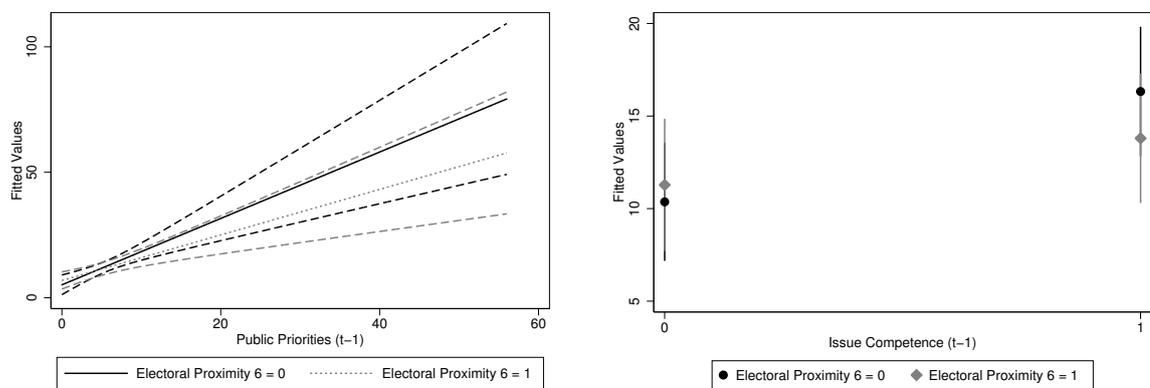


Figure 4.3: Effect of electoral proximity on agenda responsiveness

Note: Effect of public priorities on government emphasis at different levels of electoral proximity (left-hand graph) and effect of issue competence on government emphasis at different levels of electoral proximity (right-hand graph) (based on Table 4.4, Model 6). Dashed lines are 95 percent confidence interval.

⁹Note that the analysis omits Germany because data on the speech date are not available.

Table 4.4: The Electoral Proximity Hypothesis

	Model 6	Model 7
Dependent Variable: Issue Emphasis in Executive Speeches		
Saliency (t-1)	1.323*** (0.303)	1.188*** (0.320)
Competence (t-1)	5.963** (2.585)	5.314* (2.791)
Electoral Proximity (6-month)	3.533** (1.679)	
Saliency (t-1) × Electoral Proximity (6-month)	-0.415** (0.161)	
Competence (t-1) × Electoral Proximity (6-month)	-3.443* (1.856)	
Electoral Proximity (12-month)		-5.182* (2.876)
Saliency (t-1) × Electoral Proximity (12-month)		0.268 (0.433)
Competence (t-1) × Electoral Proximity (12-month)		0.930 (2.631)
Unemployment (t)	0.641 (0.525)	0.491 (0.571)
Inflation (t)	-0.216 (0.379)	-0.326 (0.407)
LSq (t)	-0.698 (0.742)	-0.662 (0.777)
US 2nd Term (t)	-1.552 (6.577)	-2.415 (6.556)
Constant	4.780 (9.902)	10.98 (10.97)
N	485	485
R ²	0.13	0.14

Models with AR₁ autocorrelation structure

Panel-corrected standard errors in parentheses and country dummies (Spain reference category)

Germany omitted from this analysis due to data unavailability of the speech date

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

4.5 Conclusion and Discussion

This chapter has studied the linkages between government's policy agenda, public opinion, and incentives from party competition. The puzzle at the very heart of the chapter stems from the following question: what do governments do between elections when they are electorally vulnerable? Do they tend to respond to those issues the public is concerned about or do they tend to emphasise those issues they have a good reputation on? The question is addressed using pooled time-series cross-sectional data from four advanced democracies that show high electoral identifiability and high clarity of responsibility, which would make it easier for governments to respond given the majoritarian incentives of the electoral system and the lack of constraints for being in coalition with a large number of partners.

From an empirical standpoint, this chapter contributes to the existing literature on dynamic agenda representation and government's rhetorical responsiveness (John, Bevan, and Jennings 2011; Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008; Hakhverdian 2010; Spoon and Klüver 2014; Klüver and Spoon 2014). My findings present additional evidence for the influence of public priorities on the policy agenda of governments and find interesting effects of competitive incentives on agenda responsiveness. This chapter presents three main findings.

First, from previous research, we know that issue salience is a sufficient, if not necessary, incentive for governments to react. However, given that parties hold a historical reputation on certain issues, as issue ownership theories suggest, in the longer run one may expect that issue competence makes the difference more than issue salience. Unlike this trade-off, I find that governments adjust their policy agendas to the issues that are salient to the public as well as to the issues they are perceived as competent on, but tend to rely more heavily on the latter. These are not mutually exclusive scenarios but, instead, governments rely on both strategies. My results make sense to the extent that governments, unlike oppositions, can also play the card of competence, because of their own governing status.

Second, the chapter finds support for the hypothesis that vulnerability enhances responsiveness on the issues that are salient to the public and where the government has not a good reputation on. This somehow confirms previous findings that elevate issue salience and issue competence as important conditions for responsiveness. However, unlike previous research which shows that government

responsiveness is conditional on electoral pressure, I find that electoral vulnerability is an incentive for governments to respond in their policy agendas only when they are not competent on the issue.

The last result suggests that governments tend to rely on both issues that are salient to the public and on which they are competent independently of the closeness of elections. When elections are approaching, there is rather some evidence that agenda responsiveness to issue salience and issue competence slightly decreases.

In the light of the results from this chapter, the theoretical expectation that political competition, defined as a set of dimensions, has a beneficial effect for democracy, in general, and responsiveness, in particular, and the empirical expectation that responsiveness would be more likely under certain competitive incentives, end up standing. Governments do care about electoral expectations, not only at election time, but also between elections and rely on incentives to ease their electoral pressures. However, as also suggested by Cohen (1997), this kind of reaction could be very different in other venues such as policy-making and policy implementation, where the relevance of other factors different than electoral ones might play a major role in driving government responsiveness. The next two chapters will, in fact, be devoted to assessing the impact of competitive incentives on responsiveness in more substantive policy venues.

Chapter 5

Budgetary Responsiveness

5.1 Introduction

Unlike Chapter 4, this chapter moves the discussion towards more substantive policy venues and builds on the negative findings of Bevan and Jennings (2014) and Jennings and Wlezien (2015*a*) that public issue priorities do not have any influence on government expenditures. What they conclude is that, unlike executive speeches and legislation, ‘spending is not responsive to public concern about the “most important problem” in contrast to relative preferences’ (Bevan and Jennings 2014: 52; but see Wlezien 2005). The reason why public priorities would not have an impact on spending is that, since budgets have directional implications, changes in the most important problem/issue question are not directional, that is, the public cannot signal whether it wants more or less spending on a given policy domain (Jennings and Wlezien 2015*a*). According to these scholars, there is a clear problem of measurement and they argue that priorities are not a good measure of dynamic representation. Yet this is rather different from the conclusion that Hobolt and Klemmensen (2008) reached using the same opinion indicator. Indeed, they actually find that, in several domains, the more an issue becomes salient to the public, the more the government spends on that issue and this is also conditional on other factors such as electoral pressure and institutional differences.¹

Building on the theoretical insights from political competition as a multidimensional concept

¹Though policy issue and policy category/domain do not mean the same thing, they are used interchangeably in this chapter.

(Bartolini 1999, 2000; Strøm 1989, 1992) as well as from the spatial model of elections (Downs 1957; Adams 2001) and the saliency theory of party competition (Budge and Farlie 1983), this chapter aims to contribute to the literature on dynamic representation and assess whether competitive incentives have an effect on governmental policy responsiveness between elections. More precisely, the analysis focuses on three main competitive incentives that can be conceived as necessary conditions for responsiveness: government electoral vulnerability, the political offer differentiation, and electoral proximity.

This chapter tests this framework using pooled time-series cross-section analysis on both public issue priorities and preferences in spending and concludes that public spending is not responsive to the most important problem/issue (Jennings and Wlezien 2015a) and that no clear evidence is found for a beneficial effect of electoral incentives for policy responsiveness. Such findings have, thus, serious implications for our conclusions about responsiveness of governments to citizens' concerns and demands, as well as for the application to policy responsiveness of theories driven by party competition.

5.2 Theoretical Expectations

The empirical research on dynamic representation is currently facing a methodological debate, probably started by the influential article *On the salience of political issues: The problem with 'most important problem'* by Wlezien (2005) and more recently developed in Jennings and Wlezien (2011) and Jennings and Wlezien (2015a). At the core of this debate there is the question of whether the saliency approach is appropriate to measure dynamic representation and, especially, policy responsiveness. According to this approach, citizens' preferences can be captured by the 'most important problem' (MIP) or 'most important issue' (MII) question. Some scholars think that these questions are problematic and inappropriate to measure the public opinion side of the responsiveness relationship. I summarise the arguments here based on the main points discussed in this literature (Wlezien 2005; Jennings and Wlezien 2011, 2015a).

The first problem arising in the discussion is the unclear definition in the most important problem question, in fact, an issue may not be a problem, in the sense that if an issue is not problematic

then it cannot be turned into a problem. An issue is a problem if we are not getting the policy we want. Therefore, issues and problems might be fundamentally different things. Moreover, the MIP and MII questions add an attribute to problems/issues, which is their importance and importance is often conflated with salience. However, a problem/issue may be important, but not salient if it is not reflected in the media. So, variation in problem status can or cannot be correlated with importance over time, hence MIP responses simply ‘tell us little, if anything, about the importance of issues’ (Wlezien 2005: 575).

A second problematic aspect is whether MIP and MII mean the same for respondents. Jennings’ and Wlezien’s findings in this regard are reassuring. In fact they find that MIP and MII series ‘capture many of the same things, both at particular points in time and over time’. What they cannot rule out is the connection between problem status and importance, however both may indicate public ‘attention’ (Jennings and Wlezien 2011: 554-5).

A more serious limitation of the MIP/MII question is the lack of directionality. Respondents are asked only to tell which is the most relevant issue for them regardless of whether they want more or less of a policy. This is probably the main reason that brought scholars to conclude that the most important problem is not well suited to measure policy responsiveness (Jennings and Wlezien 2015a) and this statement finds empirical support in a recent article suggesting that public priorities do not have an impact on spending (Bevan and Jennings 2014).

In the light of this debate, this chapter analyses budgetary responsiveness by presenting a comparison between public priorities and public preferences. More interestingly, this chapter provides an empirical test for the theoretical framework of electoral competition discussed in Chapter 2 and focuses on three main incentives or dimensions of competition that can be conceived as necessary conditions for governmental responsiveness to public opinion: (1) electoral vulnerability, which refers to the electoral uncertainty the government faces in between elections; (2) electoral decidability, that is, how clear and differentiated the political offer is within the party system; (3) electoral proximity, which refers to the pressure the government faces when elections are approaching.

Please refer to Chapter 2 for the discussion of the theoretical expectations concerning these competitive incentives. Here I only recall in a more formal way the three empirical hypotheses that will be

tested in the chapter. Incumbent vulnerability is at the core of the connection between responsiveness and competition. The hypothesis that electoral pressure increases government responsiveness to citizens' preferences and priorities finds confirmation in both case studies and comparative research (Hakhverdian 2010; Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008; Pickup and Hobolt 2015), though the effect varies from policy area to policy area. Therefore:

H5.1 (The Electoral Vulnerability Hypothesis). The more vulnerable the government, the more likely it will be responsive to public opinion.

The second hypothesis relates to the differentiation of the political offer. In the eyes of voters, it is sufficient for the political offer on a given issue to be decidable between government and opposition and not across the whole party system, for what matters is that voters are able to understand what the main competitors are offering. Note that, although electoral competition should lead to constant and smooth adaptation of parties' preferences to voters' demands (Downs 1957), parties actually change their positions slowly (Budge 1994; Walgrave and Nuytemans 2009), so one should not expect governments to quickly adapt their positions to changes in public opinion. Following this argument, the assumption is that party preferences are quite stable during the electoral cycle but can change from one election to the next. In order for decidability to influence the opinion-policy link, an interactive effect between public opinion and decidability is hypothesised. In other words, the facilitating effect of decidability, for the reasons aforementioned, is more likely to occur if the policy difference between government and opposition on the issue increases when the issue becomes more salient to the public or the public wants the government to spend more on the issue. A hypothesis concerning decidability would then be the following:

H5.2 (The Electoral Decidability Hypothesis). The greater the policy difference between government and opposition on a given issue, the higher the likelihood of policy responsiveness to public opinion.

Electoral proximity is the third electoral incentive considered in this chapter. On the one hand, the political economy literature suggests that fiscal policy tends to be systematically manipulated

before elections (for a review, see Persson and Tabellini 2000, 2002). While taxes are cut before elections, painful fiscal adjustments (such as cuts in spending and deficits) are postponed until after the elections and this, in turn, depends on institutional differences (Persson and Tabellini 2002: 4). On the other hand, though between-country variation may exist due to institutional friction, budgetary policy is highly incremental and occasionally punctuated by large changes (Jones et al. 2009). Changing budgets (and observing the effects of this change) simply takes time (Tsebelis 1995; Garrett and Mitchell 2001). More than that, when setting budgets, policymakers are constrained by veto players (Tsebelis 1995) as well as social, economic and international realities that are largely beyond their control (Epp, Lovett, and Baumgartner 2014). This means that also governmental responsiveness to public opinion would be subject to the ‘empirical law of public budgets’ (Jones et al. 2009). Given such contrasting results and expectations, it is worth retesting a hypothesis linking policy responsiveness and electoral proximity:

H_{5.3} (The Electoral Proximity Hypothesis). Policy responsiveness is more likely to be higher when elections are approaching.

5.3 Data, Measurement, and Model Specification

This chapter focuses on the impact of certain dimensions of competition on responsiveness of governments to public opinion and tests its framework through a pooled TSCS analysis in five advanced democracies: Canada, Germany, Spain, the UK, and the US in a time span between 1980 and 2009. The reason of the case selection is a compromise between data availability and comparability. On the one hand, since this chapter is interested in policy responsiveness between elections, it is not possible to collect long-time series data on public opinion and the competitive incentives for several countries allowing a thorough test of dynamic representation. On the other hand, all the cases selected display high clarity of responsibility (Powell and Whitten 1993; Hellwig and Samuels 2007; Hobolt, Tilley, and Banducci 2013) and high electoral identifiability (Strøm 1990; Shugart and Carey 1992), given that the features of the electoral system, though differing to some extent, help produce clear and

identifiable governments. In fact, Canada, the UK and the US are all single member district (SMD) countries, Spain is a proportional representation (PR) system but with low district magnitude and overrepresentation of large parties (Hopkin 2005) and Germany is a mixed-member system (Scarrow 2001) allowing the formation of pre-electoral coalitions and producing a bipolar pattern conducive to high levels of cabinet durability (Saalfeld 2005).

Measuring the Independent Variables

Public opinion is measured in two ways: priorities and preferences. Public issue priorities are measured using the most important problem/issue (MIP/MII) question (see Chapter 3 for details). In the light of recent findings suggesting that MIPs/MIIs are not good indicators of public opinion for budgetary responsiveness, because they do not allow to measure directionality but only attention (Jennings and Wlezien 2015a), public opinion is also measured by using relative preferences in spending (Soroka and Wlezien 2010). While through MIPs/MIIs it is possible to argue that, especially for valence issues such as crime, environment, but also health, higher public concern does imply more spending (Jennings and Wlezien 2015a: 19), spending preferences allows to better address the directionality issue, as the public can say whether it wants more or less spending on a given issue. Data on preferences in spending are taken from the Soroka-Wlezien dataset used for *Degrees of Democracy* (Soroka and Wlezien 2010), but they are available only for a subset of countries (Canada, the UK and the US).

Government's electoral vulnerability is defined as the electoral uncertainty the government faces in between elections. Governments' electoral vulnerability is computed by subtracting for each year the vote intentions for the relevant opposition parties from the vote intentions for the government parties (for the US, presidential approvals are used by subtracting disapproval from approval).

Though the concept of electoral decidability is potentially broader, the chapter focuses on the key aspect which refers to the dispersion of the political offer on a given issue in a given party system. For this reason, data from the Comparative Manifestos Project (CMP), which analyses party manifestos for 56 countries throughout the post-war period (Volkens et al. 2014), are used.² I apply Ezrow's

²Note that although party positions can change between elections due, for instance, to external shocks, it is not unreasonable to assume that in normal situations they are quite stable during legislative periods. Thus keeping the same

(2007) version of party system dispersion not to the left-right ideological position – as he does – but to specific policy categories and test three measures of party system dispersion: an unweighted measure (UPSD), a measure weighted by vote share (VWPSD), and a measure weighted by the salience of the issue in the party system (SWPSD) (see Chapter 3 for details). Since what matters for voters is whether the political offer on the issue is decidable between the main competitors, in the text are reported results only for VWPSD and SWPSD.

To test whether governments are more responsive during the election year a dummy variable is created (1 for election year, zero otherwise). Following previous research, standard economic indicators for unemployment rate and inflation are included as controls given that responsiveness on certain issues can be a function of the state of the economy. Government ideology is also included (as a dummy variable with value of 1 for left-wing governments, zero otherwise) for two reasons. One is that there might be an issue ownership effect meaning that, for instance, left-wing governments spend more on left-wing issues and vice versa. Second is that government partisanship captures representation through election results. Therefore, responsiveness may also depend on government ideology, although a recent study (Epp, Lovett, and Baumgartner 2014) clearly shows that the latter has no significant impact whatsoever on spending. Given that electoral rules shape policy (Persson and Tabellini 2000, 2002), a measure of disproportionality of electoral system is included, precisely Gallagher's (1991) Least squares index. Moreover, since an already reelected US president cannot be reelected for a third time, a dummy variable is also included, as in their second terms presidents might care less about responsiveness (although this possibility might be moderated by the fact that their party can still win the presidency). Finally, some issue-specific controls are also included for some policy domains: a dummy variable accounting for the presence of major wars in the defence model and a variable accounting for elderly population in the health model, given that spending in these two policy domains can also be a function of these factors.

value for the measure of decidability for the whole electoral cycle is theoretically reasonable.

Dependent Variable and Model

The dependent variable is the level of government expenditure by policy function as a percentage of GDP. Although Wlezien and Soroka (2003: 273-4) note that expenditures are not policy *per se* and using appropriations would be better than outlays, they also acknowledge the former are not easily available comparatively. The reason of using effective expenditure (outlays) as a percentage of GDP instead of spending in national currency is that some countries may spend more than others just because of their size, as also suggested by Garrett and Mitchell (2001). The policy domains selected are the ones for which comparative data are available for all the five countries: defence, education, health, housing, unemployment and welfare.³

There is a vital methodological debate among political scientists and political economists about the use of expenditure as a dependent variable and its related modeling issues (see Plümper, Troeger, and Manow 2005). To check whether errors can display temporal dependence, that is, errors are not independent from one time period to the next, autocorrelation and partial autocorrelation functions are examined graphically. These tests reveal that first-order autocorrelation is present. Given such problems of autocorrelation in time-series data, some methodologists suggest to include the lag of the dependent variable in the model (Beck and Katz 1995). Lagging dependent variables is motivated by methodological reasons, meaning autocorrelation in the data, for observation at time t can depend on observation at time $t - 1$. In other words, there is no time independence and this is a common issue with all time-series data. This seems to be especially true for expenditure data considered as highly path dependent (Garrett and Mitchell 2001; Jones et al. 2009). However, alternative solutions exist for, according to other methodologists (Achen 2000; Plümper, Troeger, and Manow 2005), using a lagged dependent variable would depress the explanatory power of the main independent variables and absorb part of the trend in the dependent variable. Moreover, some heteroskedasticity in the data is detected.⁴ For these reasons, in the chapter I present models with panel-corrected standard

³Data on defence are from the SIPRI Military Expenditure Database; data on health, housing, unemployment and welfare are from the OECD Social Expenditure Database; data on education are combined from World Bank Development Indicators and Eurostat.

⁴The Breusch-Pagan and White tests for heteroskedasticity reject the null hypothesis that the variance of the error term is constant in some policy domains but not in others.

errors and country dummies.⁵

Since significant unit-root tests (Fisher-type test based on ADF test) reveal that the data on expenditures are not stationary and not accounting for this issue will lead to flawed hypothesis tests and results can be spurious (see e.g., Fortin-Rittberger 2014), in Appendix C I report sensitivity analysis (discussed in the chapter at the end of the empirical analysis) with a large variety of models while differencing the dependent variable.

The basic issue-specific model that will be estimated is the following:

$$\begin{aligned}
 EXP_{(t)} = & \alpha + \beta_1[PO_{(t-1)}] + \beta_2[COMP_{(t-1)}] \\
 & + \beta_3[PO_{(t-1)} \times COMP_{(t-1)}] + \beta_4[LEFT_{(t-1)}] \\
 & + \beta_5[LSQ_{(t)}] + \beta_6[TERM_{(t)}] + \beta_7[ECON_{(t)}] + \epsilon
 \end{aligned} \tag{5.1}$$

where:

$EXP_{(t)}$ = the level in public spending on a given policy domain in year t .

$PO_{(t-1)}$ = public priorities and preferences on a given policy domain in the previous year.

$COMP_{(t-1)}$ = competitive incentives: electoral vulnerability at time $t-1$; electoral decidability at the time of the previous election; electoral proximity at time t .

$LEFT_{(t-1)}$ = government ideology in the previous year (1 for left-wing governments, zero otherwise).

$LSQ_{(t)}$ = disproportionality of electoral system using Gallagher's Least squares index at the time of the previous election.

$TERM_{(t)}$ = second US presidential term in the current year (1 for second presidential term, zero otherwise).

$ECON_{(t)}$ = each economic indicator (unemployment and inflation) in the current year.

⁵This choice is also motivated by the argument that clustering standard errors by country is a practice strongly discouraged when the sample is very small (Cameron, Gelbach, and Miller 2008) and robust standard errors may lead to biased estimators (King and Roberts 2015). However, given that in instances autocorrelation remains, in additional analyses the lagged dependent variable is also included in the models and this does not undermine the validity of the results.

α and ϵ represent the intercept and the error term. The effect of the competitive incentives on policy responsiveness is given by the interaction term between public opinion and the competitive incentive [$PO_{(t-1)} \times COMP_{(t-1)}$]. Lagging public opinion is important to establish the time order. Since expenditures are quite sticky and it may take time to translate citizens' priorities into policy, it is common sense to use the lagged variable for public opinion as the citizens' side of the responsiveness relationship (Page and Shapiro 1983; Soroka and Wlezién 2010; Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008). Note that, in the analysis I reverse the sign of electoral vulnerability – namely, positive values denote higher levels of vulnerability, whereas negative values denote higher levels of safety – to ease the interpretation of the coefficients. If the Electoral Vulnerability Hypothesis is supported by the data, I should expect a positive and significant coefficient for the interaction term, meaning the more vulnerable the government, the more likely it would be responsive. If electoral decidability produces the expected effect, the coefficient for the interaction term would be positive, that is, the more differentiated the emphasis on the issue in the party system, the more likely the government would be responsive, as the Electoral Decidability Hypothesis would predict. Finally, if the government is more responsive in the election year, the coefficient for the interaction term should also be positive and significant.

Whereas it is accepted, for the arguments outlined above, that the lagged variable of public opinion is required, it is less clear whether we should consider the current or the past value of government ideology as well as the competitive incentives. For example, Soroka and Wlezién (2010) use the lag of government ideology and vote margins while Hobolt and Klemmensen (2008) set both government ideology and electoral uncertainty at time t . There might be two competing arguments that are worth considering here. On the one hand, we could expect that what matters for the government is its current potential vulnerability and not as much if the government was vulnerable before. In this case, the solution adopted by Hobolt and Klemmensen (2008) would be theoretically preferable. On the other hand, however, there might be a causality issue with this solution, that is, are governments responsive because they are vulnerable or are they vulnerable because they are responsive? In other words, is a change in spending mediated by government vulnerability or do governments become more vulnerable due to a change in spending? This concern is less relevant to the other competitive

incentives, electoral decidability and electoral proximity. In fact, given that CMP data are used to capture the former, electoral decidability takes repeated values for the whole electoral cycle and there would be no reasonable causal expectation saying that the political offer on a given issue becomes more decidable due to a change in spending. The same would apply to electoral proximity. For these reasons, the model for electoral vulnerability is tested with vulnerability at time $t - 1$ whereas the models for electoral decidability and electoral proximity are tested with both the former and the latter at time t .

5.4 Empirical Results

Responsiveness to Public Priorities

This section presents the findings with public priorities. Before moving to the results for my hypotheses, it is worth noting that the analysis only for the constitutive terms (models are reported in Appendix C) confirms previous findings that spending does not respond to the most important problem/issue. In fact, all coefficients for public priorities are negative and three also statistically significant (education, unemployment and welfare).

Results for the Electoral Vulnerability Hypothesis are reported in Table 5.1. Two main findings seem to be clear. Firstly, looking at the constitutive term for public opinion, when electoral vulnerability is zero (I recall that vulnerability equaling zero does not mean absence of vulnerability but maximum uncertainty about results of the next election) the coefficient for public issue priorities is negative (and sometimes significant) in all policy domains considered. This would suggest that, when electoral vulnerability is zero, the more the issue becomes salient to the public, the less the government spends on the issue.

Secondly, when it comes to spending, government's electoral vulnerability seems not to have any beneficial effect whatsoever for governmental responsiveness to public priorities. The coefficient of the interaction is mostly negative, meaning that the safer the government, the more responsive it is to public priorities, and only positive and significant in one policy domain (housing).⁶ To interpret

⁶Note that N differs across models due to the lack of observations of the most important problem/issue for some years.

Table 5.1: Electoral vulnerability and policy responsiveness to public priorities

	Defence	Education	Health	Housing	Unemployment	Welfare
Dependent variable: Government expenditure as percentage of GDP						
Public Priorities (t-1)	-0.002 (0.003)	-0.064*** (0.024)	-0.021 (0.013)	-0.016* (0.009)	-0.007** (0.003)	-0.060*** (0.023)
Gov't Vulnerability (t-1)	-0.003 (0.003)	-0.002 (0.003)	0.003 (0.005)	-0.000 (0.001)	0.005* (0.003)	0.017*** (0.006)
Priorities (t-1) × Vulnerability (t-1)	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.001)	-0.000 (0.000)	0.001** (0.000)	-0.000** (0.000)	-0.001 (0.001)
Left (t-1)	-0.921*** (0.167)	0.260* (0.134)	0.538*** (0.107)	0.040 (0.043)	0.180** (0.083)	0.517*** (0.178)
LSq (t)	0.061** (0.025)	-0.074*** (0.022)	-0.163*** (0.022)	-0.031*** (0.011)	-0.082*** (0.021)	-0.166*** (0.037)
US 2nd Term (t)	0.173 (0.249)	-0.398*** (0.153)	-1.276*** (0.232)	0.051* (0.031)	0.012 (0.085)	-0.538** (0.232)
Inflation (t)	0.043* (0.024)	-0.073** (0.029)	-0.005 (0.039)	-0.013 (0.011)	0.033 (0.025)	-0.158*** (0.045)
Unemployment (t)	0.044** (0.017)	0.009 (0.016)	0.022* (0.012)	-0.000 (0.005)	0.113*** (0.013)	0.054** (0.025)
War (t)	0.006 (0.052)					
Elderly (t)			0.078 (0.084)			
Constant	0.931** (0.419)	6.679*** (0.370)	7.199*** (1.186)	0.953*** (0.132)	1.614*** (0.279)	11.02*** (0.437)
N	86	57	75	59	80	85
R ²	0.93	0.96	0.99	0.94	0.97	0.99

OLS with AR1 autocorrelation structure

Correlated panels corrected standard errors in parentheses and country dummies (Canada reference category)

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

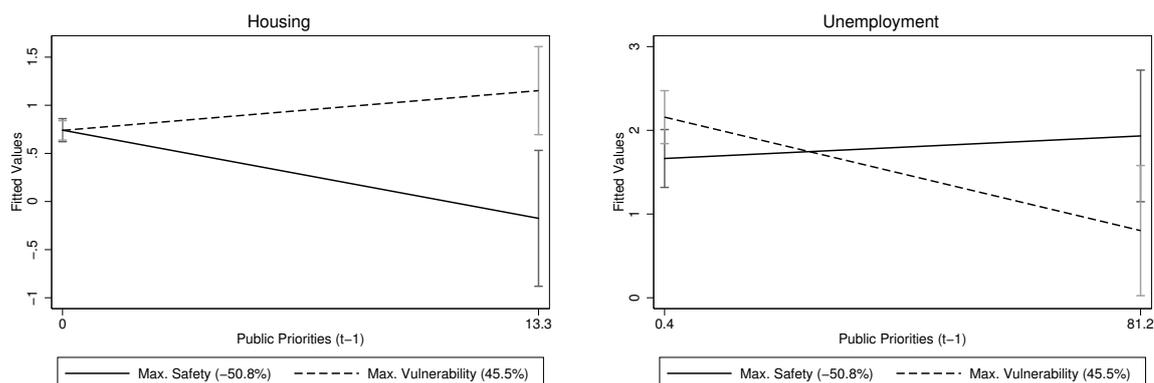


Figure 5.1: Electoral vulnerability and responsiveness to public priorities

Note: Predicted values of government's electoral vulnerability on responsiveness to public priorities in housing and unemployment with 95 percent confidence intervals (based on Table 5.1).

these findings more intuitively, I follow the advice by Brambor, Clark, and Golder (2006) and plot the predicted values (Figure 5.1). It is easier to see that when the government is extremely vulnerable (dashed line), as concern about housing increases, spending in housing increases, and the opposite happens for unemployment; conversely, when the government is extremely safe (solid line), as concern about housing increases, spending in housing decreases, and the opposite happens for unemployment.

Table 5.2 shows the results for the Electoral Decidability Hypothesis. Since CMP data use two single categories for social domains (welfare state expansion and welfare state limitations), health, housing and social welfare have been aggregated into one policy category called Welfare State.⁷ Table 5.2 presents results for the two measures of electoral decidability, that is, vote weighted party system dispersion (VWPSD) and salience weighted party system dispersion (SWPSD), whereas results for the unweighted party system dispersion (UPSDD) measure are reported in Appendix C. Electoral decidability seems not to have any conditional effect on policy responsiveness to public priorities for the selected domains as all coefficients of the interaction term are not statically significant at conventional levels.

⁷Given that CMP data do not have a specific category for unemployment, this policy issue has not been included in this analysis.

Table 5.2: Electoral decidability and policy responsiveness to public priorities

	Defence (a)	Defence (b)	Education (a)	Education (b)	Welfare State (a)	Welfare State (b)
Dependent variable: Government expenditure as percentage of GDP						
Public Priorities (t-1)	-0.009 (0.010)	0.002 (0.009)	-0.067** (0.027)	-0.042 (0.035)	0.036 (0.039)	-0.004 (0.030)
VWPSD (t)	0.214*** (0.068)		-0.008 (0.048)		0.138 (0.105)	
Priorities (t-1) × VWPSD (t)	0.003 (0.004)		0.005 (0.006)		-0.019 (0.012)	
SWPSD (t)		0.177* (0.104)		-0.058 (0.090)		0.071 (0.134)
Priorities (t-1) × SWPSD (t)		-0.002 (0.005)		0.002 (0.024)		-0.009 (0.014)
Left (t-1)	-0.457*** (0.091)	-0.454*** (0.092)	0.155* (0.091)	0.127 (0.085)	0.418** (0.191)	0.392** (0.191)
LSq (t)	0.041** (0.020)	0.037* (0.022)	-0.061** (0.025)	-0.077*** (0.021)	-0.301*** (0.050)	-0.288*** (0.050)
US 2nd Term (t)	0.158 (0.220)	0.166 (0.230)	-0.418** (0.177)	-0.436*** (0.153)	-1.333*** (0.280)	-1.404*** (0.281)
Inflation (t)	0.053** (0.025)	0.051** (0.025)	-0.076** (0.031)	-0.062** (0.027)	-0.245*** (0.059)	-0.248*** (0.059)
Unemployment (t)	0.052*** (0.019)	0.049** (0.020)	0.007 (0.016)	0.014 (0.015)	0.064* (0.039)	0.065 (0.040)
War (t)	-0.042 (0.072)	-0.008 (0.069)				
Constant	0.487 (0.329)	0.737** (0.374)	6.704*** (0.431)	6.843*** (0.369)	19.22*** (0.811)	19.39*** (0.728)
N	95	95	61	61	94	94
R ²	0.90	0.86	0.97	0.98	0.98	0.98

OLS with AR1 autocorrelation structure

Correlated panels corrected standard errors in parentheses and country dummies (Canada reference category)

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

Results for the Electoral Proximity Hypothesis are reported in Table 5.3. In all policy domains but one, the interaction term between public priorities and election year is not statistically significant. Only for housing, electoral proximity seems to decrease the likelihood of responsiveness to public priorities. The effect is plotted in Figure 5.2, which shows the predicted values of electoral proximity on responsiveness to public priorities in housing. Given that electoral proximity is operationalised with a dummy variable, the dashed line reports the effect of public priorities on spending in housing in the election year, while the solid line reports the effect of public priorities on spending in housing elsewhere. The graph shows that there is a very modest difference between the two cases, as confidence intervals almost overlap.

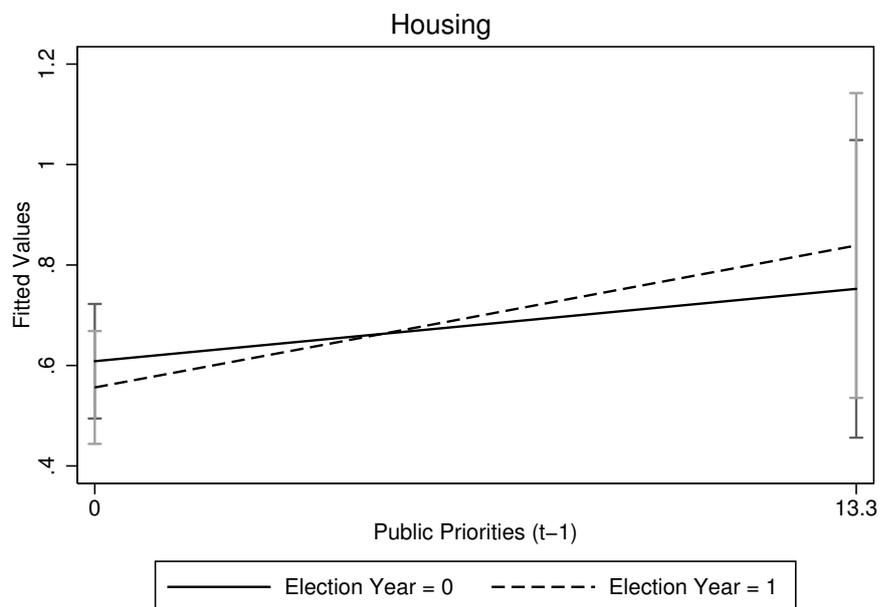


Figure 5.2: Electoral proximity and responsiveness to public priorities

Note: Predicted values of election year on responsiveness to public priorities in housing with 95 percent confidence intervals (based on Table 5.3) while omitting country dummies.

Table 5.3: Electoral proximity and policy responsiveness to public priorities

	Defence	Education	Health	Housing	Unemployment	Welfare
Dependent variable: Government expenditure as percentage of GDP						
Public Priorities (t-1)	-0.000 (0.004)	-0.036* (0.019)	-0.002 (0.012)	-0.010 (0.007)	-0.007** (0.003)	-0.061** (0.025)
Election Year (t)	0.030 (0.069)	0.085 (0.060)	-0.010 (0.109)	0.028 (0.025)	-0.059 (0.048)	-0.128 (0.129)
Priorities (t-1) × Election Year (t)	0.000 (0.006)	-0.014 (0.010)	-0.002 (0.009)	-0.010* (0.006)	-0.001 (0.002)	0.025 (0.022)
Left (t-1)	-0.432*** (0.089)	0.119 (0.091)	0.037 (0.126)	0.005 (0.032)	-0.046 (0.069)	0.160 (0.120)
LSq (t)	0.040* (0.021)	-0.064*** (0.019)	-0.121*** (0.029)	-0.035*** (0.012)	-0.052*** (0.020)	-0.172*** (0.034)
US 2nd Term (t)	0.148 (0.220)	-0.456*** (0.147)	-0.626** (0.275)		0.080 (0.061)	-0.204 (0.154)
Inflation (t)	0.054** (0.024)	-0.074*** (0.027)	-0.101*** (0.035)	-0.002 (0.011)	0.017 (0.017)	-0.128*** (0.038)
Unemployment (t)	0.050*** (0.017)	0.011 (0.015)	0.037** (0.019)	0.004 (0.003)	0.125*** (0.018)	0.061** (0.025)
War (t)	0.017 (0.066)					
Elderly (t)			0.167* (0.086)			
Constant	0.729** (0.311)	6.708*** (0.412)	5.871*** (1.205)	0.973*** (0.128)	1.238*** (0.317)	11.06*** (0.470)
N	95	61	82	64	87	93
R ²	0.85	0.98	0.97	0.90	0.90	0.99

OLS with AR1 autocorrelation structure

Correlated panels corrected standard errors in parentheses and country dummies (Canada reference category)

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

Responsiveness to Public Preferences

The previous section showed that spending is not responsive to the most important problem/issue and that competitive incentives have a marginal impact on policy responsiveness. The analysis is replicated for a subset of countries (Canada, the UK, and the US) and a subset of issues (defence, education, health, and welfare) by using spending preferences. Results are reported in Tables 5.4 to 5.6. As for priorities, before moving to comment on the impact of competitive incentives on responsiveness to public preferences, I consider the basic responsiveness model (reported in Appendix C) with only public opinion and a set of controls. As for priorities, these analyses show that *levels* of spending in the current period do not respond to *levels* of public preferences in spending in the previous period. This finding is interesting and will be readdressed in the sensitivity analysis.

Results for the Electoral Vulnerability Hypothesis (Table 5.4) partly resemble the story told for public priorities. Except for welfare, safe governments are no more likely than vulnerable governments to respond to public preferences. In fact, the interaction between preferences and vulnerability is negative in all models, but significant only in health, while positive and statistically significant at conventional levels ($p < 0.01$) only in welfare. As for priorities, these effects are plotted in Figure 5.3, where the dashed line refers to maximum vulnerability and the solid line to maximum safety. The graph shows that when the government is extremely vulnerable, an increase in spending preferences in welfare results in an increase in government spending on the issue, and the opposite happens to health; conversely, when the government is extremely safe, an increase in spending preferences in welfare results in a decrease in government spending on the issue, and the opposite happens to health.

Results for the Electoral Decidability Hypothesis are reported in Table 5.5 and, compared to the models for public priorities, do not report substantive differences. The exception is given by the education model, where the interaction between public preferences and party system dispersion goes in the opposite direction: the coefficient is, in fact, negative and significant for both the vote and the salience weighted measures. The effect of the latter is plotted in Figure 5.4, which shows that when the issue is very undecidable (solid line), as public preferences for spending in education increase, spending in education increases; conversely, when the issue is very decidable (dashed line), as public preferences for spending in education increase, spending in education decreases.

Table 5.4: Electoral vulnerability and policy responsiveness to public preferences

	Defence	Education	Health	Welfare
Dependent variable: Government expenditure as percentage of GDP				
Public Preferences (t-1)	-0.002 (0.005)	-0.018** (0.008)	-0.010 (0.011)	-0.003 (0.006)
Gov't Vulnerability (t-1)	-0.003 (0.004)	0.005 (0.014)	0.052*** (0.012)	0.003 (0.002)
Preferences (t-1) × Vulnerability (t-1)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.001*** (0.000)	0.000*** (0.000)
Left (t-1)	-0.888*** (0.275)	0.159 (0.119)	0.356 (0.288)	0.437*** (0.149)
LSq (t)	0.140*** (0.036)	-0.153*** (0.023)	-0.208*** (0.041)	-0.045** (0.023)
US 2nd Term (t)	0.481** (0.236)	-0.602*** (0.106)	-0.624*** (0.232)	-0.261*** (0.094)
Inflation (t)	0.104** (0.045)	0.079** (0.039)	-0.067 (0.052)	-0.089*** (0.029)
Unemployment (t)	0.223*** (0.058)	0.150*** (0.043)	-0.062 (0.073)	0.309*** (0.032)
War (t)	0.109 (0.127)			
Elderly (t)			0.481 (0.371)	
Constant	-1.731** (0.805)	7.324*** (0.627)	4.003 (4.114)	6.987*** (0.392)
N	43	31	43	43
R ²	0.96	0.98	0.89	0.99

OLS with AR1 autocorrelation structure

Correlated panels corrected standard errors in parentheses and country dummies (Canada reference category)

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

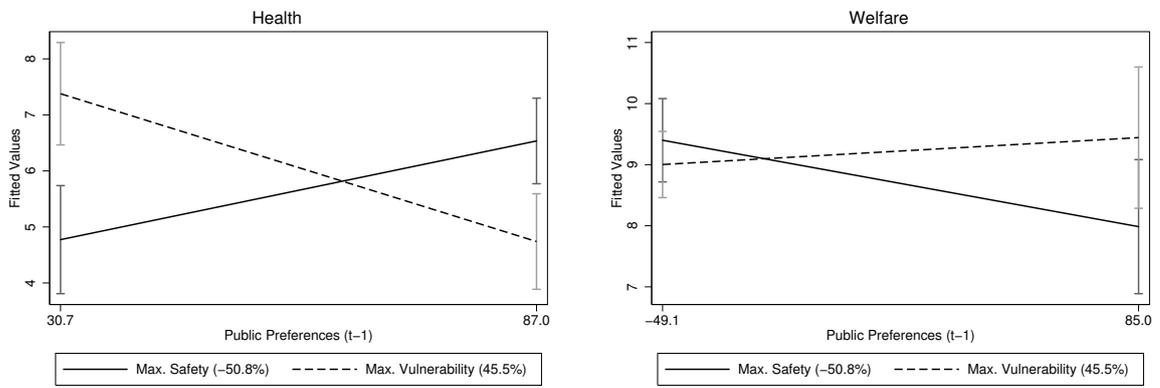


Figure 5.3: Electoral vulnerability and responsiveness to public preferences

Note: Predicted values of government's electoral vulnerability on responsiveness to public preferences in health and welfare with 95 percent confidence intervals (based on Table 5.4).

Table 5.5: Electoral decidability and policy responsiveness to public preferences

	Defence (a)	Defence (b)	Education (a)	Education (b)	Welfare State (a)	Welfare State (b)
Dependent variable: Government expenditure as percentage of GDP						
Public Preferences (t-1)	-0.004 (0.006)	-0.007 (0.005)	0.029* (0.016)	0.010 (0.012)	-0.015 (0.020)	-0.016 (0.018)
VWPSD (t)	0.387*** (0.056)		1.162*** (0.325)		0.161 (0.160)	
Preferences (t-1) × VWPSD (t)	0.000 (0.002)		-0.016*** (0.005)		0.000 (0.002)	
SWPSD (t)		0.603*** (0.121)		2.284* (1.320)		0.056 (0.218)
Preferences (t-1) × SWPSD (t)		0.004 (0.005)		-0.036* (0.020)		0.001 (0.004)
Left (t-1)	-0.713*** (0.156)	-0.667*** (0.168)	-0.129 (0.099)	0.021 (0.118)	0.021 (0.299)	0.108 (0.282)
LSq (t)	0.046 (0.033)	0.100*** (0.029)	-0.136*** (0.022)	-0.181*** (0.024)	-0.150** (0.065)	-0.200*** (0.065)
US 2nd Term (t)	0.293* (0.168)	0.344* (0.180)	-0.362*** (0.111)	-0.552*** (0.101)	-0.581* (0.311)	-0.625** (0.318)
Inflation (t)	0.090** (0.038)	0.080** (0.039)	0.042 (0.042)	0.037 (0.040)	-0.202*** (0.060)	-0.220*** (0.060)
Unemployment (t)	0.171*** (0.054)	0.170*** (0.058)	0.218*** (0.028)	0.248*** (0.035)	0.234** (0.113)	0.240** (0.115)
War (t)	0.020 (0.104)	0.044 (0.107)				
Constant	-0.775 (0.632)	-1.203* (0.695)	3.528*** (1.196)	5.412*** (0.979)	16.00*** (1.634)	17.13*** (1.410)
N	48	48	33	33	48	48
R ²	0.97	0.96	0.98	0.99	0.98	0.98

OLS with AR1 autocorrelation structure

Correlated panels corrected standard errors in parentheses and country dummies (Canada reference category)

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

Table 5.6: Electoral proximity and policy responsiveness to public preferences

	Defence	Education	Health	Welfare
Dependent variable: Government expenditure as percentage of GDP				
Public Preferences (t-1)	-0.002 (0.003)	-0.012* (0.006)	-0.005 (0.010)	-0.009 (0.005)
Election Year (t)	0.145 (0.101)	3.372*** (0.625)	-0.140 (0.451)	0.019 (0.066)
Preferences (t-1) × Election Year (t)	0.005 (0.005)	-0.047*** (0.009)	0.001 (0.007)	-0.001 (0.002)
Left (t-1)	-0.446*** (0.170)	0.176* (0.104)	-0.278 (0.187)	0.337*** (0.127)
LSq (t)	0.121*** (0.030)	-0.190*** (0.021)	-0.153*** (0.044)	-0.058*** (0.020)
US 2nd Term (t)	0.400* (0.221)	-0.917*** (0.124)	-0.455** (0.219)	-0.206** (0.098)
Inflation (t)	0.132*** (0.031)	0.104*** (0.033)	-0.060 (0.048)	-0.077*** (0.022)
Unemployment (t)	0.219*** (0.053)	0.151*** (0.033)	-0.060 (0.072)	0.322*** (0.039)
War (t)	0.100 (0.115)			
Elderly (t)			0.893*** (0.333)	
Constant	-1.942*** (0.720)	7.334*** (0.456)	-1.304 (3.945)	7.009*** (0.435)
N	48	33	48	48
R ²	0.94	0.99	0.68	0.89

OLS with AR1 autocorrelation structure

Correlated panels corrected standard errors in parentheses and country dummies (Canada reference category)

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

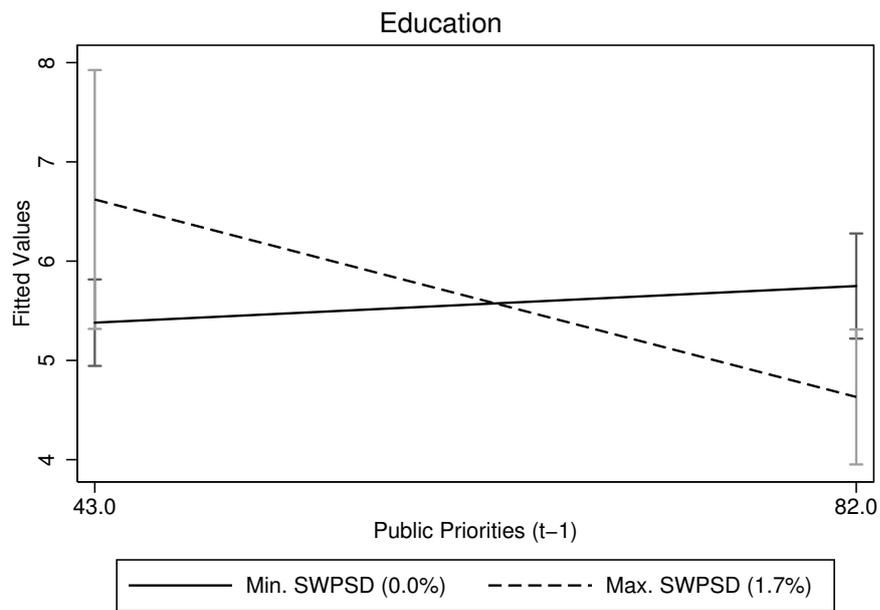


Figure 5.4: Electoral decidability and responsiveness to public preferences

Note: Predicted values of salience weighted party system dispersion (SWPSD) on responsiveness to public preferences in education with 95 percent confidence intervals (based on Table 5.5).

Finally, results for the Electoral Proximity Hypothesis are reported in Table 5.6. The hypothesis does not find confirmation and, in one case (education), the interaction between public preferences and election year is significant but in the opposite direction. The effect for the education model is shown in Figure 5.5, where predicted values are plotted. The slope is negative for both the dashed line (election year) and the solid line (other years), but lower for the election year, suggesting that spending in this domain decreases a bit more when public preferences increase and elections are approaching.

Sensitivity Analysis

The analysis reported above documented little if no influence of electoral incentives on budgetary responsiveness to public opinion (both priorities and preferences). The dependent variable has been estimated in levels and the responsiveness models (Tables C3 and C5) suggest that *levels* of spending in the current period do not respond to *levels* of priorities/preferences in the previous period. The opposite seems, instead, more likely from the policy domains analysed: that is, the higher the increase

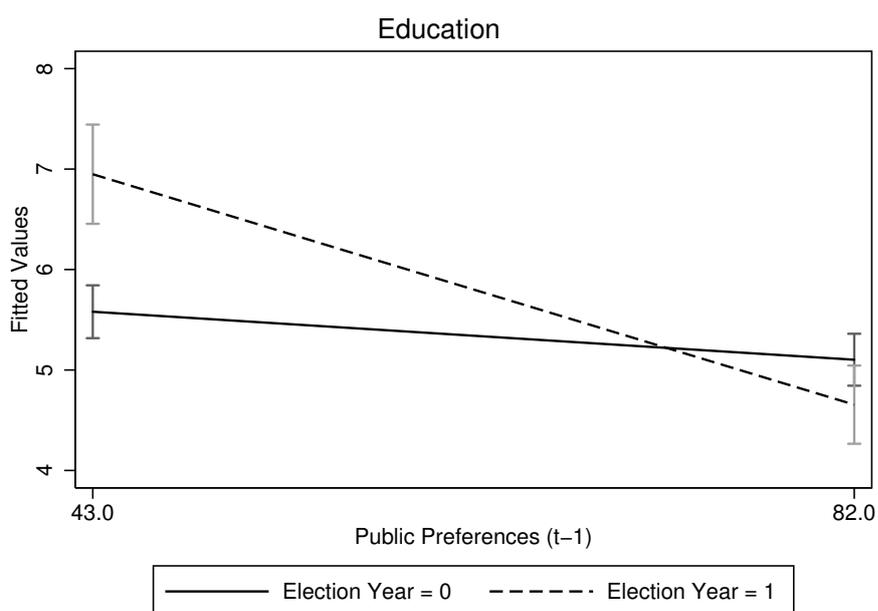


Figure 5.5: Electoral proximity and responsiveness to public preferences

Note: Predicted values of election year on responsiveness to public preferences in education with 95 percent confidence intervals (based on Table 5.6).

in priorities/preferences in the previous period, the lower the government spending in the current period.

However, theoretical reasons from the responsiveness literature (Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008; Soroka and Wlezien 2010) along with methodological caveats discussed above – namely, data on spending are not stationary – suggest that spending should be estimated in changes rather than levels. Therefore, in Appendix C, I report an extensive number of analyses where the dependent variable is measured in *changes in* instead of *levels of* spending. I summarise the main results below.

Firstly, the responsiveness analysis of changes in spending on past levels of priorities/preferences without interactions (Tables C4 and C6) reports a much clearer story. Changes in government budgetary policy respond to preferences but not to priorities and this effect is statistically significant in three out of four policy domains. This result confirms previous findings by Jennings and Wlezien (2015a) according to which, unlike spending preferences, the most important problem/issue does not have any effect on spending.

Secondly, several additional analyses with changes in spending have been undertaken to assess the

validity of the results presented in the chapter. First, all models in the chapter have been reestimated with the dependent variable in changes (Tables C7-C12). Second, the analysis with public priorities has been reestimated for the same countries used for the analysis with public preferences (Tables C13-C15). Third, the Electoral Decidability Hypothesis has been retested by using two alternative measures: an unweighted measure of party system dispersion (Tables C16-C17) and a measure based on the policy difference on a given issue between the government and the biggest opposition party (Tables C18-C19). Fourth, all models have been reestimated while including a lagged dependent variable (Tables C20-C25). None of these analyses subvert the conclusions that competitive incentives have a limited effect on policy responsiveness when it comes to budget.

5.5 Conclusion and Discussion

This chapter started with certain expectations that incentives coming from electoral competition (Sartori 1977; Stimson, Mackuen, and Erikson 1995; Bartolini 1999, 2000; Manin, Przeworski, and Stokes 1999) might have beneficial effects for policy responsiveness of governments to public opinion. The empirical analysis undertaken suggests that, when it comes to budgetary policy, all these expectations should be rethought.

As often happens, this chapter's attention has been captured by a puzzling result from the literature: on the one hand, Hobolt and Klemmensen (2008) and Pickup and Hobolt (2015) show strong findings in support of governmental responsiveness to public priorities and the importance of electoral pressures as a clear incentive for governments to respond; on the other hand, Bevan and Jennings (2014) and Jennings and Wlezien (2015a) find no governmental responsiveness whatsoever to public priorities. The reason why public priorities would not have an impact on spending is that, since budgets have directional implications, changes in the most important problem/issue question would not allow us to capture well the preferences the public is signalling, meaning whether the public wants more or less spending on a given policy domain (Jennings and Wlezien 2012).

Given these premises, I developed an empirical framework of competitive incentives for responsiveness to both public preferences and priorities, inspired by the prolific conceptual and theoretical literature on party competition (e.g., Downs 1957; Budge and Farlie 1983; Strøm 1992; Bartolini 1999),

and applied it to government spending as an indicator of policy responsiveness. Three major competitive incentives have been selected: electoral vulnerability of governments, decidability of the political offer, and electoral proximity.

The analysis produces three major findings. First, changes in (but not levels of) governments' budgetary policy respond to public preferences but not to public priorities. This finding contributes to the long-lasting debate in political science around whether governments respond to preferences or priorities and confirms results from previous studies in favour of the use of preferences instead of priorities to measure signals from the public when spending is involved.

Second, no support is found for a beneficial effect of governments' electoral vulnerability on responsiveness. Rather, the fact that the interaction between public opinion and vulnerability is, apart for few examples coming from sensitivity analyses with changes in spending, mostly not significant confirms and extends previous studies on presidential popularity arguing that being unpopular does not increase (or decrease) the likelihood of responsiveness (e.g., Cohen 1995; Canes-Wrone 2004) or that more popular presidents feel less pressure to promote policies in line with the public (Manza and Cook 2002, but see also Hakhverdian 2012).

Third, the chapter did not find clear support for higher responsiveness to priorities close to the elections, but there is some evidence that changes in spending are more responsive to spending preferences when elections are approaching. Interestingly, this finding is strictly connected to another incidental finding of this chapter, that is, government ideology seems to matter only when the dependent variable is measured in levels rather than changes. The latter seems to be in line with the recent comparative finding of Epp, Lovett, and Baumgartner (2014), according to which no evidence is found that governments spend more in line with their ideology, and, as they claim, this is relevant since it challenges the usefulness of issue ownership theories in explaining budgetary policy.

The Electoral Decidability Hypothesis represents the biggest non-result of the chapter as inconsistent results are found with both preferences and priorities. A possible explanation would be that since governments are overloaded by citizens' requests and demands (Jones and Baumgartner 2005), it is plausible to argue that disagreement on the issue might reduce responsiveness rather than enhance it. In fact, electoral decidability, conceived as position taking by emphasising the importance

of certain issues compared to others, may be interpreted not only as a degree of polarisation of the political offer, but also as the amount of difficulty governments are facing in making a policy change. However, also another explanation can be proposed. If it is true that ‘when polarisation is high, the meaning of the vote choice can be reduced to nothing more than an expression of partisan loyalty’ (Vegetti 2014: 240), then the expected beneficial effect of decidability in facilitating responsiveness might simply translate into party attachment when the issue is too polarised. In this sense, too much polarisation would not be good for responsiveness either; hence these results for decidability should not be seen so strongly in opposition of the Electoral Decidability Hypothesis. Perhaps in polarised contexts, public preferences and priorities are also polarised, meaning that different partisan groups might want more or less budget spent on different policy areas, and governments might just be inclined to respond to their own voters and not to the priorities/preferences of the general public. Unfortunately, I do not have data to check the preferences and priorities of different voter groups and to see whether governments are more likely to respond to their own supporters, rather than to the whole public, as polarisation increases. This would be very interesting, though, for future developments of this chapter.

Chapter 6

Legislative Responsiveness

6.1 Introduction

This chapter studies whether the proportion of adopted laws responds to an increase in public attention and, then, whether this is mediated by electoral incentives. This question is relevant for we already know considerably about rhetorical responsiveness (Cohen 1997; Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008; Hakhverdian 2010) as well as dynamic agenda representation (John, Bevan, and Jennings 2011; Mortensen et al. 2011; Bevan and Jennings 2014; Green-Pedersen and Walgrave 2014), and whether parties respond to voters' preferences (Adams et al. 2004; Ezrow et al. 2010; Adams, Ezrow, and Somer-Topcu 2011; Schumacher, de Vries, and Vis 2013) and priorities (Spoon and Klüver 2014; Wagner and Meyer 2014; Klüver and Spoon 2014) in their manifestos. Yet we know much less about legislative responsiveness and its determinants.

Governmental policy responsiveness can be driven by several factors. For instance, responsiveness may depend on public issue salience (Miller and Stokes 1963; Page and Shapiro 1983; Burstein 2003; Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008; Soroka and Wlezien 2010), different institutional arrangements (Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008; Wlezien and Soroka 2012), electoral pressure (Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008), electoral proximity (Canes-Wrone 2004; Canes-Wrone and Shotts 2004), interest group pressure (Lax and Phillips 2009), and the size and intensity of protest (Morales et al. 2014). However, this chapter addresses the issue of under which circumstances governments respond

to the public, looking specifically at a set of incentives governing parties face when their mind is projected to the next elections. Although reelection is not the only goal politicians aim to achieve (e.g., see Strøm 1990), they nevertheless have in mind the “shadows of future elections” when they enter government (Lupia and Strom 1995) and are worried about voters’ reactions (Downs 1957; Friedrich 1963; Sartori 1977; Bartolini 1999) during the electoral cycle.¹

If studies on governmental policy responsiveness in comparative perspective exist, they mainly look at policy in terms of public spending (Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008; Soroka and Wlezien 2010; Wlezien and Soroka 2012). While the comparative literature on policy agenda’s priorities is still underdeveloped (Baumgartner et al. 2009; Green-Pedersen and Walgrave 2014), comparative studies using legislation as an indicator of policy responsiveness are even rarer (e.g., Bevan and Jennings 2014), if compared to single country studies (see, for instance, the chapters included in the recent volume edited by Green-Pedersen and Walgrave 2014).

This chapter uses time-series cross-sectional data on legislative priorities from the Comparative Agendas Project for Spain, the UK, and the US in several policy domains. In line with previous research, the chapter confirms that public priorities have an impact on legislative priorities of governments (e.g., Bevan and Jennings 2014). However, the effect of incentives coming from competition is mixed. First, government electoral vulnerability seems not to have a conditional effect on legislative responsiveness, supporting and extending the finding from presidential research (Canes-Wrone 2004) that unpopular presidents are not more likely than popular ones to support policies endorsed by the majority of the public. Second, despite law productivity decreases when elections are approaching, legislative responsiveness seems to actually be higher in the election year compared to other years, meaning that policy makers are willing to play the salience card to increase their chance of reelection. Third, the chapter finds mixed results in relation to the expectation that public priorities would have a greater effect on legislative priorities when the government is associated with the issue and the issue is salient to the public.

¹Yet policy portfolio risk and return must matter to citizens hence they must affect government’s electoral prospects (Bertelli and John 2012).

6.2 Subverting the Public

A major reason for enacting legislation is to translate the people's will into policy output. Yet there is a solid and diversified literature showing how legislation is the product of a combination of factors that are at odds, if not detrimental, to responsiveness to citizens' preferences and demands.

A first insight comes from the literature on presidential powers (e.g., Shugart and Carey 1992; Cheibub 2006; Doyle and Elgie 2014). Presidents can exercise a set of legislative powers over legislation and budgetary policy, as well as non-legislative powers over cabinet formation, cabinet dismissal and dissolution of assembly (see Shugart and Carey 1992: Ch. 8). More than that, presidents can exercise not only formal powers as prescribed in the constitution, but also a set of informal powers that are more difficult to measure empirically. In this sense, presidents can act as an arbiter, that is, they follow different priorities than the ones of their own party and take different positions than the ones their own party officially stands for (e.g., Finland in the 1980s as well as the US). Such a divergence can have serious consequences for policy-making and electoral expectations, but also for responsiveness to public opinion.

For instance, policy switches (Stokes 2001; Samuels and Shugart 2010: Ch. 8) can also be a deviation from the citizens. In her study on mandate responsiveness in Latin America, Stokes (2001) addresses that theoretical issue regarding responsiveness and responsibility from an empirical perspective and finds that in some cases to be responsible/manipulative pays off better than to be responsive if it can help face minor risks, even though it implies violating the mandate. From an institutional standpoint, Samuels and Shugart (2010: Ch. 8) find that policy switches are more likely in presidential and semi-presidential systems, when elections are closer, than in parliamentary systems, probably due to the fact that they are more accustomed to the responsible party model. Incentives for the next election come also into play: presidents would try to bring their party on their own side if this justifies the ultimate end of winning elections, even though it would mean changing policy against their own party.

A second insight comes from the literature on government and coalition formation. While a first wave of research previously suggested that ministers are policy dictators in their ministry (Laver and Shepsle 1990, but see also Carroll and Cox 2007), recent research shows that the autonomy of

ministers is diminished by the activity of junior ministers as well as parliamentary committees (Indridason and Kristinsson 2013) and that coalition partners monitor and delegate to each other (Thies 2001; Indridason and Kam 2008). Also, opposition influence matters: the public will can be distorted by committee preferences, the opposition, or veto players (Shugart and Carey 1992; Tsebelis 1995; Cameron 2000; Cox and McCubbins 2005), which can have the final word on a bill. This is even more relevant in systems allowing the constitution of divided governments (Shugart 1995; Cox and McCubbins 2005), for if the executive party controls a majority of the seats, its capacity to push forward legislation should increase.

Finally, presidential literature suggests that presidents can also raise the salience of a bill by “going public” and make it electorally costly to the House to block certain bills (Kernell 1986; Canes-Wrone and de Marchi 2002; Canes-Wrone 2004; Cox and McCubbins 2005; Calvo 2007). Moreover, some scholars argue that amendments bring the bill closer to the party’s position (Martin and Vanberg 2004), but that intra-party factors can also matter as well as change in public opinion.

6.3 Electoral Competition as Incentive for Legislative Responsiveness

Despite the literature suggesting how often governments deviate from the public in the law-making and policy-making stages, this chapter argues that, if certain electoral incentives are present, they might have a beneficial effect and increase the likelihood of responsiveness to public opinion. The vast conceptual and theoretical literature on political competition suggests which electoral incentives can improve the chances of governments for responding to the public. Nevertheless, I remind the reader that the focus is on legislative responsiveness and not on other types of responsiveness, meaning that a given electoral incentive can have different effects according to how responsiveness is measured.

The proposed theoretical framework builds on the so-called Friedrich’s (1963) “mechanism of anticipated reactions” and argues that, if governments aim to be reelected, they will be more likely to reach this goal if they respond sympathetically to citizens’ preferences and demands (see Downs

1957; Bartolini 1999). Given this fundamental premise, the first competitive incentive is what Bartolini (2000) calls incumbent vulnerability, for governments are theoretically more likely to respond to the public when they feel electorally vulnerable between elections. Therefore, vulnerability is defined as the electoral uncertainty governments perceive during the electoral cycle. The literature on electoral vulnerability and government popularity does not give a definitive answer to the question of whether such an incentive matters for responsiveness. While some studies find that electoral pressure increases government responsiveness to citizens' preferences and priorities (Hakhverdian 2010; Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008) and that unpopular presidents will tend to endorse popular positions in order to boost personal approval ratings (e.g., Manza and Cook 2002), other studies report no particular impact of presidential popularity on responsiveness to public concern (Cohen 1995) and that "unpopular presidents are not more likely than popular ones to support positions endorsed by majority opinion" (Canes-Wrone 2004: 487).

However, alternative arguments exist and come from the presidential literature. Since governments are attentive to changes in public opinion and fear electoral consequences (Manin, Przeworski, and Stokes 1999), it can also be the case that "going public" and raising the salience of a bill constitutes an effective strategy for increasing its legislative success (Kernell 1986; Canes-Wrone and de Marchi 2002; Cox and McCubbins 2005; Calvo 2007). For instance, Canes-Wrone and de Marchi (2002: 504) in the US find that "only for legislation that is *both* complex and salient will popularity translate into policy influence", while Calvo (2007: 275) finds that, in Argentina, "a very high positive image increases legislative success to about 60 per cent when legislation starts in the House and about 80 per cent for the Senate".² Therefore, an opposite argument suggests that "the likelihood of approving a bill [is] a function of the increasing popularity of the executive" (Calvo 2007: 275). According to this argument, legislative productivity increases when the government is more popular rather than more vulnerable.

If electoral vulnerability behaves in the way theorised above, we should expect governments to produce more legislation *in line with* public priorities when governments are vulnerable. In this

²Yet elsewhere Canes-Wrone (2004: 487) finds that both popular and unpopular presidents "obtain significant legislative influence from appealing to the public" (about domestic initiatives) and that "unpopular presidents are not more likely than popular ones to support positions endorsed by majority opinion".

sense, my first hypothesis will be the following:

H6.1 (The Electoral Vulnerability Hypothesis). The more vulnerable the government, the more likely it will be responsive to public priorities.

Another crucial competitive incentive for responsiveness is given by electoral proximity. In fact, if elections are instruments of democracy (Mayhew 1974; Manin, Przeworski, and Stokes 1999; Powell 2000), governments who seek reelection are theoretically more likely to respond when elections are approaching. However, the literature provides inconsistent conclusions. For instance, the hypothesis finds confirmation in the American context where reelection-seeking presidents are more likely to endorse popular policies in the second half of the term (Canes-Wrone and Shotts 2004). Moreover, studying nuclear energy policy in thirteen countries after the Fukushima disaster, Morales et al. (2014) find that proximity to elections was indeed a powerful incentive, in association with other factors, in all of the three cases – Germany, Italy and Switzerland – that undertook substantial policy responsiveness. On the other side, evidence from Spain reveals that policymakers are more responsive to public priorities immediately after elections and when the executive governs without a majority (Chaqués Bonafont and Palau 2011).³

Theorising on the electoral proximity hypothesis in relation to legislative responsiveness is tricky. Should we really expect governments to legislate more on issues the public is concerned about right before elections? On the one hand, the answer might be yes, for law-making in favour of public priorities may boost government's chances of reelection. On the other hand, either governments are likely to produce legislation closer to public priorities right after elections – perhaps due to the ongoing “honeymoon effect” (Stimson 1976; Sigelman and Kathleen 1983; Green and Jennings 2014) – or governments would tend not to put forward a bill they might run against during the campaign (Martin and Vanberg 2004), decreasing the likelihood of introducing legislation in the final part of the election cycle. In other words, the “natural” cycle of legislation production suggests that politicians know that there will be no “procedural” time to go through a complex piece of legislation towards the end.

³This might suggest that the relationship between responsiveness and the electoral cycle is not linear but curvilinear, with responsiveness higher in the first year after elections, probably in line with the so-called honeymoon effect, but decreasing during the legislative term and increasing again in the election year.

The crucial distinction here is between putting forward legislation because the government is linked to a mandate that it has to carry forward and putting forward legislation as a reaction to a change in public priorities. It might be less likely and more risky for governments to introduce a bill before elections, in general terms, but it might also be the case that the chances of introducing a bill *in line with* public opinion might have beneficial effects for the government. So, my argument is not that legislation production increases when elections are approaching. What I argue is, instead, that if a law in line with with public concerns and priorities is implemented when elections are approaching, it can still help governments to increase their chance of reelection because the public is concerned about the issue.

H6.2 (The Electoral Proximity Hypothesis). Legislative responsiveness to public opinion is likely to occur when elections are approaching.

Unlike electoral vulnerability and electoral proximity, which can be conceived as beneficial incentives for responsiveness, there is an additional competitive incentive that might, instead, have an ill-fated effect on responsiveness. This incentive relies on the issue ownership theory of party competition (Budge and Farlie 1983; Petrocik 1996), and, especially, on its associative dimension (Walgrave, Lefevere, and Tresch 2012). In this sense, responsiveness is mediated by whether the government is more associated with certain issues rather than others. In fact, a left-wing government might be more willing to legislate more on social left-wing issues and, conversely, a right-wing government might be expected to legislate on right-wing issues such as defence or public order. If governments behaved as issue ownership theories would expect, they would devote their legislative attention on issues they have a good reputation on or issues they are associated with, in order to avoid electoral defeat (Green and Hobolt 2008; van der Brug 2004).

However, there is also a tendency for issues to receive more attention from a party when that party does well on that issue and when the public cares about it (e.g., Walgrave and De Swert 2007; Walgrave and Lefevere 2013). This would suggest that public issue salience and issue ownership are not purely additive effects but that there is an interactive effect between the two.

Hence, we should expect government partisanship to mediate the relationship between public

opinion and public policy in the following way. The likelihood of responsiveness can be higher on those issues the government is more associated with. However, it can also be the case that public issue priorities diverge from the issues the government is closer to, therefore responsiveness may be lower in these cases.

Reviewing the studies on governmental responsiveness in dynamic representation, the effect of government ideology has been mostly tested using executive speeches and public spending, as indicators of policy, leading to inconsistent results. For instance, Hakhverdian (2010) finds that, although government partisanship affects policy independently of public preferences in the UK, the latter still have an impact on the budget speeches. Using both executive speeches and public spending in Denmark, the UK and the US, Hobolt and Klemmensen (2008) find that the effect of government ideology and public priorities is less consistent across policy areas, while Soroka and Wlezien (2010, 2004*b*, 2005) find support for the effect of government ideology on government spending in the US but not in Canada and the UK. In a large N study on responsiveness and inequality in twenty-five European countries, Peters and Ensink (2014) find that more right-wing governments tend to have lower levels of social spending. However, although not interested in responsiveness, a recent study by Epp, Lovett, and Baumgartner (2014) does not find that the ideology of the prime ministerial party predicts the level of spending, which suggests that the application of expectations based on issue ownership theories should be seriously rethought when looking at budgets. Finally, the literature from the Comparative Agendas Project has recently started to look at the responsiveness of government agendas to public priorities using different venues, but only a few studies look at laws, mainly in the UK, and find that government ideology does not really matter (John, Bevan, and Jennings 2011; Bevan and Jennings 2014).

Such a rich diversification in the results outlined corroborates the necessity of testing the effect of legislative responsiveness to public priorities conditional to government partisanship.

H6.3 (The Ideological Proximity Hypothesis). Government responsiveness is higher on those issues the public cares about and that are closer to the government.

6.4 Data, Measurement, and Model Specification

The Dependent Variable

Unlike other studies on government responsiveness to public opinion, which essentially use party manifestos (Schumacher, de Vries, and Vis 2013; Klüver and Spoon 2014), executive speeches (Cohen 1997; Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008; Hakhverdian 2010) and public spending (Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008; Soroka and Wlezien 2010; Wlezien and Soroka 2012), this chapter uses legislative priorities as indicator of policy. This novelty is clearly driven by the fact that comparative data on policy indicators across time and space have only recently started to become available. Data for the dependent variable are taken from the Comparative Agendas Project (CAP) for Spain, the UK and the US (Bevan, John, and Jennings 2011; Chaqués Bonafont, Palau, and Muñoz 2014; Jones and Whyman 2014).

The reason for the case selection is twofold. On the one hand, the advantage of using data from the CAP is clear. Given that this chapter is about responsiveness between elections, data ideally covering the whole electoral cycle are the gold standard for studying dynamic representation. However, CAP data have also drawbacks. The contingent disadvantage is that a unified CAP dataset is not ready as yet and data on some countries are not publicly available. A second issue is related to the fact that CAP time-series must be matched with time-series for public priorities as well as government's electoral vulnerability. These caveats end up reducing considerably the number of countries at my disposal.

On the other hand, the countries selected would allow me to assess the likelihood of legislative responsiveness, conditional on a set of electoral incentives, in cases in which electoral identifiability (Strøm 1990; Shugart and Carey 1992) and clarity of responsibility (Powell and Whitten 1993; Hellwig and Samuels 2007) are high. The argument is that, if voters have a reasonably clear understanding of the main differences between government and opposition, then this would be a facilitating condition for governments to respond (Bartolini 2000). In this sense, if it is hard for voters to punish governments in future elections because of low electoral identifiability and low clarity of responsibility, as happens in multi-party coalition governments, then governments would be less worried to respond

to the public. Following this argument, it would be easier for single-party governments to respond to opinion change since the policy output would not be the by-product of a coalition agreement (Soroka and Wlezien 2010: 48). Moreover, the cases selected share other institutional similarities and differences. For instance, the fact that Spain experiences the formation of minority governments makes it similar to the US, where the president can also be regarded as a minority in periods of divided governments. This is also the main difference with the UK, where governments usually have a majority. Moreover, similarly to the US President, Spain's constructive vote of no-confidence makes the remove of the prime minister quite difficult.⁴

The dependent variable is the proportion of laws by CAP Major Topic enacted every year. Note that, while the British legislative process does not allow a distinction between laws initiated by the parliament and laws initiated by the government because, in practice, all laws except for private members' bills, are proposed by the government (John et al. 2013), such a distinction does exist in the Spanish case. However, most laws are in practice initiated by the governing party.⁵ Given that some legislation in Spain and the UK implements European directives into the national context, this legislation would simply be a response to European Union requests rather than a response to public opinion. For this reason, legislation explicitly stating in the CAP title that implements a directive from the EU is omitted. For the US, a subpopulation of all public laws is taken. Although all laws in the US must be signed by the president, only those initiated by a Congressman whose party coincides with the party of the president are considered here. Commemorative laws in the US are also excluded. Since I am interested in parceling out government responsiveness, this cautiousness aims at reducing some of the noise in the data. Table 6.1 shows the number of laws enacted in each country in the policy domains used in the analysis. Government's legislative attention in Spain is mainly devoted to macroeconomic issues and crime. The UK shows a similar pattern with the exception that law and crime issues are the first legislative priority of British governments, closely followed by macroeconomic issues. In the US there is a dominant law production in defence and legislative activity

⁴The lack of counter examples will leave to future research the task of testing on empirical grounds whether single-party governments are more responsive than multi-party coalition governments, a hypothesis that is clearly influenced by electoral institutions (Lijphart 1999; Powell 2000).

⁵Laws coded by the Spanish Policy Agendas Project and published in the *Boletín Oficial del Estado* include ordinary laws, organic laws, decree laws and legislative decrees.

decreases considerably in all other policy domains.

Table 6.1: CAP Major Topic codes used in the analysis

Major Topic	Spain (1982-2008)		UK (1960-2007)		US (1948-2011)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1. Macroeconomics	253	16.5	374	13.0	208	2.5
3. Health	40	2.6	124	4.3	240	2.9
6. Education	63	4.1	86	3.0	193	2.3
7. Environment	39	2.5	87	3.0	232	2.8
12. Law and Crime	170	11.1	429	15.0	374	4.5
13. Social Welfare	21	1.4	91	3.2	115	1.4
14. Housing	19	1.2	157	5.5	119	1.4
16. Defence	62	4.0	58	2.0	1004	12.0

Note: The cells contain frequencies and proportion of laws enacted in each policy domain in each country.

Source: Comparative Agendas Project.

Independent Variables and Controls

The main independent variable is public issue priorities measured using the “most important problem/issue” (MIP/MII) question. While the MIP/MII question might be more problematic when associated with indicators of government activity that contain policy directionality (for instance, more or less spending on a given issue), it matches quite well with government priorities and is frequently used in studies on dynamic agenda representation (Jones and Baumgartner 2004; John, Bevan, and Jennings 2011; Bevan and Jennings 2014). Data on citizens’ priorities have been recoded by the author in line with the Policy Agendas Project codebook to make them more comparable.

Electoral vulnerability represents the most relevant incentive of electoral competition for responsiveness. Governments’ electoral vulnerability is computed by subtracting for each year the vote intentions for the relevant opposition parties from the vote intentions for the governing parties (for Spain and the UK) while US presidential disapprovals are subtracted from approvals (see Chapter 3 and Appendix A for details).⁶

Electoral proximity is measured using a dummy variable, 1 for the election year, zero otherwise.

⁶Note that, the measure does not explicitly take into account any institutional difference mainly because it focuses on capturing potential vulnerability over time. However, even though such indicators were included, given the own countries’ nature there would be not enough variance as vulnerability is mostly electoral rather than institutional.

Government ideology is measured with a dummy variable, taking value 1 if the government is defined as left-wing along the traditional left-right economic scale (e.g., Benoit and Laver 2006), zero otherwise. Including government partisanship in the equation allows me to test the mechanism through which public opinion translates into policy (see Hakhverdian 2010: 849-850). If the public has an impact on policy after controlling for government ideology, then it means that the government is truly responding to the public. If public priorities have no impact on policy after controlling for government ideology, then it means the government is not dynamically reacting to the public but it is only responding to its mandate (only if government ideology is also significant).

Given the importance of institutional factors and veto players in the law-making phase and given that such constraints can help policy change deviate from the public, I use an index of political constraint developed by Heinsz (2002). POLCONIII “identifies the number of independent branches of government with veto power over policy change”, assuming that the preferences of each of these branches and the status quo policy are independently and identically drawn from a uniform, unidimensional policy space (Heinsz 2002: 363). The measure of political constraint “incorporates data on the number of independent political institutions with veto power in a given polity and data on the alignment and heterogeneity of the political actors that inhabit those institutions” (Heinsz 2002: 384). The index, thus, takes into account “the extent of alignment across branches of government using data on the party composition of the executive and legislative branches” and “the extent of preference heterogeneity within each legislative branch” (Heinsz 2002: 363). The index varies from zero to 1: as the number of actors with independent veto power increases, the level of political constraints increases.⁷

Another political control is included, namely, a dummy variable accounting for the possibility that US presidents who cannot run for reelection might be less willing to respond to the public, because the electoral incentive simply disappears (though not fully because their party still runs for reelection). I also include unemployment rate and inflation as economic indicators, since legislation can be driven by the state of the economy and not necessarily by an increase in public concern on the

⁷In practical terms, the measure of political constraint derives from the fractionalisation of the legislature based on Rae’s and Taylor’s (1970) index of fractionalisation. For details on how the political constraint index is calculated I refer to the appendix in Heinsz (2002: 380-389).

issue.

The Model

This chapter uses time-series cross-sectional data from three countries in eight policy domains. Instead of estimating issue-specific models, as done in other research on responsiveness and dynamic representation, to test my hypotheses I reshape the data and I stack the data matrix in terms of issues as well (see Chapter 4 for details).

To estimate TSCS models, pure OLS can be problematic (Beck and Katz 1995) because it assumes errors to have the same variance (homoskedasticity) and errors to be independent of each other over time (no serial correlation) and across unit (no spatial correlation). Unit-root tests for stationarity reveal that data on the dependent variable are stationary and thus there is no need of differencing the data.⁸ The Wooldridge (2002) test for autocorrelation in TSCS data suggests that only in one instance (housing) is there evidence of autocorrelation. However, by running country-specific models, predicting the residuals of the dependent variable and plotting the autocorrelation and partial autocorrelation functions, some residuals seem to be autocorrelated. For this reason, I prefer to proceed cautiously and control for possible serial correlation in the model. Finally, tests for homoskedasticity reveal that some models require an adjustment to control for heteroskedasticity.⁹

The pooled models are estimated with panel corrected standard errors (Beck and Katz 1995), which controls for panel heteroscedasticity and contemporaneous correlations of the errors and fitted with the Prais-Winsten method to test for serial correlation (Plümper, Troeger, and Manow 2005: 342). The assumption is that, within panels, there is first-order autocorrelation (AR1). TSCS data are seldom independent along the time dimension within units and the Prais-Winsten estimator is one way to deal with serial correlation in the data and is suggested for small samples (Fortin-Rittberger 2014). This choice is preferable to LDV models as “the elimination of serial correlation by inclusion of the lagged residuals gives more appropriate coefficients than the inclusion of a lagged dependent variable” (Plümper, Troeger, and Manow 2005: 342-3), which would also absorb more time-series dy-

⁸Unit-root tests based on Augmented Dickey-Fuller tests are used.

⁹Breusch-Pagan and White tests are used.

namics leaving less variance for the substantive explanatory variables (see also Achen 2000).¹⁰ Since it is unlikely that errors are independent across panels, they are assumed to be panel-level heteroskedastic.

$$\begin{aligned}
 LAW_{(t)} = & \alpha + \beta_1[PO_{(t-1)}] + \beta_2[COMP_{(t-1)}] \\
 & + \beta_3[PO_{(t-1)} \times COMP_{(t-1)}] + \beta_4[LEFT_{(t-1)}] + \beta_5[LSQ_{(t)}] \\
 & + \beta_6[POLCONIII_{(t)}] + \beta_7[TERM_{(t)}] + \beta_8[ECON_{(t)}] + \epsilon
 \end{aligned} \tag{6.1}$$

where:

$LAW_{(t)}$ = the percentage of enacted laws devoted to a given policy domain in year t .

$PO_{(t-1)}$ = public priorities on a given policy domain at time $t-1$.

$COMP_{(t-1)}$ = competitive incentives: electoral vulnerability at time $t-1$; electoral proximity at time t .

$LEFT_{(t-1)}$ = government ideology in the previous year (1 for left-wing governments, zero otherwise).

$LSQ_{(t)}$ = Gallagher's least squares index at the time of the previous election.

$POLCONIII_{(t)}$ = Heinsz's index of political constraint in the current year.

$TERM_{(t)}$ = second US presidential term in the current year (1 for second term, zero otherwise).

$ECON_{(t)}$ = each economic indicator (unemployment, inflation) in the current year.

α and ϵ represent the intercept and the error term. The effect of the competitive incentives on policy responsiveness is given by the interaction term between public opinion and the competitive incentive [$PO_{t-1} \times COMP_{(t-1)}$]. In the analysis I reversed the sign of electoral vulnerability – namely, positive values denote higher levels of vulnerability, whereas negative values denote higher levels of safety – to ease the interpretation of the coefficients. If the Electoral Vulnerability Hypothesis is supported by the data, I should expect a positive and significant coefficient for the interaction

¹⁰Note that models are also reestimated including a LDV and results are reported in Appendix D. The inclusion of the LDV does not alter the results for the Electoral Vulnerability and Electoral Proximity models.

term, meaning the more vulnerable the government, the more likely it will be responsive. Finally, if the government is more responsive in the election year, the coefficient for the interaction term should also be positive and significant.¹¹

To test the expectation relating the Ideological Proximity Hypothesis, issues are divided into two macro categories, according to a traditional left-right distinction. Left-wing issues include education, environment, health, housing, welfare. Right-wing issues include defence, foreign affairs, law and crime. Macroeconomics is excluded given that it is not straightforward to assign such macro topic either to right- or left-wing governments. The model that will be tested is the one outlined in Equation 1 but without the interaction term and the government ideology control.

Given that CAP data on enacted laws provide information on when the law has been approved but not when it has been introduced, it is hard to say when the public actually influenced government's decision to introduce a law on the issue. I follow the standard suggestion in the studies of responsiveness (Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008; Soroka and Wlezién 2010) of taking one year lag for public priorities.

6.5 Empirical Results

Table 6.2 reports the results with panel-corrected standard errors and country dummies for Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2. Hypothesis 1 tests the mediating effect of government's electoral vulnerability against the mediating effect of government popularity on legislative responsiveness. On the one hand, electoral pressure is said to be beneficial for making governments responsive. On the other hand, presidential research suggests that more popular governments have higher probabilities of passing a bill on a salient issue.

The Electoral Vulnerability model results in a coefficient of the interaction between public priorities and vulnerability that is positive but not statistically significant. A closer look at the main terms suggests that public issue salience does have an effect on legislative productivity as well as government's vulnerability. When vulnerability is zero, public issue salience has an effect of 0.1 percent on law production. The negative sign for the coefficient of electoral vulnerability indicates that law

¹¹The models without interaction terms are not reported in the text but they are available in Appendix D.

productivity increases when the government is vulnerable, but this effect seems not to be mediated by an increase in public concern on issues.

The finding that government's electoral vulnerability seems not to have an effect on legislative responsiveness is, however, in line with some presidential research. In fact, by confirming that unpopular governments are not more likely than popular ones to support positions endorsed by majority opinion (Canes-Wrone 2004), my finding drifts from the American-based conventional wisdom that unpopular presidents would tend to endorse popular positions in order to boost their own popularity. Though this chapter does not deal with position taking but with public issue salience, it is interesting that such a non-result can be extended comparatively outside the US boundaries.

Results from the Electoral Proximity model seem to be in line with the Electoral Proximity Hypothesis, that is, legislative responsiveness would be higher during the election year. Although the main term for the election year dummy is, as expected, negative – meaning that law production decreases when elections are approaching (if public issue salience was zero) – but not statistically significant, the interaction between public priorities and the election year dummy is positive and significant. Thus, apparently, when elections are imminent, governments seem to be willing to play the issue salience card, by introducing legislation on issues about which the public is concerned in order to increase their chances of reelection.

To better understand this effect, I follow Brambor and colleagues' recommendation (2006) and plot the marginal effects of the interaction. Figure 6.1 shows that the slope of the coefficient when the election year dummy equals one (black dashed line) is higher than the slope of the coefficient for all other years (grey straight line), meaning that the likelihood of legislative responsiveness is slightly higher when elections are proximate.

Table 6.2: Electoral Pressure and Legislative Responsiveness

	Electoral Vulnerability Model	Electoral Connection Model
Dependent Variable: Proportion of Legislation		
MIP (t-1)	0.100 ^{***} (0.019)	0.082 ^{***} (0.020)
Vulnerability (t-1)	-0.015 (0.011)	
MIP (t-1) × Vulnerability (t-1)	0.000 (0.001)	
Election Year (t)		-0.113 (0.356)
MIP (t-1) × Election Year (t)		0.075 ^{***} (0.029)
Left (t-1)	-0.076 (0.366)	0.007 (0.357)
LSq (t)	0.100 [*] (0.058)	0.106 [*] (0.056)
Political Constraint (t)	4.076 (5.877)	3.297 (5.402)
US 2nd Term (t)	-0.464 (0.471)	-0.372 (0.469)
Unemployment (t)	0.002 (0.059)	0.000 (0.057)
Inflation (t)	0.019 (0.039)	-0.002 (0.038)
Constant	2.524 (2.674)	2.871 (2.433)
N	706	706
R ²	0.10	0.11

OLS with AR1 autocorrelation structure

Correlated panels corrected standard errors in parentheses and country dummies (Spain reference category)

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

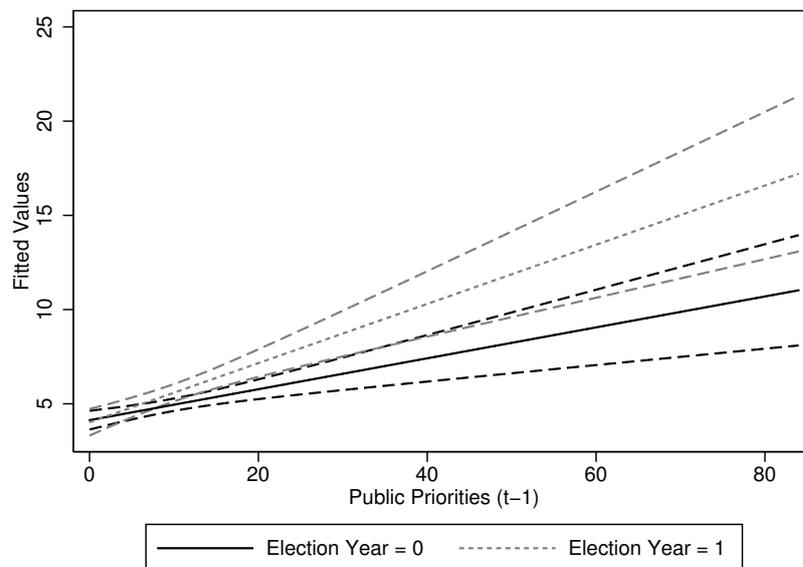


Figure 6.1: Effect of electoral proximity on legislative responsiveness

Note: Effect of public priorities on government emphasis at different levels of electoral proximity (based on Electoral Connection Model, Table 6.2). Dashed lines are 95 percent confidence interval.

Some interesting insights come from the control variables. Whereas the economic indicators and the political constraint index are not statistically significant, the controls for the disproportionality of the electoral system and for the US second presidential term are. Specifically, US presidents are less likely to pass legislation when they cannot be reelected and the positive coefficient for the least squares index suggests that legislative productivity is higher in contexts where the electoral system is less proportional. Finally, government ideology seems not to have any effect, but this finding will be better explored in the next table.

Table 6.3 breaks down the sample into right-wing and left-wing issues and tests Hypothesis 3 trying to reply to the question: do governments devote more attention in legislation production as a response to public priorities in those issues the government is more associated with? The Ideological Proximity Hypothesis argues in favour of an issue ownership effect. In this sense, right-/left-wing governments should increase their attention on their own issues when salience for the public increases on those issues. Table 6.3 seems to support this expectation, but only for left-wing governments (last column). In fact, the coefficient for public priorities is positive and significant, meaning that left-wing governments are more likely to respond to the priorities of the public on those issues

they have a long term reputation for.

Table 6.3: Ideological Proximity and Legislative Responsiveness

	Right-wing Issues	Right-wing Issues	Left-wing Issues	Left-wing Issues
	Right-wing Govts	Left-wing Govts	Right-wing Govts	Left-wing Govts
Dependent Variable: Proportion of Legislation				
MIP (t-1)	0.068 (0.064)	0.077 (0.062)	0.115 (0.070)	0.108* (0.056)
Vulnerability (t-1)	-0.026 (0.025)	0.010 (0.031)	-0.008 (0.012)	-0.006 (0.011)
Election Year (t)	1.322* (0.785)	-0.091 (0.592)	-0.013 (0.344)	-0.444 (0.281)
LSq (t)	-0.064 (0.239)	0.654*** (0.219)	-0.043 (0.083)	-0.002 (0.065)
Political Constraint (t)	-27.36 (43.45)	-29.33 (20.13)	21.36 (14.16)	6.318 (7.163)
US 2nd Term (t)	-0.408 (1.203)	-2.986 (1.851)	0.542 (0.692)	-1.015* (0.580)
Unemployment (t)	0.536* (0.310)	0.324 (0.281)	0.098 (0.082)	-0.112 (0.086)
Inflation (t)	-0.139 (0.213)	0.007 (0.134)	-0.012 (0.068)	0.155*** (0.041)
Constant	13.53 (22.38)	7.591 (4.807)	-9.028 (7.186)	0.570 (1.785)
N	116	86	229	172
R ²	0.09	0.18	0.04	0.15

OLS with AR1 autocorrelation structure

Panel-corrected standard errors in parentheses and country dummies (Spain reference category)

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

Right-wing issues: defence, foreign affairs, law and crime

Left-wing issues: education, environment, health, housing, welfare

The results presented in this chapter are robust to a set of additional analyses reported in Appendix D. In particular, the analysis has been reestimated under different model specifications: including a trend variable, policy dummies, and the lagged dependent variable (Tables D3-D8). Moreover, since the duration of policy-making can change across countries and policy domains and a one year lag for public opinion might not be sufficient, models have been reestimated by using the mean value of public priorities for the previous three years (Tables D9 and D10). Finally, given that law-making in the US might differ from law-making in Western European democracies, the analysis has been

presented at the country level, too (Tables D11-D13). The Electoral Vulnerability Hypothesis finds support only in the UK, whereas the interaction between public priorities and government electoral vulnerability is negative and significant in the US. The Electoral Connection Hypothesis finds support only in the UK, while the interaction between public priorities and government ideology is never statistically significant in any of the countries analysed.

6.6 Conclusion and Discussion

Law-making is a key moment of the democratic process. Yet, despite very few exceptions, most quantitative time-series analyses on governmental responsiveness to public opinion focus on other stages of policy-making, in particular agenda-setting and budgetary policy. The reason is essentially due to the difficulty of collecting comparative data on public laws. This chapter aims at filling this gap and contributes to the research on the opinion-policy link by using recent data from the Comparative Agendas Project on enacted laws.

Although the autonomy of both elected officials and bureaucrats from public opinion, along with the complexity of policy-making, allowing for low responsive or non-responsive behaviours of policy makers (e.g., see Manza and Cook 2002), this chapter tried to answer the question of whether citizens' priorities are still translated into legislation and argued that this relationship can be facilitated by some electoral incentives, for governments aim at reelection.

Evidence from a pooled time-series cross-section analysis including Spain, the UK and the US suggests that public issue salience has an influence on legislative production. However, results on whether competitive incentives have a beneficial effect on legislative responsiveness are mixed. The analysis does not support the hypothesis that electoral vulnerability increases the likelihood of responsiveness nor the opposite expectation, borrowed from the presidential literature, that popular governments have higher probabilities of passing a bill on an issue which is salient to the public. This chapter, instead, supports previous findings by Canes-Wrone (2004), according to which unpopular presidents are not more likely than popular ones to support positions endorsed by majority opinion, and extends them to parliamentary systems. Although my chapter deals with attention and not with position, this finding is important for reflecting on the idea that the effect of electoral pressure on

responsiveness might differ depending on the venue of interest.

Mixed results are found in relation to the issue ownership dimension of party competition. There is the tendency, in fact, for issues to receive more attention from a party when that party does well on that issue and when the public cares about it. Therefore, unlike purely issue ownership incentives, governments would be more responsive, by approving legislation salient to the public, when the public is concerned about it and the government is closely associated with the issue in question. The analysis suggests that public priorities have an impact on legislation only over traditional left-wing issues (i.e., education, environment, health, housing, and welfare) when the government is left-wing.

Finally, there is evidence that closeness to elections makes the likelihood of legislative responsiveness higher. Although it is well known, also from the literature on executive-legislative relations (e.g., see Martin and Vanberg 2004), that legislative production decreases in the election year because policy makers are afraid of putting forward, right before the elections, a bill that can be used against them in the campaign, there is not much research on whether enacting laws supported by the public concern is, instead, beneficial for governments. My argument was, in fact, that producing legislation on issues that the public cares about might boost government's chances of reelection. The analysis seems to support this view.

Chapter 7

Conclusions

Degrees of Democracy concludes that representative democracy is not perfect but it works (Soroka and Wlezien 2010: 182). My dissertation shares this optimistic thought and confirms the major findings from previous research on dynamic representation: public issue salience matters for governmental responsiveness and the latter differs across policy domains and institutions. However, given that most of what we know in terms of determinants of responsiveness is about the impact of institutional arrangements (i.e., form of government, division of power, electoral system) on government responsiveness, this dissertation only indirectly touched upon these explanatory factors. My analysis, instead, focused on whether governments respond to public priorities and whether this relationship is mediated by a set of dimensions from electoral competition. Conventional wisdom claims, in fact, that elections and their consequent incentives are one of the most powerful drivers of governmental responsiveness to public opinion. At least for what relates to public priorities, the reflection of this dissertation seems to suggest differently. Let me explain why.

This dissertation tests empirically the theoretical claim that electoral competition is beneficial for democracy and, in particular, for responsiveness. If we think of electoral competition as a multi-dimensional concept (Strøm 1989, 1992; Bartolini 1999, 2000) and if we think that some dimensions of competition are important for responsiveness, then we can argue that such dimensions of competition can be studied as incentives useful to explain when governments are more likely to respond to public opinion and, more specifically, to public issue priorities. My goal was not to find the

golden rule or the universal law of responsiveness that holds across time and space. My ambition, in Durkheim's understanding of science, was nonetheless to look for explanations as functional propositions about patterns of relations among variables (della Porta 2008: 203). In this sense, my research design was clearly variable-oriented. This is so because my aim was to move the discussion on responsiveness beyond the exploratory country-specific analysis, which was helpful to answer the question of under what institutions responsiveness is maximised. My research question is rather different and the focus of my analysis moves from a case-based to a variable-based comparison.

More precisely, my original expectations pointed at a beneficial effect of electoral incentives on government responsiveness to public priorities by following the classical hypothetical fashion "more... more". Along these lines, if governments care about reelection, my key expectations can be outlined as follows: (i) electorally vulnerable governments are more likely than safe governments to respond to public priorities. Similarly, (ii) responsiveness is higher when elections are approaching compared to other moments of the electoral cycle. Moreover, (iii) responsiveness is higher on those issues the government is more associated with. Finally, (iv) a higher decidability of the political offer between the main competitors on a given issue has a facilitating effect on responsiveness compared to a lower decidability.

Summarising the main contributions to the existing research, my dissertation produces two major findings: (1) governmental responsiveness to public priorities decreases when we move from a more symbolic policy venue (agenda priorities) to more substantive policy venues (budgetary and legislative priorities) and (2) the impact of competitive incentives changes depending on the policy venue. While the implications of the first point will be considered below, the second point will be discussed in detail in the next section.

In relation to the first point, my work extends findings from previous research in the US (e.g., Cohen 1997) which argues that presidential responsiveness to public opinion is higher in symbolic presidential policy activities and then declines as decisions become more substantive. This is the common thread that links together the empirical chapters of this dissertation. While there is substantial evidence that public issue priorities are translated into government's agenda priorities through executive speeches, when responsiveness is analysed by looking at budgetary allocations and attention

devoted to given issues in enacted legislation, the picture is not as reassuring as it was for government speeches. Although my pooled analysis suggests that public priorities do have an impact on legislative priorities, a closer look at single policy domains reveals that only in a few areas the priorities of the public are actually translated into legislation. The picture is even worse when budgetary policy is considered. In this policy venue, in fact, unlike spending preferences, public priorities have no impact whatsoever on spending. This finding confirms results from previous studies according to which the budget is not responsive to the most important problem/issue but rather to spending preferences (Bevan and Jennings 2014; Jennings and Wlezien 2015a).

The finding that the impact of citizens' priorities on governments' priorities is higher in more symbolic policy venues is not surprising, though. Reelection-oriented governments would, indeed, find it easier and less risky to incorporate public priorities in their policy announcements than in their actual policies. If we think of responsiveness and accountability as both crucial values of democracy, then attribution of responsibility is the other side of the coin. Whether voters weigh more heavily rhetorical and symbolic representation or more substantive policy representation and reward or punish governments accordingly has serious implications for representation. Although it is reasonable to expect that voters might more easily agree on the policy goals and more easily disagree on the policy means, it is an empirical question of whether voters reward governments as long as they make promises and punish them as soon as they implement what has been promised. My findings that governmental responsiveness to public priorities is higher in the agenda-setting stage and lower in the policy-making stage clearly connect to the emerging debate about voters' reactions to what governing parties *say* compared to what governing parties actually *do*. New research on social welfare issues seems, in fact, to suggest that government support between elections tends to be influenced by what governments emphasise in their budgetary allocations but not in their executive speeches. Specifically, governments seem not to benefit when they emphasise social welfare issues in their executive speeches but punished when they increase spending on these issues (Bernardi and Adams 2015). This can be the case because people's lives are not touched by policy decisions as long as such decisions still consist of words and promises, and citizens' dissatisfaction relentlessly increases when words are turned into acts. If this is true, it is not that surprising to find greater responsiveness in

more symbolic policy venues. Which role then do electoral incentives play in responsiveness?

7.1 The Impact of Competitive Incentives on Responsiveness

Competitive incentives matter for governmental responsiveness to public priorities differently from policy venue to policy venue. As a general point, similarly to the impact of public priorities on government's policy, the effects of such incentives are more evident in more symbolic than in more substantive policy venues. However, this is not the whole story. A more accurate picture is given in Table 7.1, which reports the effect of each competitive incentive for each level of responsiveness compared to the original expectations.

Governments' electoral vulnerability is an incentive to respond to citizens' priorities only in the rhetorical responsiveness stage and only when the government does not have a long-term advantage on the issue. Instead, when the issue is salient to the public and the government is perceived as competent on the issue, electoral vulnerability does not have any enhancing effect on responsiveness. Vulnerability matters to the extent that the government is not historically associated with the issue. Moreover governments tend to respond to both the public and emphasise those issues in which they are perceived as competent on, but the effect is much bigger for issue competence than issue salience.

Table 7.1: Effects of competitive incentives on responsiveness

Dependent Variable	Rhetorical Ch. 4		Budgetary Ch. 5		Legislative Ch. 6	
	Speeches		Expenditures		Laws	
	Expectation	Finding	Expectation	Finding	Expectation	Finding
Electoral Vulnerability	positive	mixed	positive	mixed	positive	no impact
Electoral Decidability	n.a.	n.a.	positive	mixed	n.a.	n.a.
Issue Competence/Ideological Proximity	negative	negative	n.a.	n.a.	positive	mixed
Electoral Proximity	positive	negative	positive	mixed	positive	positive

Source: Author's own.

When we move to more substantive policy venues such as budgetary and legislative policy, governments' electoral vulnerability either does not have an impact at all on responsiveness or its effect goes in the opposite direction and rarely in the expected direction. Similar findings had already been discovered in the American presidential context, where more popular presidents would feel less pressure to promote policies in line with the public (e.g., Manza and Cook 2002; but also, see Canes-Wrone and Shotts 2004). This is the case for some policy issues in the budgetary responsiveness chapter but also in the legislative responsiveness chapter. Although the latter shows that by pooling all issues together no particular impact of electoral vulnerability is found, when looking at issue-specific models a few issues seem to confirm the hypothesis already outlined in previous presidential research (Canes-Wrone and de Marchi 2002; Calvo 2007) that a president's higher positive image increases the likelihood of legislative success. However, in many other issues considered, in both policy responsiveness chapters, safe governments are not more likely than vulnerable governments to take public issue priorities into account in their own budgetary and legislative priorities. This finding is, indeed, in line with other research on presidential popularity, which suggests that popular presidents are not more likely than unpopular ones to support policies endorsed by the majority of the public (Canes-Wrone 2004; Cohen 1995). It is important to note that these findings do not differ – in the budgetary responsiveness chapter – when preferences in spending are used instead of priorities as a measure of public opinion. So, at least for what relates to the policy domains included in the analysis, whereas how we measure public opinion (and government output) matters for responsiveness, the impact of electoral vulnerability on government responsiveness does not change much when we measure public opinion in different ways.

A possibility that requires further exploration relates to the nature of the relationship between vulnerability and responsiveness. In the dissertation I assumed a linear relationship, meaning the more vulnerable the government, the higher the responsiveness. However, an alternative hypothesis may imply a curvilinear relationship between these two variables. More specifically, one can assume that when governments have no hope of winning next election they will not bother and neither will they when they are sure of winning. In this sense, one can expect governments to respond when the difference in support between government and opposition is minimal, that is around the area of

total uncertainty. I have started exploring this possibility in additional analyses not reported in the dissertation, but I have not so far found confirmation for this hypothesis when pooled models are estimated. It can be the case that support for this relationship can be found in country-by-country analyses and this is something that I want to consider more carefully in future research.

Beyond the results of these chapters, a broader consideration deserves to be raised, for it has serious implications for representation. The reason why electoral vulnerability does not show the expected effect when more substantive policy responsiveness is considered might have something to do with the notable debate around public ignorance. Given that people have an incentive not to invest in information (Lupia and McCubbins 1998) and that their preferences can be uninformed (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996), as well as unstable and inconsistent (Bartels 2003), we might think that perhaps governments do not expect to be punished in such technical subjects such as budgetary policy and legislation. Put it differently, maybe governments think that in spite of the power of aggregation (Page and Shapiro 1992; Erikson, Mackuen, and Stimson 2002) and notwithstanding the fact that *change in* preferences may be more meaningful than *levels of* preferences, as Soroka and Wlezien might argue, the average citizen is essentially uninformed about how much governments spend on an issue or about the details underneath a law, therefore governments might weigh out other factors more than electoral pressure and respond for other reasons. In this sense, it would be interesting to test in future research the expectation that governments are more likely to respond when their vote intentions decrease among those voters who are more competent and informed.

If elections are drivers of responsiveness, electoral proximity does not work the same way for each level of responsiveness either. While in the rhetorical responsiveness chapter no evidence is found that closeness to elections increases the likelihood that citizens' priorities are implemented into government's priorities in its speeches – there is instead evidence for the opposite scenario that responsiveness is slightly higher in other moments of the electoral cycle (Chaqués Bonafont and Palau 2011) – electoral proximity seems to matter more for preferences than for priorities in budgetary policy. More interesting are, however, the findings for legislative responsiveness. Despite the fact that law productivity decreases when elections are approaching, legislative responsiveness seems to actually be higher in the election year compared to other years, meaning that policy makers are willing to play

the saliency card to increase their chance of reelection.

Issue ownership matters for responsiveness more in symbolic policy venues than in substantive ones. Though measured in two different ways – long-term issue competence on the issue and ideological proximity – issue ownership matters for rhetorical but less for legislative responsiveness, where its effect is only significant for left-wing governments but not for right-wing governments. Governments tend, in fact, to emphasise, in their agendas, both issues that are salient to the public and issues on which they are competent, independently of whether they are vulnerable at the polls. The fact that government's issue reputation (measured as government ideology) has a limited mediating effect on responsiveness in legislative venues (see also Epp, Lovett, and Baumgartner 2014) raises the question of the validity of issue ownership theories for policy responsiveness. However, it is worth noting that government ideology has an impact on spending when the latter is measured in levels and not changes. Perhaps, it is also true that, in the legislative process, factors other than government ideology or issue reputation are more relevant for explaining how governments respond to public opinion in decision-making and policy implementation phases.

Finally, this dissertation argued in favour of a beneficial effect of party policy differentiation on responsiveness. Due to research design limitations, the effect of electoral decidability on responsiveness could be tested only for budgetary responsiveness and results were mixed. Again, the fact that electoral decidability in the way it is measured has a limited impact on responsiveness goes hand in hand with the issue ownership story depicted above and reinforces the conclusion that parties matter for responsiveness not as much in the policy-making stage – where, perhaps, other actors such as veto players or bureaucrats are more important – but in the earlier stage of agenda-setting.

As an addendum, although I have not tested a specific hypothesis concerning electoral contestability and responsiveness, it is worth noting that the disproportionality of the electoral system – used as an indicator of contestability – has different effects on government emphasis. In fact, higher disproportionality is more associated with higher levels of spending and higher emphasis in government legislation in traditional right-wing issues (e.g., defence), whereas higher disproportionality is more associated with lower levels of spending and lower emphasis in government legislation in traditional left-wing issues (e.g., education, health and welfare).

7.2 Limitations and Future Agenda

As any other honorable work, this dissertation comes with some caveats. One of these is certainly data availability. Probably the greatest effort of this dissertation was to collect time-series cross-sectional data for responsiveness and the electoral competition variables. The ambition to go back in time as much as possible and the need to collect data points for different policy domains as well as different indicators of competition came at the expense of the number of countries included in the analysis.

More than that, this dissertation employs the mainstream approach used in the studies of responsiveness, that is, it analyses the opinion-policy link dynamically over time and across countries. If the world works as described in this dissertation, then electoral incentives have a limited impact on government responsiveness to public priorities, stronger in some policy venues and weaker in others. However, due to data availability constraints, macro temporal units (year or parliamentary term) have been used to study the dynamics of government's reaction. Yet it would still be interesting to see whether electoral incentives matter differently when a more micro temporal unit is employed in order to unveil causal mechanisms that, perhaps, would be covered by aggregating data by a higher temporal unit.¹ This is, essentially, one of the motivations behind different approaches on the study of responsiveness such as the ResponsiveGov Project that use, for instance, an event history analysis approach, a strategy which could lead to a better understanding of the timing of responsiveness.² Projects such as ResponsiveGov would allow the researcher to study whether, at least in the policy issues included, governments change their policy positions in line with the public when, for instance, elections are approaching or the policy positions of the main competitors are more differentiated. In this latter case, one can expect responsiveness if the main opponent has positions similar to the majority of the people and is perceived as sufficiently credible in the eyes of voters (see Gerber and

¹Note that a similar concern can be raised in relation to an analysis of responsiveness by disaggregating broader policy domains into more specific policy issues to reduce noise in the data. Although this can be a fascinating solution, it is not easily applicable because of the nature of public issue priorities. When respondents are asked to name the most important problem/issue in their country, they tend to name broader policy areas such as environment, health, economy or education instead of specific policy issues within these domains. For this reason, it would be inadvisable to decompose major topics of governments' policy agendas into minor topics, as it would create a mismatch between public and government priorities. For more details please refer to Jennings and Wlezien (2011) and Bevan and Jennings (2014).

²The European Research Council Starting Grant ResponsiveGov Project studies government responsiveness to the preferences of different sections of public opinion in twenty-three advanced democracies plus the European Union. For details see: <http://www.responsivegov.eu/>.

Lupia 1995).

Another caveat, which is not a disadvantage per se but a limitation of this work, is given by the fact that, with the exception of Germany and the 2010 British coalition, all the cases included experienced single-party (minority) governments. This can be an advantage, for such cases register high levels of clarity of responsibility and electoral identifiability, which makes it easier for voters to pin down unresponsive policy makers and makes it easier for governments to respond to the public without compromising with coalition partners. However, the forced exclusion of cases of multi-party coalition governments cannot give a complete picture of the impact of electoral incentives on responsiveness to public priorities and this is an evident limitation of this work.

My research can be – and will be – extended in the future once more data on public priorities and government agendas will be publicly available. Data on the most important issue are available for all European countries from Eurobarometer but only since 2003. As this is not a very long time span, other sources will have to be taken into account. For instance, the Comparative Agendas Project (CAP) is also involved in the data collection of public issue priorities and such data for additional countries will hopefully be soon at the disposal of the scientific community. Similarly, CAP is also finalising the assemblage of a joint website where data collected by single CAP units on different policy venues will be publicly available in the following months. The other good news for future developments of this work is that survey data on vote intentions have just been released for a large number of countries over the last decades (Jennings and Wlezien 2015*b*). This would allow me to test the impact of governments' electoral vulnerability on responsiveness for a larger sample than the one I could rely on for my dissertation.

A final thought is devoted to the extension of my current work on the effect of electoral decidability on responsiveness to public priorities. As done by, for instance, Bertelli and John (2012), the idea would be to reaggregate the policy categories included in the Comparative Manifestos Project in line with the CAP coding schemes. This would give me the opportunity to increase the number of policy issues and extend the analysis to additional policy venues such as executive speeches. It can be the case that there would be a clearer effect of decidability on responsiveness in more symbolic policy venues, as my results for issue competence suggest.

As students of comparative politics, we tend to assign a great deal of importance to elections and party politics. We put our trust on the expectation that party competition is a very powerful engine that moves the machinery of our democracies and motivates politicians to respond to public opinion. The ultimate message that my dissertation is sending points to the fact that we should not dismiss the relevance of party competition as an explanatory variable for responsiveness, but that, at least in the realm of public priorities, we should rather reconsider its role for a better understanding of how our democracies work.

Appendix A

Appendix Chapter 3

Table A.1: Electoral vulnerability in Canada

Year	Government	Opposition
1978	LP	PCP + NDP
<i>1979</i>	PCP	LP + NDP
<i>1980</i>	LP	PCP + NDP
1981	LP	PCP + NDP
1982	LP	PCP + NDP
1983	LP	PCP + NDP
1984a	LP	PCP + NDP
<i>1984b</i>	PCP	LP + NDP
1985	PCP	LP + NDP
1986	PCP	LP + NDP
1987	PCP	LP + NDP
<i>1988</i>	PCP	LP + NDP
1989	PCP	LP + NDP + RPC
1990	PCP	LP + NDP + RPC + BQ
1991	PCP	LP + NDP + RPC + BQ
1992	PCP	LP + NDP + RPC + BQ
1993a	PCP	LP + NDP + RPC + BQ
<i>1993b</i>	LP	PCP + NDP + RPC + BQ
1994	LP	PCP + NDP + RPC + BQ
1995	LP	PCP + NDP + RPC + BQ
1996	LP	PCP + NDP + RPC + BQ
<i>1997</i>	LP	PCP + NDP + RPC + BQ
1998	LP	PCP + NDP + RPC + BQ
1999	LP	PCP + NDP + RPC + BQ
<i>2000</i>	LP	PCP + NDP + CA + BQ
2001	LP	PCP + NDP + CA + BQ
2002	LP	PCP + NDP + CA + BQ
2003	LP	PCP + NDP + CA + BQ
<i>2004</i>	LP	CPC + NDP + BQ
2005	LP	CPC + NDP + BQ
<i>2006</i>	CPC	LP + NDP + BQ
2007	CPC	LP + NDP + BQ
<i>2008</i>	CPC	LP + NDP + BQ
2009	CPC	LP + NDP + BQ
2010	CPC	LP + NDP + BQ

Note: Liberal Party (LP), Progressive Conservative/Conservative Party (PCP/CPC), Bloc Québécois (BQ), New Democratic Party (NDP), and Reform Party/Canadian Alliance (RPC/CA). Election years in italics.

Table A.2: Electoral vulnerability in Germany

Year	Government	Opposition
1977	SPD + FDP	CDU/CSU + GREENS
1978	SPD + FDP	CDU/CSU + GREENS
1979	SPD + FDP	CDU/CSU + GREENS
<i>1980</i>	SPD + FDP	CDU/CSU + GREENS
1981	SPD + FDP	CDU/CSU + GREENS
1982	SPD + FDP	CDU/CSU + GREENS
<i>1983</i>	CDU/CSU + FDP	SPD + GREENS
1984	CDU/CSU + FDP	SPD + GREENS
1985	CDU/CSU + FDP	SPD + GREENS
1986	CDU/CSU + FDP	SPD + GREENS
<i>1987</i>	CDU/CSU + FDP	SPD + GREENS
1988	CDU/CSU + FDP	SPD + GREENS
1989	CDU/CSU + FDP	SPD + GREENS
<i>1990</i>	CDU/CSU + FDP	SPD + GREENS + PDS/LINKE
1991	CDU/CSU + FDP	SPD + GREENS + PDS/LINKE
1992	CDU/CSU + FDP	SPD + GREENS + PDS/LINKE
1993	CDU/CSU + FDP	SPD + GREENS + PDS/LINKE
<i>1994</i>	CDU/CSU + FDP	SPD + GREENS + PDS/LINKE
1995	CDU/CSU + FDP	SPD + GREENS + PDS/LINKE
1996	CDU/CSU + FDP	SPD + GREENS + PDS/LINKE
1997	CDU/CSU + FDP	SPD + GREENS + PDS/LINKE
<i>1998</i>	SPD + GREENS	CDU/CSU + FDP + PDS/LINKE
1999	SPD + GREENS	CDU/CSU + FDP + PDS/LINKE
2000	SPD + GREENS	CDU/CSU + FDP + PDS/LINKE
2001	SPD + GREENS	CDU/CSU + FDP + PDS/LINKE
<i>2002</i>	SPD + GREENS	CDU/CSU + FDP + PDS/LINKE
2003	SPD + GREENS	CDU/CSU + FDP + PDS/LINKE
2004	SPD + GREENS	CDU/CSU + FDP + PDS/LINKE
<i>2005</i>	CDU/CSU + SPD	FDP + GREENS + PDS/LINKE
2006	CDU/CSU + SPD	FDP + GREENS + PDS/LINKE
<i>2007</i>	CDU/CSU + SPD	FDP + GREENS + PDS/LINKE

Note: Social Democratic Party (SPD), Christian Democratic Party (CDU/CSU), Liberal Party (FDP), Greens, and The Left (PDS/Die Linke). Election years in italics.

Table A.3: Electoral vulnerability in Spain

Year	Government	Opposition
1978	UCD	PSOE + AP + PCE + CiU
<i>1979</i>	UCD	PSOE + AP + PCE + CiU
1980	UCD	PSOE + AP + PCE + CiU
1981	UCD	PSOE + AP + PCE + CiU
<i>1982</i>	PSOE	UCD + AP + PCE + CiU
1983	PSOE	UCD + AP + PCE + CiU
1984	PSOE	UCD + AP + PCE + CiU
1985	PSOE	UCD + AP + PCE + CiU
<i>1986</i>	PSOE	AP + IU + CiU
1987	PSOE	AP + IU + CiU
1988	PSOE	AP + IU + CiU
<i>1989</i>	PSOE	PP + IU + CiU
1990	PSOE	PP + IU + CiU
1991	PSOE	PP + IU + CiU
1992	PSOE	PP + IU + CiU
<i>1993</i>	PSOE	PP + IU + CiU
1994	PSOE	PP + IU + CiU
1995	PSOE	PP + IU + CiU
<i>1996</i>	PP	PSOE + IU + CiU
1997	PP	PSOE + IU + CiU
1998	PP	PSOE + IU + CiU
1999	PP	PSOE + IU + CiU
<i>2000</i>	PP	PSOE + IU + CiU
2001	PP	PSOE + IU + CiU
2002	PP	PSOE + IU + CiU
2003	PP	PSOE + IU + CiU
<i>2004</i>	PSOE	PP + IU + CiU
2005	PSOE	PP + IU + CiU
2006	PSOE	PP + IU + CiU
2007	PSOE	PP + IU + CiU
<i>2008</i>	PSOE	PP + IU + CiU
2009	PSOE	PP + IU + CiU
2010	PSOE	PP + IU + CiU
<i>2011</i>	PP	PSOE + IU + CiU
2012	PP	PSOE + IU + CiU
2013	PP	PSOE + IU + CiU

Note: Union of the Democratic Centre (UCD), People's Alliance/People's Party (AP/PP), Communist Party of Spain (PCE), United Left (UI), Convergence and Union (CiU), and Socialist Party (PSOE). Election years in italics.

Table A.4: Electoral vulnerability in the UK

Year	Government	Opposition
<i>1970</i>	CON	LAB + LIB
<i>1971</i>	CON	LAB + LIB
<i>1972</i>	CON	LAB + LIB
<i>1973</i>	CON	LAB + LIB
<i>1974a</i>	LAB	CON + LIB
<i>1974b</i>	LAB	CON + LIB
<i>1975</i>	LAB	CON + LIB
<i>1976</i>	LAB	CON + LIB
<i>1977</i>	LAB	CON + LIB
<i>1978</i>	LAB	CON + LIB
<i>1979</i>	CON	LAB + LIB
<i>1980</i>	CON	LAB + LIB
<i>1981</i>	CON	LAB + SDP/LIB Alliance
<i>1982</i>	CON	LAB + SDP/LIB Alliance
<i>1983</i>	CON	LAB + SDP/LIB Alliance
<i>1984</i>	CON	LAB + SDP/LIB Alliance
<i>1985</i>	CON	LAB + SDP/LIB Alliance
<i>1986</i>	CON	LAB + SDP/LIB Alliance
<i>1987</i>	CON	LAB + SDP/LIB Alliance
<i>1988</i>	CON	LAB + SDP/LIB Alliance
<i>1989</i>	CON	LAB + LD
<i>1990</i>	CON	LAB + LD
<i>1991</i>	CON	LAB + LD
<i>1992</i>	CON	LAB + LD
<i>1993</i>	CON	LAB + LD
<i>1994</i>	CON	LAB + LD
<i>1995</i>	CON	LAB + LD
<i>1996</i>	CON	LAB + LD
<i>1997</i>	LAB	CON + LD
<i>1998</i>	LAB	CON + LD
<i>1999</i>	LAB	CON + LD
<i>2000</i>	LAB	CON + LD
<i>2001</i>	LAB	CON + LD
<i>2002</i>	LAB	CON + LD
<i>2003</i>	LAB	CON + LD
<i>2004</i>	LAB	CON + LD
<i>2005</i>	LAB	CON + LD
<i>2006</i>	LAB	CON + LD
<i>2007</i>	LAB	CON + LD
<i>2008</i>	LAB	CON + LD
<i>2009</i>	LAB	CON + LD
<i>2010</i>	CON + LD	LAB
<i>2011</i>	CON + LD	LAB
<i>2012</i>	CON + LD	LAB
<i>2013</i>	CON + LD	LAB

Note: Conservative Party (CON), Labour Party (LAB), Liberal Party/Social Democratic and Liberal Alliance/Liberal Democratic Party (LIB/SDP/LIB Alliance/LD). Election years in italics.

Table A.5: Electoral vulnerability in the US

Year	Government	Opposition
1945	DEM	REP
1946	DEM	REP
1947	DEM	REP
<i>1948</i>	DEM	REP
1949	DEM	REP
1950	DEM	REP
1951	DEM	REP
<i>1952</i>	REP	DEM
1953	REP	DEM
1954	REP	DEM
1955	REP	DEM
<i>1956</i>	REP	DEM
1957	REP	DEM
1958	REP	DEM
1959	REP	DEM
<i>1960</i>	DEM	REP
1961	DEM	REP
1962	DEM	REP
1963	DEM	REP
<i>1964</i>	DEM	REP
1965	DEM	REP
1966	DEM	REP
1967	DEM	REP
<i>1968</i>	REP	DEM
1969	REP	DEM
1970	REP	DEM
1971	REP	DEM
<i>1972</i>	REP	DEM
1973	REP	DEM
1974	REP	DEM
1975	REP	DEM
<i>1976</i>	DEM	REP
1977	DEM	REP
1978	DEM	REP
1979	DEM	REP
<i>1980</i>	REP	DEM
1981	REP	DEM
1982	REP	DEM
1983	REP	DEM
<i>1984</i>	REP	DEM
1985	REP	DEM
1986	REP	DEM
1987	REP	DEM
<i>1988</i>	REP	DEM
1989	REP	DEM
1990	REP	DEM
1991	REP	DEM
<i>1992</i>	DEM	REP
1993	DEM	REP
1994	DEM	REP
1995	DEM	REP
<i>1996</i>	DEM	REP
1997	DEM	REP
1998	DEM	REP
1999	DEM	REP
<i>2000</i>	REP	DEM
2001	REP	DEM
2002	REP	DEM
2003	REP	DEM
<i>2004</i>	REP	DEM
2005	REP	DEM
2006	REP	DEM
2007	REP	DEM
<i>2008</i>	DEM	REP
2009	DEM	REP
2010	DEM	REP
2011	DEM	REP
<i>2012</i>	DEM	REP
2013	DEM	REP

Note: Democratic Party (DEM) and Republican Party (REP). Election years in italics.

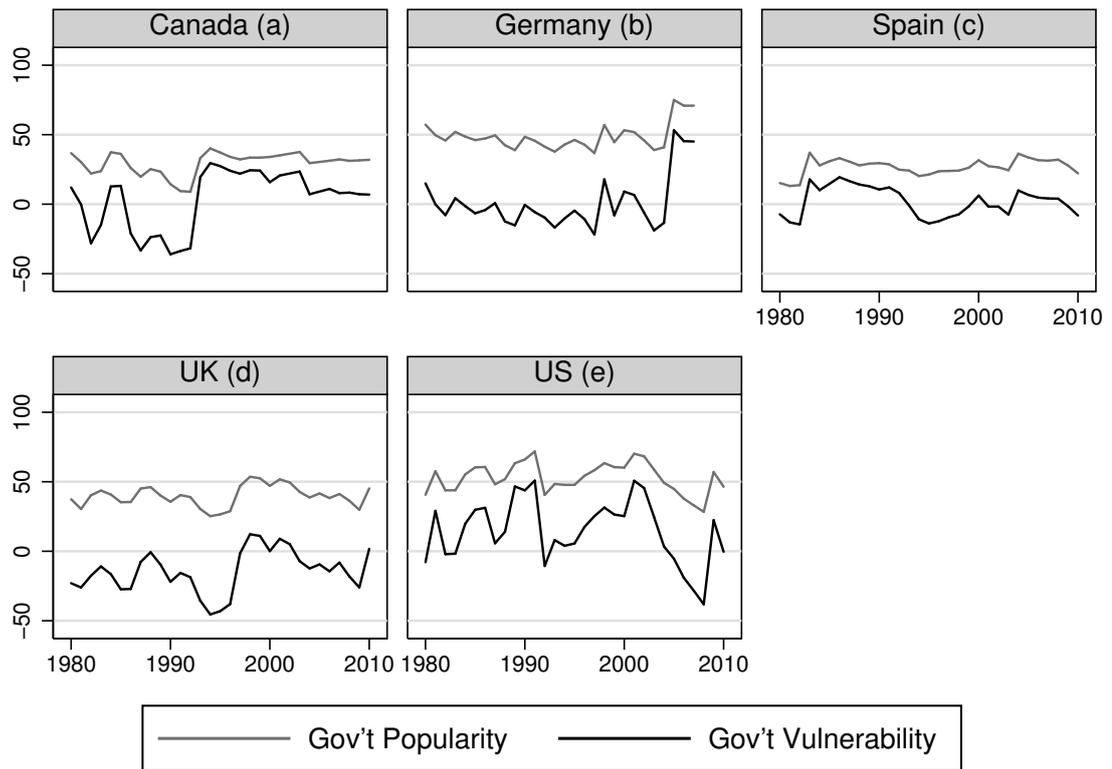


Figure A.1: Popularity and vulnerability: A comparison, 1980-2010 (percentage values)

Source: Environics Focus (Canada), Politbarometer (Germany), Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (Spain), Ipsos MORI (UK), Gallup (US).

Table A.6: CMP categories for party system dispersion

Policy Domain	CMP Category
Defence	Military Positive (104) - Military Negative (105)
Education	Education Expansion (506) - Education Limitation (507)
Welfare	Welfare State Expansion (504) - Welfare State Limitation (505)

Table A.7: Issue competence in Germany

Year	Govt	Defence/Foreign	Education	Environment	Health	Housing	Law and Crime	Welfare
1987	CDU/CSU FDP	1			0	0		0
1988	CDU/CSU FDP	1			0	0		0
1989	CDU/CSU FDP	1			0	0		0
1990	CDU/CSU FDP	1	0	0	1	0	1	1
1991	CDU/CSU FDP	1	0	0	1	0	1	1
1992	CDU/CSU FDP	1	0	0	1	0	1	1
1993	CDU/CSU FDP	1	0	0	1	0	1	1
1994	CDU/CSU FDP	1	0	0	1	0	1	1
1995	CDU/CSU FDP	1	0	0	1	0	1	1
1996	CDU/CSU FDP	1	0	0	1	0	1	1
1997	CDU/CSU FDP	1	0	0	1	0	1	1
1998	SPD GRUE	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
1999	SPD GRUE	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
2000	SPD GRUE	1	0	1	0		0	0
2001	SPD GRUE	1	0	1	0		0	0
2002	SPD GRUE	1	0	1	0		0	0
2003	SPD GRUE	1	0	1	0		0	0
2004	SPD GRUE	1	0	1	0		0	0

Source: Politbarometer (various years); Politbarometer Election Study (1987, 1990, 1994, 1998, 2002); European Election Studies (1989, 1994, 1999, 2004).

Table A.8: Issue competence in Spain

Year	Govt	Defence/Foreign	Education	Environment	Health	Housing	Law and Crime	Welfare
1982	PSOE	1		1				1
1983	PSOE	1		1				1
1984	PSOE	1		1				1
1985	PSOE	1		1				1
1986	PSOE	1		1				1
1987	PSOE	1		1				1
1988	PSOE	1		1				1
1989	PSOE	1		1				1
1990	PSOE	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
1991	PSOE	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
1992	PSOE	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
1993	PSOE	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
1994	PSOE	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
1995	PSOE	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
1996	PP	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
1997	PP	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
1998	PP	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
1999	PP	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
2000	PP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2001	PP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2002	PP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2003	PP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2004	PSOE	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2005	PSOE	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2006	PSOE	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2007	PSOE	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Source: CIS Barometer (various years); European Election Studies (1989, 1994, 1999, 2004).

Table A.9: Issue competence in the UK

Year	Govt	Defence/Foreign	Education	Environment	Health	Housing	Law and Crime	Welfare
1970	CON		1		1	1		
1971	CON		1		1	1		
1972	CON		1		1	1		
1973	CON		1		1	1		
1974	LAB		0		0	0		
1975	LAB		0		0	0		
1976	LAB		0		0	0		
1977	LAB		0		0	0		
1978	LAB		0		0	0		
1979	CON		1		0	1		
1980	CON	1	0	0	0	0		
1981	CON	1	0	0	0	0		
1982	CON	1	0	0	0	0		
1983	CON	1	0	0	0	0		
1984	CON	1	0	0	0	0		
1985	CON	1	0	0	0	0		
1986	CON	1	0	0	0	0		
1987	CON	1	0	0	0	0		
1988	CON	1	0	0	0	0		
1989	CON	1	0	0	0	0		
1990	CON	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
1991	CON	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
1992	CON	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
1993	CON	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
1994	CON	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
1995	CON	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
1996	CON	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
1997	LAB	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
1998	LAB	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
1999	LAB	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
2000	LAB	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
2001	LAB	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
2002	LAB	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
2003	LAB	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
2004	LAB	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
2005	LAB	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
2006	LAB	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
2007	LAB	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
2008	LAB	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
2009	LAB	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
2010	CON LD	0	0	0	0	0	1	0

Source: Ipsos-MORI (various years); European Election Studies (1989, 1994, 1999).

Table A.10: Issue competence in the US

Year	Govt	Defence	Education	Environment	Health	Housing	Law and Crime	Welfare
1970	REP	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
1971	REP	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
1972	REP	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
1973	REP	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
1974	REP	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
1975	REP	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
1976	DEM	0	1	1	1	1	0	1
1977	DEM	0	1	1	1	1	0	1
1978	DEM	0	1	1	1	1	0	1
1979	DEM	0	1	1	1	1	0	1
1980	REP	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
1981	REP	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
1982	REP	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
1983	REP	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
1984	REP	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
1985	REP	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
1986	REP	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
1987	REP	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
1988	REP	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
1989	REP	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
1990	REP	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
1991	REP	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
1992	DEM	0	1	1	1	1	0	1
1993	DEM	0	1	1	1	1	0	1
1994	DEM	0	1	1	1	1	0	1
1995	DEM	0	1	1	1	1	0	1
1996	DEM	0	1	1	1	1	0	1
1997	DEM	0	1	1	1	1	0	1
1998	DEM	0	1	1	1	1	0	1
1999	DEM	0	1	1	1	1	0	1
2000	REP	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
2001	REP	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
2002	REP	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
2003	REP	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
2004	REP	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
2005	REP	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
2006	REP	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
2007	REP	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
2008	DEM	0	1	1	1	1	0	1
2009	DEM	0	1	1	1	1	0	1
2010	DEM	0	1	1	1	1	0	1
2011	DEM	0	1	1	1	1	0	1
2012	DEM	0	1	1	1	1	0	1
2013	DEM	0	1	1	1	1	0	1

Source: American National Election Studies (1972-2004); Egan (2013); Pope and Woon (2009); Sides (2006).

Appendix B

Appendix Chapter 4

Data Sources

Executive Speeches

Comparative Agendas Project

Most Important Problem/Issue

Germany: Politbarometer

Spain: CIS Barometer

United Kingdom: Gallup; Ipsos-MORI (UK Policy Agendas Project)

United States: Gallup (Roper Center)

Vote Intentions/Presidential Approvals

Germany: Politbarometer

Spain: CIS Barometer

United Kingdom: WJFFP dataset (see Wlezien et al. 2013; Green and Jennings 2012*b*)

United States: Gallup (Roper Center)

Issue Competence

Germany: Politbarometer (1978-2004); Gesis Election Study (1987, 1990, 1994, 1998, 2002); EES (combined EES file 1989-2004: van der Eijk, Oppenhuis, and Schmitt (1993); Schmitt et al. (1997); van der Eijk et al. (1999); Schmitt et al. (2009))

Spain: CIS Barometer (2006-2007); EES (combined EES file 1989-2004: van der Eijk, Oppenhuis, and Schmitt (1993); Schmitt et al. (1997); van der Eijk et al. (1999); Schmitt et al. (2009))

United Kingdom: Ipsos-MORI (1977-2010); EES (combined EES file 1989-2004: van der Eijk, Oppenhuis, and Schmitt (1993); Schmitt et al. (1997); van der Eijk et al. (1999); Schmitt et al. (2009))

United States: ANES (1972-2002), Sides (2006); Pope and Woon (2009); Egan (2013)

Economic Indicators

Unemployment rate as percentage of civilian labour force (OECD)

Inflation as consumer prices as percentage change on the same period of the previous year (OECD)

Table B.1: Correlation table for speeches and priorities

Variables	speech_def	speech_edu	speech_env	speech_heu	speech_hou	speech_low	speech_wel	mip_def	mip_edu	mip_env	mip_heu	mip_hou	mip_low	mip_wel
speech_def	1.000													
speech_edu	0.220	1.000												
speech_env	0.586	0.257	1.000											
speech_heu	0.400	0.420	0.228	1.000										
speech_hou	0.550	0.302	0.400	0.365	1.000									
speech_low	0.163	0.339	0.223	0.323	0.178	1.000								
speech_wel	0.530	0.402	0.451	0.450	0.385	0.197	1.000							
mip_def	0.240	-0.029	0.180	-0.010	0.038	0.143	0.020	1.000						
mip_edu	-0.118	0.261	-0.030	0.180	-0.107	0.104	0.065	0.211	1.000					
mip_env	0.223	-0.161	0.565	-0.078	0.030	-0.073	0.065	0.164	-0.130	1.000				
mip_heu	-0.134	0.043	-0.085	0.208	-0.092	0.038	-0.047	0.035	0.562	-0.121	1.000			
mip_hou	-0.104	0.224	0.016	-0.065	0.177	0.301	-0.060	0.137	0.037	0.209	0.038	1.000		
mip_low	-0.118	0.341	-0.077	0.376	-0.030	0.550	0.089	0.081	0.470	-0.262	0.199	0.040	1.000	
mip_wel	0.143	0.263	0.164	0.287	-0.064	0.201	0.342	0.002	0.258	0.169	0.316	0.064	0.318	1.000

Table B.2: Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2 with LDV

	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Dependent Variable: Issue Emphasis in Executive Speeches			
Speech (t-1)	0.539*** (0.105)	0.450*** (0.118)	0.742*** (0.217)
Salience (t-1)	1.092*** (0.300)		
Competence (t-1)	3.602* (1.842)		
Vulnerability (t-1)	0.144 (0.094)	0.107 (0.124)	0.136 (0.117)
Salience (t-1) × Vulnerability (t-1)	0.007 (0.011)		
Competence (t-1) × Vulnerability (t-1)	-0.103 (0.089)		
Salience C (t-1)		1.208*** (0.360)	
Salience C (t-1) × Vulnerability (t-1)		-0.005 (0.011)	
Salience NC (t-1)			1.226*** (0.392)
Salience NC (t-1) × Vulnerability (t-1)			0.021** (0.009)
Unemployment (t)	0.467 (0.369)	0.401 (0.456)	1.586* (0.817)
Inflation (t)	0.532* (0.310)	0.090 (0.493)	1.356*** (0.518)
LSq (t)	-0.251 (0.590)	-0.043 (0.544)	-0.685 (0.894)
US 2nd Term (t)	-3.374 (6.690)	3.359 (6.241)	-7.749 (8.248)
Spain	-4.595 (6.181)	-10.09 (8.377)	-7.395 (9.578)
UK	-5.385 (8.657)	-13.30 (10.21)	-0.355 (11.63)
US	7.205 (6.301)	-2.026 (8.843)	15.52* (8.021)
Constant	-4.026 (5.423)	7.120 (7.270)	-20.19** (10.18)
N	575	296	279
R ²	0.45	0.54	0.36

Models with lagged dependent variable

Panel-corrected standard errors in parentheses and country dummies (Germany reference category)

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

Table B.3: Hypothesis 3 with LDV

	Model 6	Model 7
Dependent Variable: Issue Emphasis in Executive Speeches		
Speech (t-1)	0.827*** (0.117)	0.835*** (0.115)
Salience (t-1)	0.523* (0.278)	0.508* (0.283)
Competence (t-1)	0.912 (1.605)	1.753 (1.751)
Electoral Proximity (6-month)	1.095 (2.377)	
Salience (t-1) × Electoral Proximity (6-month)	-0.344 (0.253)	
Competence (t-1) × Electoral Proximity (6-month)	1.646 (2.643)	
Electoral Proximity (12-month)		0.869 (3.384)
Salience (t-1) × Electoral Proximity (12-month)		-0.107 (0.522)
Competence (t-1) × Electoral Proximity (12-month)		-2.507 (2.933)
Unemployment (t)	0.621* (0.339)	0.596* (0.347)
Inflation (t)	0.531 (0.324)	0.514 (0.318)
LSq (t)	-0.355 (0.599)	-0.351 (0.598)
US 2nd Term (t)	-2.957 (6.827)	-3.162 (6.830)
UK	6.195 (6.724)	6.151 (6.846)
US	9.906** (5.019)	9.821* (5.061)
Constant	-10.13 (7.146)	-9.956 (7.471)
N	485	485
R ²	0.48	0.48

Models with lagged dependent variable

Panel-corrected standard errors in parentheses and country dummies (Spain reference category)

Germany omitted from this analysis due to data unavailability of the speech date

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

Table B.4: Hypothesis 2 with three-way interaction

Alternative Model H2	
Dependent Variable: Issue Emphasis in Executive Speeches	
Salience (t-1)	1.840*** (0.317)
Competence (t-1)	6.861* (4.023)
Vulnerability (t-1)	-0.090 (0.105)
Salience (t-1) × Vulnerability (t-1)	0.035*** (0.010)
Salience (t-1) × Competence (t-1)	0.238 (0.567)
Competence (t-1) × Vulnerability (t-1)	0.302 (0.220)
Salience (t-1) × Competence (t-1) × Vulnerability (t-1)	-0.046* (0.027)
Unemployment (t)	0.502 (0.541)
Inflation (t)	-0.311 (0.447)
LSq (t)	0.021 (0.779)
US 2nd Term (t)	-1.904 (6.442)
Spain	-7.682 (7.421)
UK	-13.91 (10.17)
US	-0.758 (5.860)
Constant	3.111 (6.492)
N	575
R ²	0.20

Models with AR1 autocorrelation structure

Panel-corrected standard errors in parentheses and country dummies (Germany reference category)

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

Table B.5: Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2, German data omitted

	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Dependent Variable: Issue Emphasis in Executive Speeches			
Salience (t-1)	1.372*** (0.300)		
Competence (t-1)	5.814** (2.898)		
Vulnerability (t-1)	-0.008 (0.128)	0.224* (0.134)	-0.099 (0.123)
Salience (t-1) × Vulnerability (t-1)	0.012 (0.013)		
Competence (t-1) × Vulnerability (t-1)	-0.011 (0.132)		
Salience C (t-1)		1.423*** (0.278)	
Salience C (t-1) × Vulnerability (t-1)		-0.012 (0.013)	
Salience NC (t-1)			2.321*** (0.499)
Salience NC (t-1) × Vulnerability (t-1)			0.045*** (0.013)
Unemployment (t)	0.538 (0.589)	0.893* (0.522)	-0.321 (1.072)
Inflation (t)	-0.315 (0.436)	-0.081 (0.477)	-0.423 (0.537)
LSq (t)	-0.760 (0.834)	-0.184 (0.681)	-0.492 (1.146)
US 2nd Term (t)	-2.305 (6.705)	4.457 (7.049)	-5.621 (7.993)
UK	-2.947 (11.03)	-5.269 (9.205)	-11.48 (16.85)
US	0.268 (6.824)	11.39** (5.335)	-5.414 (12.28)
Constant	8.069 (10.91)	0.164 (5.922)	16.02 (18.43)
N	485	253	232
R ²	0.14	0.30	0.15

Models with AR1 autocorrelation structure

Panel-corrected standard errors in parentheses and country dummies (Spain reference category)

German data omitted

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

Table B.6: Descriptive statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Speech Defence/Int. Affairs	128	55.7	57.5	0	458
Speech Education	128	10.7	13.5	0	64
Speech Environment	128	4.4	8.3	0	48
Speech Health	128	8.0	13.7	0	106
Speech Housing	128	2.9	5.0	0	47
Speech Law & Crime	128	15.6	18.7	0	85
Speech Social Welfare	128	9.0	12.4	0	67
MIP Defence	118	12.2	10.3	0.4	56.1
MIP Education	103	2.7	2.5	0	11.7
MIP Environment	96	2.2	3.1	0	16.9
MIP Health	101	5.8	6.7	0.1	34.7
MIP Housing	75	2.1	2.3	0.1	11.9
MIP Law & Crime	117	8.4	7.5	0.2	32.7
MIP Social Welfare	117	3.7	2.6	0.1	14.1
Competence Defence	117			0	1
Competence Education	117			0	1
Competence Environment	117			0	1
Competence Health	120			0	1
Competence Housing	112			0	1
Competence Law & Crime	96			0	1
Competence Social Welfare	107			0	1
Gov't Vulnerability	128	0.2	20.0	-43.6	53.7
Election Year (6 months)	110			0	1
Election Year (12 months)	110			0	1
Unemployment	128	8.8	5.0	2	24.2
Inflation	128	4.9	4.2	-0.4	24.2
Least Squares Index	128	8.0	5.2	0.8	17.8
US 2nd Term	128			0	1

Appendix C

Appendix Chapter 5

Data Sources

Most Important Problem/Issue

Canada: Environics Focus

Germany: Politbarometer

Spain: CIS Barometer

United Kingdom: Gallup, Ipsos-MORI (UK Policy Agendas Project)

United States: Gallup (Roper Center)

Preferences in Spending from Soroka and Wlezien (2010) Dataset

Canada: *int_all_def, int_all_educ, int_all_heal, int_all_wel*

United Kingdom: *int_all_def, int_all_educ, int_all_heal, int_all_pen*

United States: *int_all_def, int_all_educ, int_all_heal, int_all_wel*

Vote Intentions/Presidential Approval

Canada: Environics Focus

Germany: Politbarometer

Spain: CIS Barometer

United Kingdom: WJFFP dataset (see Wlezien et al. 2013; Green and Jennings 2012*b*)

United States: Gallup (Policy Agendas Project)

Party System Dispersion

Comparative Manifestos Project (Volkens et al. 2014)

Government Expenditures

Defence: SIPRI Military Expenditure Database

Education: World Bank Development Indicators, Eurostat

Health, Housing, Labour/Unemployment, Social Welfare: OECD Social Expenditure Database

Economic Indicators

Unemployment rate as percentage of civilian labour force (OECD)

Inflation as consumer prices as percentage change on the same period of the previous year (OECD)

Additional Controls

Population over 65 as percentage of population (OECD)

Table C.1: Correlation table for spending and priorities

Variables	exp_def	exp_edu	exp_heu	exp_hou	exp_une	exp_wel	mip_def	mip_edu	mip_heu	mip_hou	mip_une	mip_wel
exp_def	1.000											
exp_edu	0.108	1.000										
exp_heu	-0.526	0.268	1.000									
exp_hou	0.055	0.278	0.009	1.000								
exp_une	-0.600	-0.398	0.182	-0.412	1.000							
exp_wel	-0.524	-0.396	0.608	-0.043	0.548	1.000						
mip_def	0.018	-0.257	-0.129	-0.305	0.095	0.133	1.000					
mip_edu	0.154	0.066	-0.177	0.782	-0.493	-0.190	-0.183	1.000				
mip_heu	0.277	0.021	-0.348	0.513	-0.569	-0.429	-0.301	0.477	1.000			
mip_hou	-0.066	-0.199	-0.193	0.062	0.019	-0.033	0.261	0.152	0.102	1.000		
mip_une	-0.534	-0.297	0.418	-0.263	0.703	0.670	-0.203	-0.476	-0.463	-0.353	1.000	
mip_wel	0.371	-0.182	-0.079	-0.118	-0.313	-0.102	-0.173	0.084	0.212	-0.047	-0.023	1.000

Table C.2: Correlation table for spending and preferences

Variables	exp_def	exp_edu	exp_heal	exp_wel	pref_def	pref_educ	pref_heal	pref_welf
exp_def	1.000							
exp_edu	-0.516	1.000						
exp_heal	-0.785	0.753	1.000					
exp_wel	-0.316	-0.095	0.091	1.000				
pref_def	-0.303	0.137	0.206	-0.225	1.000			
pref_educ	-0.110	-0.786	0.065	0.230	-0.116	1.000		
pref_heal	0.016	-0.837	-0.129	0.131	0.011	0.897	1.000	
pref_welf	-0.103	-0.549	-0.119	0.619	-0.322	0.696	0.664	1.000

Table C.3: Policy responsiveness to public priorities (DV in levels)

	Defence	Education	Health	Housing	Unemployment	Welfare
Dependent variable: Government expenditure as percentage of GDP						
Public Priorities (t-1)	-0.002 (0.004)	-0.054** (0.022)	-0.011 (0.010)	0.004 (0.003)	-0.007** (0.003)	-0.036* (0.019)
Left (t-1)	-0.431*** (0.082)	0.129 (0.093)	-0.016 (0.123)	-0.042* (0.023)	0.049 (0.073)	0.263** (0.121)
US 2nd Term (t)	0.146 (0.214)	-0.382* (0.221)	-0.400 (0.256)		0.055 (0.055)	-0.293** (0.122)
Inflation (t)	0.054** (0.023)	-0.137*** (0.030)	-0.088*** (0.033)	-0.028*** (0.007)	0.023 (0.019)	-0.124*** (0.036)
Unemployment (t)	0.042** (0.017)	-0.005 (0.015)	0.043* (0.024)	0.005* (0.003)	0.164*** (0.023)	0.114*** (0.038)
War (t)	0.022 (0.068)					
Elderly (t)			0.208** (0.087)			
Constant	1.279*** (0.186)	6.188*** (0.373)	4.050*** (1.158)	0.640*** (0.031)	0.181 (0.358)	8.359*** (0.469)
N	95	61	82	64	87	93
R ²	0.82	0.98	0.97	0.91	0.79	0.98

OLS with AR1 autocorrelation structure

Correlated panels corrected standard errors in parentheses and country dummies (Canada reference category)

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

Table C.4: Policy responsiveness to public priorities (DV in changes)

	Defence	Education	Health	Housing	Unemployment	Welfare
Dependent variable: Government expenditure as percentage of GDP (differenced)						
Public Priorities (t-1)	-0.000 (0.003)	-0.002 (0.017)	-0.001 (0.005)	0.006 (0.006)	-0.009*** (0.003)	-0.032* (0.016)
Left (t-1)	0.051 (0.048)	0.166** (0.065)	-0.022 (0.057)	-0.002 (0.026)	-0.017 (0.059)	-0.014 (0.077)
US 2nd Term (t)	0.004 (0.103)	-0.077 (0.233)	-0.216* (0.109)	0.062 (0.124)	-0.022 (0.139)	-0.147 (0.158)
Inflation (t)	0.018 (0.014)	0.013 (0.021)	0.024 (0.018)	0.010 (0.008)	-0.016 (0.019)	0.031 (0.024)
Unemployment (t)	0.003 (0.009)	0.009 (0.011)	-0.023** (0.011)	0.010** (0.005)	-0.010 (0.012)	0.007 (0.014)
War (t)	-0.095* (0.053)					
Elderly (t)			-0.039 (0.041)			
Constant	-0.124 (0.105)	-0.194 (0.162)	0.852 (0.614)	-0.121** (0.059)	0.326*** (0.116)	0.109 (0.179)
N	96	56	83	65	88	94
R ²	0.06	0.13	0.16	0.13	0.22	0.11

OLS with country-fixed effects. Standard errors in parentheses

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

Table C.5: Policy responsiveness to public preferences (DV in levels)

	Defence	Education	Health	Welfare
Dependent variable: Government expenditure as percentage of GDP				
Public Preferences (t-1)	-0.004 (0.003)	-0.028*** (0.009)	-0.003 (0.008)	-0.012** (0.006)
Left (t-1)	-0.468*** (0.167)	-0.077 (0.193)	-0.141 (0.148)	0.299** (0.125)
US 2nd Term (t)	0.124 (0.188)	-0.453* (0.232)	-0.189 (0.169)	-0.110 (0.107)
Inflation (t)	0.091*** (0.032)	0.030 (0.037)	-0.050 (0.032)	-0.079*** (0.025)
Unemployment (t)	0.125** (0.056)	0.255*** (0.047)	0.041 (0.056)	0.325*** (0.045)
War (t)	0.030 (0.081)			
Elderly (t)			0.658** (0.265)	
Constant	0.491 (0.581)	5.524*** (0.781)	-1.360 (3.088)	6.314*** (0.430)
N	48	33	48	48
R ²	0.92	0.98	0.87	0.95

OLS with AR1 autocorrelation structure

Correlated panels corrected standard errors in parentheses and country dummies (Canada reference category)

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

Table C.6: Policy responsiveness to public preferences (DV in changes)

	Defence	Education	Health	Welfare
Dependent variable: Government expenditure as percentage of GDP (differenced)				
Public Preferences (t-1)	0.008*** (0.002)	0.024* (0.012)	0.006* (0.003)	0.002 (0.007)
Left (t-1)	-0.091 (0.093)	-0.369 (0.232)	-0.181*** (0.067)	-0.166 (0.165)
US 2nd Term (t)	0.138 (0.112)	0.684 (0.411)	-0.090 (0.079)	-0.025 (0.154)
Inflation (t)	0.025 (0.021)	0.073 (0.050)	0.041** (0.017)	0.061** (0.029)
Unemployment (t)	0.031 (0.029)	0.137* (0.072)	-0.002 (0.025)	0.039 (0.051)
War (t)	-0.051 (0.079)			
Elderly (t)			0.042 (0.112)	
Constant	-0.255 (0.259)	-2.783** (1.229)	-0.840 (1.384)	-0.364 (0.447)
N	48	27	48	48
R ²	0.39	0.40	0.45	0.23

OLS with country-fixed effects. Standard errors in parentheses

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

Table C.7: Electoral vulnerability and policy responsiveness to public priorities

	Defence	Education	Health	Housing	Unemployment	Welfare
Dependent variable: Government expenditure as percentage of GDP (differenced)						
Public Priorities (t-1)	-0.003 (0.003)	0.005 (0.019)	-0.011 (0.007)	0.002 (0.009)	-0.012*** (0.003)	-0.035** (0.016)
Gov't Vulnerability (t-1)	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.003 (0.004)	0.002 (0.002)	-0.001 (0.001)	0.002 (0.003)	0.012*** (0.004)
Priorities (t-1) × Vulnerability (t-1)	-0.000** (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	-0.000** (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	-0.000* (0.000)	-0.002*** (0.001)
Left (t-1)	0.010 (0.059)	0.164* (0.084)	-0.017 (0.070)	-0.013 (0.043)	0.015 (0.073)	0.100 (0.091)
LSq (t)	-0.011 (0.015)	-0.003 (0.018)	-0.017 (0.017)	-0.009 (0.012)	-0.070*** (0.018)	-0.046* (0.024)
US 2nd Term (t)	-0.004 (0.102)	-0.069 (0.267)	-0.203* (0.116)	0.065 (0.136)	-0.009 (0.139)	-0.269 (0.162)
Inflation (t)	0.018 (0.018)	0.015 (0.027)	0.032 (0.024)	0.015 (0.013)	0.004 (0.024)	0.056* (0.031)
Unemployment (t)	0.005 (0.010)	0.012 (0.012)	-0.021* (0.011)	0.009* (0.005)	0.008 (0.013)	0.006 (0.015)
War (t)	-0.078 (0.054)					
Elderly (t)			-0.047 (0.045)			
Constant	-0.024 (0.139)	-0.245 (0.212)	1.164* (0.689)	-0.009 (0.132)	0.788*** (0.164)	0.417* (0.224)
N	86	52	75	59	80	85
R ²	0.18	0.14	0.26	0.16	0.38	0.27

OLS with country-fixed effects. Standard errors in parentheses

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

Table C.8: Electoral decidability and policy responsiveness to public priorities

	Defence (a)	Defence (b)	Education (a)	Education (b)	Welfare State (a)	Welfare State (b)
Dependent variable: Government expenditure as percentage of GDP (differenced)						
Public Priorities (t-1)	0.006 (0.007)	0.018*** (0.006)	0.013 (0.021)	-0.024 (0.042)	-0.020 (0.037)	0.000 (0.027)
VWPSD (t)	0.050 (0.041)		0.077 (0.052)		-0.049 (0.083)	
Priorities (t-1) × VWPSD (t)	-0.002 (0.002)		-0.005 (0.006)		0.002 (0.009)	
SWPSD (t)		0.124** (0.056)		0.112 (0.111)		0.111 (0.112)
Priorities (t-1) × SWPSD (t)		-0.012*** (0.003)		0.006 (0.026)		-0.008 (0.011)
Left (t-1)	0.068 (0.050)	0.089* (0.048)	0.140* (0.072)	0.149** (0.074)	0.027 (0.126)	0.025 (0.125)
LSq (t)	-0.023* (0.014)	-0.019 (0.012)	0.012 (0.018)	0.006 (0.017)	-0.066* (0.035)	-0.073** (0.035)
US 2nd Term (t)	0.022 (0.121)	0.038 (0.103)	-0.054 (0.244)	0.014 (0.265)	-0.459* (0.255)	-0.438* (0.252)
Inflation (t)	0.021 (0.016)	0.027* (0.015)	0.013 (0.025)	0.016 (0.029)	0.099** (0.040)	0.099** (0.039)
Unemployment (t)	0.007 (0.010)	0.013 (0.009)	0.009 (0.011)	0.008 (0.011)	0.002 (0.023)	0.003 (0.023)
War (t)	-0.087 (0.054)	-0.051 (0.052)				
Constant	-0.081 (0.161)	-0.261* (0.153)	-0.534* (0.267)	-0.305 (0.229)	0.763* (0.452)	0.441 (0.377)
N	95	95	55	55	94	94
R ²	0.10	0.21	0.20	0.18	0.14	0.15

OLS with country-fixed effects. Standard errors in parentheses

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

Table C.9: Electoral proximity and policy responsiveness to public priorities

	Defence	Education	Health	Housing	Unemployment	Welfare
Dependent variable: Government expenditure as percentage of GDP (differenced)						
Public Priorities (t-1)	-0.001 (0.003)	-0.002 (0.019)	0.002 (0.007)	0.001 (0.008)	-0.010*** (0.003)	-0.053*** (0.018)
Election Year (t)	-0.011 (0.071)	0.116 (0.103)	-0.043 (0.087)	0.031 (0.041)	-0.143 (0.091)	-0.215 (0.143)
Priorities (t-1) × Election Year (t)	0.006 (0.006)	-0.013 (0.015)	-0.000 (0.008)	-0.010 (0.010)	0.003 (0.003)	0.063** (0.026)
Left (t-1)	0.073 (0.050)	0.175** (0.073)	-0.023 (0.059)	0.014 (0.031)	0.046 (0.060)	0.023 (0.076)
LSq (t)	-0.017 (0.013)	0.001 (0.017)	-0.012 (0.017)	-0.015 (0.011)	-0.058*** (0.016)	-0.050** (0.021)
US 2nd Term (t)	-0.015 (0.103)	-0.051 (0.256)	-0.219* (0.111)	0.130 (0.135)	-0.033 (0.130)	-0.185 (0.151)
Inflation (t)	0.026* (0.015)	0.007 (0.027)	0.023 (0.019)	0.019* (0.011)	0.004 (0.019)	0.056** (0.025)
Unemployment (t)	0.005 (0.009)	0.010 (0.011)	-0.025** (0.011)	0.008 (0.005)	-0.006 (0.011)	0.012 (0.013)
War (t)	-0.086 (0.054)					
Elderly (t)			-0.061 (0.046)			
Constant	-0.033 (0.139)	-0.211 (0.201)	1.274* (0.713)	0.023 (0.122)	0.761*** (0.158)	0.484** (0.221)
N	95	55	82	64	87	93
R ²	0.10	0.15	0.18	0.17	0.35	0.23

OLS with country-fixed effects. Standard errors in parentheses

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

Table C.10: Electoral vulnerability and policy responsiveness to public preferences

	Defence	Education	Health	Welfare
Dependent variable: Government expenditure as percentage of GDP (differenced)				
Public Preferences (t-1)	-0.001 (0.003)	0.020* (0.011)	0.005 (0.004)	0.009 (0.010)
Gov't Vulnerability (t-1)	0.009*** (0.002)	-0.043* (0.023)	-0.013** (0.005)	-0.004 (0.004)
Preferences (t-1) × Vulnerability (t-1)	0.000*** (0.000)	0.001 (0.000)	0.000** (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Left (t-1)	-0.137 (0.100)	0.250 (0.315)	-0.083 (0.092)	0.056 (0.260)
LSq (t)	-0.018 (0.021)	-0.053 (0.052)	-0.019 (0.016)	-0.054 (0.038)
US 2nd Term (t)	0.170 (0.102)	0.000 (0.440)	-0.006 (0.072)	-0.090 (0.173)
Inflation (t)	0.039 (0.030)	0.105* (0.059)	0.065*** (0.023)	0.099* (0.053)
Unemployment (t)	0.046 (0.028)	0.074 (0.064)	0.043 (0.026)	0.074 (0.061)
War (t)	-0.048 (0.070)			
Elderly (t)			0.099 (0.129)	
Constant	-0.423 (0.287)	-1.736 (1.098)	-1.814 (1.577)	-0.282 (0.585)
N	43	26	43	43
R ²	0.62	0.53	0.64	0.31

OLS with country-fixed effects. Standard errors in parentheses

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

Table C.II: Electoral decidability and policy responsiveness to public preferences

	Defence (a)	Defence (b)	Education (a)	Education (b)	Welfare State (a)	Welfare State (b)
Dependent variable: Government expenditure as percentage of GDP (differenced)						
Public Preferences (t-1)	-0.007* (0.004)	-0.005 (0.004)	0.009 (0.027)	0.017 (0.023)	0.011 (0.016)	0.014 (0.013)
VWPSD (t)	0.057 (0.040)		0.232 (0.774)		0.000 (0.127)	
Preferences (t-1) × VWPSD (t)	0.005*** (0.001)		-0.001 (0.010)		0.001 (0.002)	
SWPSD (t)		0.199** (0.074)		-0.636 (2.463)		0.036 (0.173)
Preferences (t-1) × SWPSD (t)		0.012*** (0.003)		0.010 (0.034)		0.000 (0.004)
Left (t-1)	-0.358*** (0.105)	-0.358*** (0.109)	-0.465 (0.341)	-0.359 (0.322)	-0.316 (0.247)	-0.313 (0.212)
LSq (t)	0.025 (0.025)	0.004 (0.021)	0.056 (0.075)	0.011 (0.071)	-0.062 (0.051)	-0.073* (0.043)
US 2nd Term (t)	0.215* (0.118)	0.176 (0.115)	0.862 (0.510)	0.711 (0.529)	-0.171 (0.222)	-0.182 (0.221)
Inflation (t)	-0.046 (0.028)	-0.044 (0.028)	0.125 (0.081)	0.082 (0.081)	0.131*** (0.045)	0.127*** (0.045)
Unemployment (t)	-0.076** (0.037)	-0.080** (0.038)	0.134 (0.077)	0.134 (0.080)	0.064 (0.083)	0.073 (0.081)
War (t)	-0.022 (0.069)	-0.041 (0.069)				
Constant	0.457 (0.317)	0.639* (0.335)	-3.094 (2.160)	-2.488 (1.689)	-0.477 (1.044)	-0.467 (0.928)
N	48	48	27	27	48	48
R ²	0.58	0.58	0.46	0.41	0.38	0.38

OLS with country-fixed effects. Standard errors in parentheses

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

Table C.12: Electoral proximity and policy responsiveness to public preferences

	Defence	Education	Health	Welfare
Dependent variable: Government expenditure as percentage of GDP (differenced)				
Public Preferences (t-1)	0.005* (0.002)	0.025* (0.013)	0.005 (0.004)	0.002 (0.008)
Election Year (t)	0.143* (0.082)	2.803* (1.570)	-0.442* (0.236)	0.114 (0.115)
Preferences (t-1) × Election Year (t)	0.008** (0.003)	-0.041* (0.023)	0.006* (0.004)	0.003 (0.003)
Left (t-1)	-0.052 (0.091)	-0.107 (0.322)	-0.195*** (0.066)	-0.154 (0.166)
LSq (t)	-0.012 (0.020)	-0.046 (0.062)	-0.013 (0.016)	-0.043 (0.029)
US 2nd Term (t)	0.150 (0.112)	0.414 (0.491)	-0.077 (0.077)	-0.072 (0.154)
Inflation (t)	0.037 (0.022)	0.124 (0.074)	0.049** (0.020)	0.077** (0.031)
Unemployment (t)	0.034 (0.028)	0.125 (0.073)	0.009 (0.026)	0.039 (0.052)
War (t)	-0.039 (0.079)			
Elderly (t)			0.098 (0.121)	
Constant	-0.295 (0.299)	-2.529* (1.255)	-1.451 (1.504)	-0.047 (0.485)
N	48	27	48	48
R ²	0.48	0.50	0.52	0.31

OLS with country-fixed effects. Standard errors in parentheses

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

Table C.13: Electoral vulnerability and policy responsiveness to public priorities CA, UK, US

	Defence	Education	Health	Housing	Unemployment	Welfare
Dependent variable: Government expenditure as percentage of GDP (differenced)						
Public Priorities (t-1)	0.008 (0.008)	0.006 (0.029)	-0.027*** (0.009)	0.033 (0.029)	-0.016*** (0.004)	-0.150*** (0.029)
Gov't Vulnerability (t-1)	-0.002 (0.003)	0.001 (0.007)	0.007** (0.002)	0.000 (0.002)	0.001 (0.003)	0.025*** (0.004)
Priorities (t-1) × Vulnerability (t-1)	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.001)	-0.001*** (0.000)	-0.000 (0.001)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.005*** (0.001)
Left (t-1)	0.201 (0.144)	-0.019 (0.239)	-0.167 (0.103)	0.036 (0.121)	-0.038 (0.096)	0.256* (0.135)
LSq (t)	-0.012 (0.026)	0.030 (0.046)	0.027 (0.018)	0.006 (0.030)	-0.019 (0.018)	-0.020 (0.026)
US 2nd Term (t)	-0.021 (0.130)	0.040 (0.371)	-0.183* (0.095)	0.105 (0.189)	0.063 (0.090)	-0.219 (0.132)
Inflation (t)	0.061* (0.032)	-0.003 (0.057)	0.014 (0.024)	0.005 (0.023)	0.011 (0.022)	0.080** (0.034)
Unemployment (t)	0.040 (0.031)	-0.019 (0.054)	-0.047* (0.027)	0.036 (0.025)	0.033 (0.024)	-0.005 (0.035)
War (t)	-0.063 (0.087)					
Elderly (t)			0.270* (0.142)			
Constant	-0.552 (0.440)	-0.279 (0.871)	-3.141* (1.804)	-0.450 (0.579)	0.124 (0.291)	0.628 (0.449)
N	53	33	51	33	47	52
R ²	0.26	0.11	0.42	0.24	0.42	0.59

OLS with country-fixed effects. Standard errors in parentheses

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

Table C.14: Electoral decidability and policy responsiveness to public priorities: CA, UK, US

	Defence (a)	Defence (b)	Education (a)	Education (b)	Welfare State (a)	Welfare State (b)
Dependent variable: Government expenditure as percentage of GDP (differenced)						
Public Priorities (t-1)	0.022* (0.012)	0.022** (0.010)	0.051 (0.034)	-0.025 (0.063)	-0.025 (0.043)	-0.011 (0.033)
VWPSD (t)	0.029 (0.071)		0.185** (0.087)		-0.082 (0.139)	
Priorities (t-1) × VWPSD (t)	-0.002 (0.004)		-0.013 (0.009)		0.007 (0.012)	
SWPSD (t)		0.070 (0.109)		0.409* (0.223)		-0.007 (0.159)
Priorities (t-1) × SWPSD (t)		-0.007 (0.008)		0.004 (0.040)		0.002 (0.014)
Left (t-1)	0.158 (0.100)	0.160 (0.096)	0.059 (0.183)	0.248 (0.178)	-0.081 (0.212)	-0.099 (0.207)
LSq (t)	-0.021 (0.026)	-0.018 (0.022)	0.061 (0.042)	0.027 (0.038)	-0.018 (0.057)	-0.008 (0.048)
US 2nd Term (t)	-0.016 (0.154)	-0.001 (0.155)	0.029 (0.321)	-0.036 (0.329)	-0.391 (0.275)	-0.365 (0.274)
Inflation (t)	0.042* (0.023)	0.040* (0.023)	0.032 (0.047)	0.086 (0.054)	0.081 (0.049)	0.087* (0.048)
Unemployment (t)	0.026 (0.032)	0.028 (0.031)	0.004 (0.050)	-0.005 (0.053)	0.018 (0.072)	0.007 (0.070)
War (t)	-0.038 (0.081)	-0.026 (0.085)				
Constant	-0.348 (0.423)	-0.384 (0.407)	-1.663 (0.971)	-1.005 (0.961)	0.468 (1.028)	0.157 (0.873)
N	59	59	34	34	58	58
R ²	0.23	0.24	0.34	0.38	0.17	0.16

OLS with country-fixed effects. Standard errors in parentheses

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

Table C.15: Electoral proximity and policy responsiveness to public priorities: CA, UK, US

	Defence	Education	Health	Housing	Unemployment	Welfare
Dependent variable: Government expenditure as percentage of GDP (differenced)						
Public Priorities (t-1)	0.017** (0.008)	-0.001 (0.029)	-0.008 (0.009)	0.026 (0.023)	-0.014*** (0.003)	-0.096** (0.039)
Election Year (t)	0.088 (0.096)	0.055 (0.231)	-0.081 (0.120)	0.071 (0.084)	-0.061 (0.068)	-0.345 (0.221)
Priorities (t-1) × Election Year (t)	-0.001 (0.010)	-0.007 (0.026)	0.003 (0.009)	-0.009 (0.033)	0.001 (0.004)	0.083** (0.041)
Left (t-1)	0.187* (0.095)	0.130 (0.215)	-0.097 (0.084)	0.112 (0.077)	0.002 (0.063)	-0.094 (0.132)
LSq (t)	-0.018 (0.020)	0.005 (0.042)	0.018 (0.019)	-0.002 (0.024)	-0.018 (0.015)	-0.017 (0.029)
US 2nd Term (t)	-0.057 (0.125)	-0.059 (0.374)	-0.219** (0.106)	0.240 (0.195)	0.030 (0.084)	-0.118 (0.163)
Inflation (t)	0.049** (0.021)	0.023 (0.055)	0.029 (0.020)	0.019 (0.016)	0.014 (0.014)	0.045 (0.031)
Unemployment (t)	0.028 (0.028)	-0.017 (0.058)	-0.045 (0.029)	0.041* (0.023)	0.020 (0.022)	-0.008 (0.044)
War (t)	-0.028 (0.081)					
Elderly (t)			0.067 (0.131)			
Constant	-0.402 (0.359)	-0.092 (0.916)	-0.568 (1.708)	-0.474 (0.481)	0.153 (0.239)	0.665 (0.589)
N	59	34	56	36	51	57
R ²	0.24	0.12	0.22	0.26	0.41	0.25

OLS with country-fixed effects. Standard errors in parentheses

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

Table C.16: Electoral decidability and policy responsiveness to public priorities: UPSD

	Defence	Education	Welfare State
Dependent variable: Government expenditure as percentage of GDP (differenced)			
Public Priorities (t-1)	0.016** (0.007)	-0.018 (0.035)	-0.032 (0.034)
UPSD (t)	0.059** (0.028)	0.081 (0.076)	-0.080 (0.096)
Priorities (t-1) × UPSD (t)	-0.005*** (0.002)	0.003 (0.015)	0.006 (0.009)
Left (t-1)	0.080* (0.048)	0.146** (0.069)	0.032 (0.124)
LSq (t)	-0.019 (0.013)	0.005 (0.016)	-0.062* (0.034)
US 2nd Term (t)	0.066 (0.110)	-0.072 (0.235)	-0.478* (0.253)
Inflation (t)	0.023 (0.015)	0.015 (0.027)	0.097** (0.040)
Unemployment (t)	0.013 (0.009)	0.010 (0.010)	-0.001 (0.023)
War (t)	-0.058 (0.053)		
Constant	-0.241 (0.157)	-0.397* (0.236)	0.841* (0.473)
N	96	56	95
R ²	0.17	0.23	0.15

OLS with country-fixed effects. Standard errors in parentheses

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

Table C.17: Electoral decidability and policy responsiveness to public preferences: UPSD

	Defence	Education	Welfare State
Dependent variable: Government expenditure as percentage of GDP (differenced)			
Public Preferences (t-1)	-0.007* (0.004)	-0.016 (0.038)	0.008 (0.015)
UPSD (t)	0.074** (0.032)	-0.988 (0.867)	-0.157 (0.106)
Preferences (t-1) × UPSD (t)	0.005*** (0.001)	0.014 (0.012)	0.003 (0.002)
Left (t-1)	-0.382*** (0.112)	-0.284 (0.315)	-0.175 (0.229)
LSq (t)	0.006 (0.021)	-0.011 (0.061)	-0.073* (0.042)
US 2nd Term (t)	0.183 (0.117)	0.716 (0.498)	-0.180 (0.215)
Inflation (t)	-0.046 (0.028)	0.102 (0.081)	0.126*** (0.043)
Unemployment (t)	-0.081** (0.039)	0.169* (0.082)	0.086 (0.080)
War (t)	-0.039 (0.069)		
Constant	0.632* (0.339)	-0.292 (2.516)	-0.125 (0.942)
N	48	27	48
R ²	0.57	0.45	0.41

OLS with country-fixed effects. Standard errors in parentheses

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

Table C.18: Electoral decidability and policy responsiveness to public priorities: Alternative measure

	Defence	Education	Welfare State
Dependent variable: Government expenditure as percentage of GDP (differenced)			
Public Priorities (t-1)	0.006 (0.006)	-0.001 (0.019)	0.012 (0.036)
Distance Gov Opp (t)	0.015 (0.013)	0.063 (0.041)	0.012 (0.032)
Priorities (t-1) × Distance (t)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.003 (0.005)	-0.005 (0.006)
Left (t-1)	0.065 (0.050)	0.236*** (0.076)	0.033 (0.129)
LSq (t)	-0.018 (0.013)	0.015 (0.018)	-0.077** (0.038)
US 2nd Term (t)	0.031 (0.120)	-0.109 (0.244)	-0.418 (0.258)
Inflation (t)	0.022 (0.016)	0.001 (0.026)	0.101** (0.041)
Unemployment (t)	0.007 (0.010)	0.015 (0.012)	0.005 (0.023)
War (t)	-0.081 (0.055)		
Constant	-0.093 (0.156)	-0.551** (0.261)	0.576 (0.424)
N	95	55	94
R ²	0.10	0.22	0.15

OLS with country-fixed effects. Standard errors in parentheses

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

Table C.19: Electoral decidability and policy responsiveness to public preferences: Alternative measure

	Defence	Education	Welfare State
Dependent variable: Government expenditure as percentage of GDP (differenced)			
Public Preferences (t-1)	-0.004 (0.004)	0.025 (0.027)	0.011 (0.013)
Distance Gov Opp (t)	0.028* (0.015)	0.020 (0.510)	-0.007 (0.046)
Preferences (t-1) × Distance (t)	0.002*** (0.001)	-0.000 (0.008)	0.001 (0.001)
Left (t-1)	-0.350*** (0.110)	-0.361 (0.372)	-0.274 (0.205)
LSq (t)	0.003 (0.021)	-0.005 (0.074)	-0.050 (0.062)
US 2nd Term (t)	0.194 (0.122)	0.670 (0.565)	-0.158 (0.222)
Inflation (t)	-0.033 (0.027)	0.074 (0.077)	0.138** (0.061)
Unemployment (t)	-0.069* (0.038)	0.138 (0.088)	0.063 (0.091)
War (t)	-0.044 (0.070)		
Constant	0.588* (0.343)	-2.827 (1.980)	-0.595 (0.862)
N	48	27	48
R ²	0.56	0.40	0.38

OLS with country-fixed effects. Standard errors in parentheses

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

Table C.20: Electoral vulnerability and policy responsiveness to public priorities: LDV

	Defence	Education	Health	Housing	Unemployment	Welfare
Dependent variable: Government expenditure as percentage of GDP (differenced)						
Gov't Spending (t-1)	-0.112*** (0.042)	-0.286*** (0.062)	-0.006 (0.065)	-0.379*** (0.119)	-0.346*** (0.084)	-0.142* (0.076)
Public Priorities (t-1)	-0.003 (0.003)	-0.032* (0.017)	-0.011 (0.008)	-0.003 (0.008)	-0.008*** (0.003)	-0.044*** (0.016)
Gov't Vulnerability (t-1)	-0.001 (0.002)	-0.004 (0.003)	0.002 (0.003)	-0.001 (0.001)	0.005 (0.003)	0.013*** (0.004)
Priorities (t-1) × Vulnerability (t-1)	-0.000** (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	-0.000** (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	-0.000** (0.000)	-0.002*** (0.001)
Left (t-1)	-0.074 (0.065)	0.239*** (0.070)	-0.012 (0.087)	-0.005 (0.040)	0.055 (0.066)	0.175* (0.098)
LSq (t)	0.002 (0.015)	-0.013 (0.015)	-0.018 (0.019)	-0.016 (0.011)	-0.087*** (0.017)	-0.056** (0.024)
US 2nd Term (t)	0.068 (0.102)	-0.078 (0.217)	-0.210 (0.142)	0.051 (0.124)	-0.007 (0.125)	-0.342** (0.164)
Inflation (t)	0.027 (0.018)	-0.034 (0.024)	0.031 (0.024)	-0.001 (0.013)	0.039* (0.023)	0.018 (0.037)
Unemployment (t)	0.010 (0.009)	0.014 (0.010)	-0.021* (0.011)	0.007 (0.005)	0.048*** (0.015)	0.010 (0.015)
War (t)	-0.094* (0.052)					
Elderly (t)			-0.047 (0.045)			
Constant	0.132 (0.145)	1.516*** (0.418)	1.202 (0.819)	0.389** (0.174)	1.026*** (0.158)	2.176** (0.963)
N	86	52	75	59	80	85
R ²	0.26	0.48	0.26	0.31	0.51	0.30

OLS with country-fixed effects. Standard errors in parentheses

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

Table C.21: Electoral decidability and policy responsiveness to public priorities: LDV

	Defence (a)	Defence (b)	Education (a)	Education (b)	Welfare State (a)	Welfare State (b)
Dependent variable: Government expenditure as percentage of GDP (differenced)						
Gov't Spending (t-1)	-0.156*** (0.047)	-0.126*** (0.042)	-0.286*** (0.060)	-0.265*** (0.062)	-0.011 (0.074)	0.003 (0.074)
Public Priorities (t-1)	-0.001 (0.007)	0.014** (0.006)	-0.032 (0.020)	-0.043 (0.036)	-0.020 (0.037)	0.000 (0.028)
VWPSD (t)	0.071* (0.039)		0.042 (0.042)		-0.047 (0.083)	
Priorities (t-1) × VWPSD (t)	-0.000 (0.002)		0.001 (0.005)		0.002 (0.009)	
SWPSD (t)		0.169*** (0.055)		0.092 (0.091)		0.110 (0.113)
Priorities (t-1) × SWPSD (t)		-0.009*** (0.003)		0.000 (0.022)		-0.008 (0.011)
Left (t-1)	-0.041 (0.057)	-0.003 (0.055)	0.208*** (0.060)	0.208*** (0.063)	0.040 (0.143)	0.026 (0.141)
LSq (t)	-0.011 (0.013)	-0.009 (0.012)	0.004 (0.014)	-0.003 (0.015)	-0.068* (0.039)	-0.072* (0.038)
US 2nd Term (t)	0.034 (0.113)	0.084 (0.099)	-0.106 (0.198)	-0.051 (0.222)	-0.473* (0.274)	-0.434 (0.274)
Inflation (t)	0.033** (0.015)	0.034** (0.015)	-0.037 (0.023)	-0.034 (0.027)	0.094* (0.050)	0.100* (0.051)
Unemployment (t)	0.008 (0.009)	0.016* (0.009)	0.008 (0.009)	0.009 (0.009)	0.003 (0.023)	0.004 (0.023)
War (t)	-0.096* (0.050)	-0.061 (0.049)				
Constant	0.201 (0.173)	-0.037 (0.164)	1.271*** (0.436)	1.327*** (0.427)	0.964 (1.568)	0.369 (1.601)
N	96	96	56	56	95	95
R ²	0.21	0.29	0.48	0.43	0.14	0.15

OLS with country-fixed effects. Standard errors in parentheses

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

Table C.22: Electoral proximity and policy responsiveness to public priorities: LDV

	Defence	Education	Health	Housing	Unemployment	Welfare
Dependent variable: Government expenditure as percentage of GDP (differenced)						
Gov't Spending (t-1)	-0.121*** (0.042)	-0.282*** (0.062)	0.027 (0.055)	-0.347*** (0.098)	-0.310*** (0.076)	-0.104 (0.068)
Public Priorities (t-1)	-0.001 (0.003)	-0.039** (0.017)	0.002 (0.007)	-0.002 (0.007)	-0.008*** (0.002)	-0.059*** (0.019)
Election Year (t)	-0.030 (0.066)	0.127 (0.081)	-0.023 (0.086)	0.055 (0.035)	-0.134 (0.082)	-0.230 (0.141)
Priorities (t-1) × Election Year (t)	0.008 (0.006)	-0.011 (0.012)	-0.001 (0.008)	-0.014 (0.009)	0.002 (0.003)	0.062** (0.026)
Left (t-1)	-0.014 (0.057)	0.235*** (0.061)	-0.030 (0.063)	0.011 (0.028)	0.028 (0.053)	0.061 (0.080)
LSq (t)	-0.004 (0.013)	-0.007 (0.014)	-0.007 (0.018)	-0.024** (0.011)	-0.072*** (0.015)	-0.059*** (0.021)
US 2nd Term (t)	0.065 (0.102)	-0.055 (0.209)	-0.191 (0.122)	0.127 (0.123)	0.011 (0.118)	-0.235 (0.153)
Inflation (t)	0.038** (0.015)	-0.044* (0.025)	0.030 (0.021)	0.008 (0.010)	0.027 (0.018)	0.032 (0.029)
Unemployment (t)	0.011 (0.009)	0.010 (0.009)	-0.023** (0.011)	0.009** (0.004)	0.032** (0.014)	0.015 (0.013)
War (t)	-0.099* (0.052)					
Elderly (t)			-0.043 (0.043)			
Constant	0.118 (0.141)	1.515*** (0.409)	0.770 (0.742)	0.387** (0.151)	0.996*** (0.154)	1.792** (0.872)
N	96	56	83	65	88	94
R ²	0.19	0.43	0.17	0.34	0.47	0.25

OLS with country-fixed effects. Standard errors in parentheses

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

Table C.23: Electoral vulnerability and policy responsiveness to public preferences: LDV

	Defence	Education	Health	Welfare
Dependent variable: Government expenditure as percentage of GDP (differenced)				
Gov't Spending (t-1)	-0.148** (0.068)	-0.536*** (0.157)	0.032 (0.062)	-0.856*** (0.136)
Public Preferences (t-1)	-0.001 (0.003)	-0.004 (0.011)	0.006 (0.004)	-0.001 (0.007)
Gov't Vulnerability (t-1)	-0.008*** (0.002)	0.018 (0.019)	0.012** (0.006)	0.003 (0.002)
Preferences (t-1) × Vulnerability (t-1)	-0.000*** (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000* (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Left (t-1)	-0.254** (0.108)	0.140 (0.243)	-0.097 (0.097)	0.372** (0.182)
LSq (t)	0.015 (0.025)	-0.086* (0.041)	-0.012 (0.021)	-0.051* (0.025)
US 2nd Term (t)	0.280** (0.109)	-0.196 (0.341)	0.022 (0.090)	-0.266** (0.120)
Inflation (t)	0.047 (0.028)	0.077 (0.046)	0.069*** (0.025)	-0.066 (0.044)
Unemployment (t)	0.081** (0.031)	0.116** (0.050)	0.048* (0.027)	0.273*** (0.052)
War (t)	-0.011 (0.068)			
Elderly (t)			0.085 (0.133)	
Constant	-0.466* (0.271)	2.858* (1.583)	-1.958 (1.621)	6.282*** (1.117)
N	43	26	43	43
R ²	0.67	0.74	0.64	0.70

OLS with country-fixed effects. Standard errors in parentheses

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

Table C.24: Electoral decidability and policy responsiveness to public preferences: LDV

	Defence (a)	Defence (b)	Education (a)	Education (b)	Welfare State (a)	Welfare State (b)
Dependent variable: Government expenditure as percentage of GDP (differenced)						
Gov't Spending (t-1)	-0.269*** (0.084)	-0.253*** (0.076)	-0.690** (0.275)	-0.649** (0.230)	-0.050 (0.139)	-0.054 (0.136)
Public Preferences (t-1)	-0.005 (0.004)	-0.005 (0.003)	0.024 (0.024)	0.010 (0.019)	0.009 (0.017)	0.012 (0.014)
VWPSD (t)	0.149*** (0.046)		0.815 (0.710)		0.010 (0.132)	
Preferences (t-1) × VWPSD (t)	0.004*** (0.001)		-0.011 (0.009)		0.001 (0.002)	
SWPSD (t)		0.299*** (0.072)		0.281 (2.080)		0.042 (0.176)
Preferences (t-1) × SWPSD (t)		0.009*** (0.003)		-0.008 (0.029)		-0.000 (0.004)
Left (t-1)	-0.451*** (0.098)	-0.431*** (0.099)	-0.410 (0.296)	-0.330 (0.269)	-0.304 (0.252)	-0.292 (0.221)
LSq (t)	0.029 (0.023)	0.032 (0.020)	-0.050 (0.078)	-0.083 (0.068)	-0.069 (0.056)	-0.082 (0.050)
US 2nd Term (t)	0.244** (0.106)	0.242** (0.104)	0.273 (0.500)	0.267 (0.469)	-0.229 (0.278)	-0.247 (0.278)
Inflation (t)	-0.006 (0.028)	-0.009 (0.027)	0.016 (0.082)	-0.000 (0.073)	0.110 (0.075)	0.103 (0.076)
Unemployment (t)	-0.007 (0.039)	-0.009 (0.040)	0.172** (0.069)	0.188** (0.069)	0.064 (0.084)	0.073 (0.081)
War (t)	-0.004 (0.06)	-0.012 (0.062)				
Constant	0.462 (0.283)	0.525* (0.298)	1.264 (2.554)	2.641 (2.298)	0.442 (2.775)	0.567 (2.790)
N	48	48	27	27	48	48
R ²	0.68	0.68	0.62	0.61	0.38	0.38

OLS with country-fixed effects. Standard errors in parentheses

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

Table C.25: Electoral proximity and policy responsiveness to public preferences: LDV

	Defence	Education	Health	Welfare
Dependent variable: Government expenditure as percentage of GDP (differenced)				
Gov't Spending (t-1)	-0.183** (0.068)	-0.683*** (0.158)	0.074 (0.057)	-0.706*** (0.127)
Public Preferences (t-1)	0.004* (0.002)	-0.007 (0.012)	0.007* (0.004)	-0.006 (0.006)
Election Year (t)	0.148* (0.076)	3.903*** (1.111)	-0.460* (0.234)	0.045 (0.086)
Preferences (t-1) × Election Year (t)	0.007** (0.003)	-0.055*** (0.016)	0.007* (0.004)	0.000 (0.003)
Left (t-1)	-0.170* (0.094)	0.094 (0.226)	-0.180** (0.067)	0.180 (0.137)
LSq (t)	0.025 (0.023)	-0.107** (0.045)	0.003 (0.021)	-0.059** (0.022)
US 2nd Term (t)	0.294** (0.117)	-0.082 (0.357)	-0.010 (0.092)	-0.213* (0.117)
Inflation (t)	0.057** (0.022)	0.095* (0.051)	0.057*** (0.021)	-0.044 (0.032)
Unemployment (t)	0.081** (0.031)	0.173*** (0.051)	0.022 (0.028)	0.237*** (0.052)
War (t)	-0.002 (0.074)			
Elderly (t)			0.022 (0.133)	
Constant	-0.404 (0.279)	3.585** (1.655)	-1.302 (1.495)	5.255*** (1.018)
N	48	27	48	48
R ²	0.57	0.78	0.54	0.63

OLS with country-fixed effects. Standard errors in parentheses

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

Table C.26: Descriptive statistics

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Expenditure defence	107	2.6	1.4	1.1	6.6
Expenditure education	85	5.2	1.3	3.2	9.1
Expenditure health	107	6.1	1.1	3.8	8.2
Expenditure housing	107	0.5	0.5	0	1.8
Expenditure unemployment	107	1.8	1.1	0.4	5.2
Expenditure social welfare	107	1.1	2.4	7.8	16.4
Expenditure welfare domains	107	1.8	3.3	12.4	24.9
Public priorities defence	100	8.8	10.1	1.1	56.1
Public priorities education	81	4.3	3.9	0.0	14.7
Public priorities health	87	7.9	7.8	0.1	34.7
Public priorities housing	67	2.6	2.8	0.0	13.3
Public priorities unemployment	92	21.8	19.0	0.4	81.2
Public priorities social welfare	98	4.3	2.7	0.7	14.1
Public priorities welfare domains	99	5.5	4.0	0.6	21.2
Public preferences defence	50	-9.2	21.9	-48	49.0
Public preferences education	50	62.5	9.9	43	82
Public preferences health	50	63.3	15.2	30.7	87
Public preferences welfare	49	-4.8	39.8	-49.1	85
Gov't electoral vulnerability	106	4.4	19.6	-45.5	50.8
UPSD defence	107	1.9	1.6	0.5	6.1
VWPSD defence	107	1.9	1.6	0.5	6.1
SWPSD defence	107	0.8	0.7	0.1	2.5
UPSD education	107	2.3	1.1	0.1	5.4
VWPSD education	107	2.6	1.4	0.3	5.4
SWPSD education	107	0.9	0.5	0.0	1.7
UPSD welfare	107	3.2	1.8	1.0	9.6
VWPSD welfare	107	3.6	1.7	1.0	8.1
SWPSD welfare	107	2.0	1.5	0.3	7.7
Distance defence	107	3.8	3.3	0	12.2
Distance education	107	2.7	2.1	0.1	7.7
Distance welfare	107	4.8	3.3	0.4	13.1
Election year	107			0	1
Left	107			0	1
LSq	107	9.1	5.3	1.9	17.8
US 2nd term	107			0	1
Inflation	107	3.2	2.1	-3	13.5
Unemployment	107	9.3	4.8	4.0	24.2
War	107			0	1
Elderly	107	14.4	2.1	10.9	19.3

Appendix D

Appendix Chapter 6

Data Sources

Enacted Laws

Comparative Agendas Project

Most Important Problem/Issue

Spain: CIS Barometer

United Kingdom: Gallup; Ipsos-MORI (UK Policy Agendas Project)

United States: Gallup (Roper Center)

Vote Intentions/Presidential Approvals

Spain: CIS Barometer

United Kingdom: WJFFP dataset (see Wlezien et al. 2013; Green and Jennings 2012*b*)

United States: Gallup (Roper Center)

Political Constraint Index

POLCONIII (see Heinsz 2002)

Economic Indicators

Unemployment rate as percentage of civilian labour force (OECD)

Inflation as consumer prices as percentage change on the same period of the previous year (OECD)

Table D.1: Correlation table for laws and priorities

Variables	law_def	law_eco	law_edu	law_env	law_heal	law_hou	law_law	law_wel	mip_def	mip_eco	mip_edu	mip_env	mip_heal	mip_hou	mip_law	mip_wel
law_def	1.000															
law_eco	-0.448	1.000														
law_edu	-0.120	0.225	1.000													
law_env	-0.173	-0.090	0.049	1.000												
law_heal	-0.167	-0.036	-0.081	0.079	1.000											
law_hou	-0.287	0.270	0.034	-0.060	-0.011	1.000										
law_law	-0.526	0.404	0.014	-0.028	0.170	0.425	1.000									
law_wel	-0.252	0.209	-0.024	0.081	0.056	0.132	0.248	1.000								
mip_def	0.582	-0.282	-0.196	-0.128	-0.175	-0.330	-0.353	-0.283	1.000							
mip_eco	-0.192	-0.002	0.045	0.016	0.088	0.417	0.123	0.265	-0.518	1.000						
mip_edu	-0.194	0.044	0.024	0.053	0.271	-0.036	0.345	0.034	-0.156	-0.313	1.000					
mip_env	-0.019	0.167	0.013	0.030	0.004	0.122	0.034	0.046	0.056	-0.163	-0.085	1.000				
mip_heal	-0.071	-0.045	0.055	0.147	0.256	-0.123	0.173	0.076	-0.127	-0.243	0.533	0.031	1.000			
mip_hou	-0.299	0.054	0.117	0.075	-0.053	0.125	0.120	-0.063	-0.049	-0.194	0.142	0.025	-0.083	1.000		
mip_law	-0.249	0.137	0.017	0.057	-0.052	-0.223	0.035	-0.088	-0.197	-0.509	0.444	0.004	0.063	0.053	1.000	
mip_wel	-0.052	-0.288	-0.010	0.067	0.069	-0.224	-0.220	-0.131	-0.099	-0.320	0.381	0.024	0.241	0.551	0.474	1.000

Table D.2: Legislative Responsiveness

	All Countries	Spain	UK	US
Dependent Variable: Proportion of Legislation				
MIP (t-1)	0.100*** (0.019)	0.188** (0.088)	0.142*** (0.034)	0.048** (0.021)
Vulnerability (t-1)	-0.017* (0.009)	0.024 (0.051)	0.006 (0.017)	-0.020* (0.011)
Election Year (t)	0.745*** (0.239)	1.911*** (0.620)	0.474* (0.287)	1.046*** (0.368)
Left (t-1)	-0.064 (0.347)	-0.204 (1.675)	0.906 (0.711)	-0.529 (0.545)
LSq (t)	0.087 (0.055)	0.667* (0.376)	0.108 (0.086)	0.003 (0.090)
Political Constraint (t)	4.923 (5.332)	-0.563 (10.39)	7.046 (15.22)	-28.43* (16.45)
US 2nd Term (t)	-0.318 (0.449)			-0.191 (0.482)
Unemployment (t)	0.009 (0.056)	-0.031 (0.116)	0.097 (0.109)	0.226 (0.161)
Inflation (t)	0.009 (0.039)	-0.630* (0.327)	0.075 (0.048)	-0.070 (0.088)
UK	0.632 (1.062)			
US	-2.145*** (0.700)			
Constant	1.824 (2.414)	3.189 (3.704)	-0.672 (5.064)	12.96* (6.654)
N	706	117	286	303
R ²	0.10	0.06	0.13	0.07

OLS with AR₁ autocorrelation structure. Correlated panels corrected standard errors in parentheses
Model All Countries with country dummies (Spain reference category)

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

Table D.3: Electoral Vulnerability and Legislative Responsiveness: Robustness checks

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Dependent Variable: Proportion of Legislation			
MIP (t-1)	0.102*** (0.019)	0.028 (0.030)	0.048*** (0.014)
Vulnerability (t-1)	-0.025** (0.012)	-0.022* (0.011)	-0.009 (0.009)
MIP (t-1) × Vulnerability (t-1)	0.000 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)
Left (t-1)	-0.254 (0.362)	-0.305 (0.331)	-0.0828 (0.273)
LSq (t)	0.078 (0.056)	0.059 (0.052)	0.068 (0.051)
Political Constraint (t)	3.346 (5.670)	2.843 (5.136)	3.035 (4.460)
US 2nd Term (t)	-0.523 (0.460)	-0.577 (0.443)	-0.377 (0.417)
Unemployment (t)	0.000 (0.057)	-0.007 (0.052)	-0.032 (0.045)
Inflation (t)	0.074* (0.044)	0.065 (0.041)	-0.009 (0.030)
Trend	0.038*** (0.014)	0.035*** (0.013)	
UK	0.088 (1.102)	0.500 (1.020)	-0.220 (0.922)
US	-3.194*** (0.856)	-3.121*** (0.775)	-1.304** (0.577)
Macroeconomics		3.474*** (1.121)	
Education		-1.976** (0.771)	
Environment		-1.255 (1.040)	
Health		-1.004 (0.866)	
Housing		-1.976** (0.876)	
Law and Crime		4.185*** (1.172)	
Welfare		-2.275*** (0.819)	
LDV			0.539*** (0.063)
Constant	2.119 (2.565)	3.192 (2.430)	1.136 (2.063)
N	706	706	706
R ²	0.10	0.21	0.36

OLS with AR1 autocorrelation structure (Models 1-2); OLS with lagged dependent variable (Model 3)

Correlated panels corrected standard errors in parentheses

Baseline category for country dummies: Spain. Baseline category for policy dummies: Defence

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

Table D.4: Electoral Connection and Legislative Responsiveness: Robustness checks

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Dependent Variable: Proportion of Legislation			
MIP (t-1)	0.083*** (0.020)	0.013 (0.030)	0.029* (0.016)
Election Year (t)	-0.140 (0.353)	-0.092 (0.366)	-0.008 (0.393)
MIP (t-1) × Election Year (t)	0.076*** (0.029)	0.067** (0.030)	0.080** (0.032)
Left (t-1)	-0.094 (0.356)	-0.156 (0.326)	-0.046 (0.261)
LSq (t)	0.099* (0.055)	0.082 (0.051)	0.073 (0.047)
Political Constraint (t)	2.343 (5.341)	2.025 (4.868)	2.615 (4.047)
US 2nd Term (t)	-0.447 (0.470)	-0.538 (0.457)	-0.367 (0.396)
Unemployment (t)	-0.005 (0.055)	-0.015 (0.050)	-0.035 (0.042)
Inflation (t)	0.030 (0.041)	0.024 (0.039)	-0.018 (0.029)
Trend	0.026* (0.013)	0.024* (0.013)	
UK	-0.436 (1.020)	-0.041 (0.937)	-0.378 (0.783)
US	-2.583*** (0.791)	-2.546*** (0.720)	-1.164** (0.546)
Macroeconomics		3.465*** (1.164)	
Education		-1.904** (0.770)	
Environment		-1.182 (1.044)	
Health		-0.951 (0.868)	
Housing		-1.913** (0.885)	
Law and Crime		4.188*** (1.201)	
Welfare		-2.224*** (0.833)	
LDV			0.545*** (0.062)
Constant	2.862 (2.380)	3.803* (2.283)	1.272 (1.854)
N	706	706	706
R ²	0.11	0.22	0.37

OLS with AR1 autocorrelation structure (Models 1-2); OLS with lagged dependent variable (Model 3)

Correlated panels corrected standard errors in parentheses

Baseline category for country dummies: Spain. Baseline category for policy dummies: Defence

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

Table D.5: Ideological Proximity and Legislative Responsiveness, Right-wing Issues and Right-wing Govts: Robustness checks

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Dependent Variable: Proportion of Legislation			
MIP (t-1)	0.078 (0.063)	0.215*** (0.072)	0.026 (0.050)
Vulnerability (t-1)	-0.037 (0.026)	-0.030 (0.026)	0.001 (0.023)
Election Year (t)	1.294* (0.774)	1.241 (0.766)	1.465 (0.944)
LSq (t)	-0.045 (0.235)	-0.021 (0.227)	-0.137 (0.209)
Political Constraint (t)	-24.91 (42.97)	-25.37 (42.38)	3.237 (38.47)
US 2nd Term (t)	-0.270 (1.211)	-0.947 (1.192)	-1.094 (1.118)
Unemployment (t)	0.480 (0.303)	0.478* (0.288)	0.330 (0.246)
Inflation (t)	-0.090 (0.210)	-0.036 (0.200)	-0.228 (0.159)
UK	1.677 (7.883)	3.184 (7.748)	4.444 (6.841)
US	-2.241 (5.134)	-1.310 (5.014)	2.564 (4.234)
Trend	0.069 (0.046)	0.066 (0.044)	
Law and Crime		6.374*** (1.671)	
LDV			0.586*** (0.099)
Constant	11.14 (22.15)	5.347 (21.66)	-2.122 (19.25)
N	116	116	116
R ²	0.10	0.21	0.40

OLS with AR1 autocorrelation structure (Models 1-2). OLS with lagged dependent variable (Model 3)

Correlated panels corrected standard errors in parentheses

Baseline category for country dummies: Spain. Baseline category for policy dummies: Defence

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

Table D.6: Ideological Proximity and Legislative Responsiveness, Right-wing Issues and Left-wing Govts: Robustness checks

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Dependent Variable: Proportion of Legislation			
MIP (t-1)	0.082 (0.061)	0.097 (0.065)	0.034 (0.051)
Vulnerability (t-1)	-0.014 (0.038)	-0.011 (0.037)	0.004 (0.027)
Election Year (t)	-0.065 (0.582)	-0.082 (0.579)	-0.511 (0.712)
LSq (t)	0.630*** (0.216)	0.558*** (0.204)	0.308* (0.170)
Political Constraint (t)	-19.60 (21.58)	-22.22 (21.70)	-13.83 (20.44)
US 2nd Term (t)	-3.868** (1.953)	-3.725* (1.973)	-1.134 (1.671)
Unemployment (t)	0.213 (0.287)	0.240 (0.293)	0.166 (0.302)
Inflation (t)	0.111 (0.163)	0.092 (0.161)	0.016 (0.105)
UK	-2.259 (3.691)	-0.964 (3.674)	-0.271 (3.453)
US	2.907 (3.390)	3.311 (3.374)	2.926 (2.901)
Trend	0.062 (0.055)	0.048 (0.053)	
Law and Crime		3.674* (1.983)	
LDV			0.588*** (0.123)
Constant	3.793 (6.018)	3.178 (5.842)	2.757 (4.076)
N	86	86	86
R ²	0.19	0.24	0.44

OLS with AR1 autocorrelation structure (Models 1-2). OLS with lagged dependent variable (Model 3)

Correlated panels corrected standard errors in parentheses

Baseline category for country dummies: Spain. Baseline category for policy dummies: Defence

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

Table D.7: Ideological Proximity and Legislative Responsiveness, Left-wing Issues and Right-wing Govts: Robustness checks

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Dependent Variable: Proportion of Legislation			
MIP (t-1)	0.072 (0.071)	0.048 (0.068)	0.103 (0.069)
Vulnerability (t-1)	-0.020* (0.011)	-0.020* (0.011)	-0.010 (0.012)
Election Year (t)	-0.109 (0.306)	-0.088 (0.312)	-0.020 (0.340)
LSq (t)	0.009 (0.074)	0.023 (0.071)	-0.037 (0.080)
Political Constraint (t)	-0.837 (14.57)	-2.983 (13.84)	19.43 (13.61)
US 2nd Term (t)	0.447 (0.624)	0.424 (0.614)	0.557 (0.669)
Unemployment (t)	-0.026 (0.083)	-0.039 (0.079)	0.088 (0.079)
Inflation (t)	0.046 (0.061)	0.045 (0.058)	-0.014 (0.065)
UK	0.944 (2.637)	0.559 (2.524)	4.714* (2.554)
US	-1.678 (1.879)	-1.782 (1.751)	2.273 (1.442)
Trend	0.067*** (0.018)	0.063*** (0.016)	
Environment		1.222* (0.682)	
Health		1.475** (0.670)	
Housing		0.619 (0.548)	
Welfare		-0.655 (0.446)	
LDV			0.097 (0.093)
Constant	1.856 (7.374)	2.680 (6.974)	-8.186 (6.886)
N	229	229	229
R ²	0.08	0.18	0.06

OLS with AR₁ autocorrelation structure (Models 1-2). OLS with lagged dependent variable (Model 3)

Correlated panels corrected standard errors in parentheses

Baseline category for country dummies: Spain. Baseline category for policy dummies: Education

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

Table D.8: Ideological Proximity and Legislative Responsiveness, Left-wing Issues and Left-wing Govts: Robustness checks

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Dependent Variable: Proportion of Legislation			
MIP (t-1)	0.107* (0.058)	0.114* (0.067)	0.107* (0.056)
Vulnerability (t-1)	-0.006 (0.014)	-0.008 (0.014)	-0.006 (0.011)
Election Year (t)	-0.443 (0.281)	-0.447 (0.290)	-0.442 (0.284)
LSq (t)	-0.004 (0.067)	-0.005 (0.067)	0.001 (0.064)
Political Constraint (t)	6.556 (7.675)	6.887 (7.650)	6.259 (7.130)
US 2nd Term (t)	-1.038* (0.586)	-1.097* (0.574)	-0.956 (0.591)
Unemployment (t)	-0.114 (0.087)	-0.124 (0.085)	-0.112 (0.085)
Inflation (t)	0.157*** (0.054)	0.157*** (0.055)	0.154*** (0.041)
UK	0.541 (1.103)	0.584 (1.098)	0.473 (1.087)
US	-1.167 (1.026)	-1.092 (1.017)	-1.124 (0.778)
Trend	0.001 (0.017)	-0.003 (0.018)	
Environment		1.130** (0.539)	
Health		0.872 (0.727)	
Housing		0.843 (0.803)	
Welfare		0.582 (0.530)	
LDV			0.036 (0.104)
Constant	0.489 (2.159)	-0.109 (2.176)	0.491 (1.794)
N	172	172	172
R ²	0.148	0.172	0.157

OLS with AR₁ autocorrelation structure (Models 1-2). OLS with lagged dependent variable (Model 3)

Correlated panels corrected standard errors in parentheses

Baseline category for country dummies: Spain. Baseline category for policy dummies: Education

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

Table D.9: Electoral Pressure and Legislative Responsiveness (MIP mean value previous three years)

	Electoral Vulnerability Model	Electoral Connection Model
Dependent Variable: Proportion of Legislation		
MIP (mean 1/3)	0.113*** (0.019)	0.090*** (0.020)
Vulnerability (t-1)	-0.013 (0.010)	
MIP (mean 1/3) × Vulnerability (t-1)	-0.000 (0.001)	
Election Year (t)		-0.399 (0.320)
MIP (t-1) × Election Year (t)		0.083*** (0.026)
Left (t-1)	-0.156 (0.348)	-0.046 (0.353)
LSq (t)	0.094* (0.053)	0.100* (0.053)
Political Constraint (t)	3.045 (6.077)	2.307 (5.898)
US 2nd Term (t)	-0.535 (0.425)	-0.429 (0.440)
Unemployment (t)	0.024 (0.057)	0.020 (0.057)
Inflation (t)	0.022 (0.035)	0.006 (0.035)
UK	0.265 (1.153)	-0.152 (1.057)
US	-2.120*** (0.733)	-1.977*** (0.739)
Constant	2.561 (2.770)	3.095 (2.657)
N	795	795
R ²	0.10	0.11

OLS with AR₁ autocorrelation structure

Correlated panels corrected standard errors in parentheses and country dummies (Spain reference category)

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

Table D.10: Ideological Proximity and Legislative Responsiveness (MIP mean value previous three years)

	Right-wing Issues Right-wing Govts	Right-wing Issues Left-wing Govts	Left-wing Issues Right-wing Govts	Left-wing Issues Left-wing Govts
Dependent Variable: Proportion of Legislation				
MIP (mean 1/3)	0.052 (0.073)	0.108 (0.072)	0.162** (0.071)	0.127** (0.053)
Vulnerability (t-1)	-0.024 (0.025)	0.004 (0.030)	-0.004 (0.011)	0.003 (0.012)
Election Year (t)	1.187 (0.765)	-0.364 (0.635)	-0.320 (0.309)	-0.291 (0.338)
LSq (t)	-0.086 (0.232)	0.561** (0.222)	-0.026 (0.071)	0.003 (0.061)
Political Constraint (t)	-33.63 (41.17)	-31.12* (17.36)	4.315 (12.98)	3.493 (8.421)
US 2nd Term (t)	-0.119 (1.144)	-2.614 (1.788)	0.095 (0.540)	-0.933 (0.622)
Unemployment (t)	0.457 (0.298)	0.391 (0.249)	0.124* (0.065)	-0.056 (0.112)
Inflation (t)	-0.183 (0.200)	0.039 (0.132)	0.012 (0.052)	0.116*** (0.041)
UK	0.791 (7.754)	0.192 (3.638)	2.467 (2.360)	0.935 (1.379)
US	-2.173 (5.034)	5.383** (2.642)	1.157 (1.298)	-0.346 (1.058)
Constant	18.35 (21.14)	7.659 (5.340)	-0.979 (6.538)	0.781 (2.486)
N	120	93	267	203
R ²	0.08	0.16	0.05	0.11

OLS with AR1 autocorrelation structure

Panel-corrected standard errors in parentheses and country dummies (Spain reference category)

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

Right-wing issues: defence, foreign affairs, law and crime

Left-wing issues: education, environment, health, housing, welfare

Table D.11: Electoral Pressure and Legislative Responsiveness by Country

	Spain	UK	US
MIP (t-1)	0.050 (0.106)	0.032 (0.054)	-0.029 (0.035)
Vulnerability (t-1)	-0.036 (0.078)	-0.026 (0.023)	0.009 (0.014)
MIP (t-1) × Vulnerability (t-1)	0.007 (0.009)	0.003** (0.002)	-0.002*** (0.001)
Election Year (t)	0.414 (1.186)	-1.152** (0.483)	0.488 (0.481)
MIP (t-1) × Election Year (t)	0.214 (0.136)	0.153*** (0.046)	0.043 (0.029)
Left (t-1)	-0.203 (1.735)	0.838 (0.729)	-0.587 (0.536)
Unemployment (t)	-0.035 (0.121)	0.088 (0.114)	0.233 (0.161)
Inflation (t)	-0.669** (0.314)	0.091* (0.051)	-0.092 (0.088)
LSq (t)	0.662* (0.362)	0.125 (0.091)	0.017 (0.090)
Political Constraint (t)	0.748 (10.89)	5.096 (16.07)	-30.80* (16.34)
US 2nd Term (t)			-0.305 (0.482)
Constant	3.945 (3.847)	1.076 (5.339)	14.71** (6.620)
N	117	286	303
R ²	0.06	0.15	0.10

OLS with AR1 autocorrelation structure

Correlated panels corrected standard errors in parentheses

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

Table D.12: Ideological Proximity and Legislative Responsiveness by Country: Right-wing Issues

	Spain	UK	US
MIP (t-1)	-0.084 (0.266)	0.059 (0.112)	0.154*** (0.052)
Left (t-1)	-11.77* (6.162)	1.629 (3.105)	0.382 (1.293)
MIP (t-1) × Left (t-1)	0.249 (0.372)	-0.154 (0.178)	-0.018 (0.068)
Vulnerability (t-1)	0.219 (0.139)	0.031 (0.047)	-0.042** (0.019)
Election Year (t)	0.545 (1.625)	-1.754** (0.720)	2.691*** (0.732)
Unemployment (t)	0.189 (0.284)	0.348 (0.363)	0.859*** (0.290)
Inflation (t)	-0.332 (0.840)	-0.093 (0.156)	-0.008 (0.153)
LSq (t)	2.861*** (0.913)	0.214 (0.206)	0.018 (0.157)
Political Constraint (t)	-65.69*** (23.71)	8.870 (53.01)	-70.44*** (26.94)
US 2nd Term (t)			-0.622 (0.816)
Constant	24.17*** (7.831)	-0.178 (18.71)	25.33** (10.90)
N	32	74	96
R ²	0.24	0.10	0.34

OLS with AR(1) autocorrelation structure

Correlated panels corrected standard errors in parentheses

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

Table D.13: Ideological Proximity and Legislative Responsiveness by Country: Left-wing Issues

	Spain	UK	US
MIP (t-1)	-0.131 (0.187)	0.210*** (0.069)	0.113 (0.099)
Left (t-1)	-1.456 (1.146)	0.242 (0.716)	-0.154 (0.907)
MIP (t-1) × Left (t-1)	0.255 (0.257)	-0.033 (0.088)	-0.253 (0.171)
Vulnerability (t-1)	0.018 (0.033)	0.014 (0.016)	0.000 (0.013)
Election Year (t)	-0.238 (0.389)	-0.309 (0.361)	0.040 (0.462)
Unemployment (t)	-0.086 (0.068)	0.106 (0.099)	0.137 (0.181)
Inflation (t)	0.188 (0.238)	0.179*** (0.046)	-0.045 (0.096)
LSq (t)	0.237 (0.216)	0.067 (0.080)	-0.065 (0.107)
Political Constraint (t)	-0.145 (6.146)	-11.40 (13.94)	10.39 (20.78)
US 2nd Term (t)			0.071 (0.555)
Constant	2.604 (2.264)	4.546 (4.369)	-1.611 (8.227)
N	69	173	159
R ²	0.07	0.10	0.06

OLS with AR₁ autocorrelation structure

Correlated panels corrected standard errors in parentheses

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

Table D.14: Descriptive statistics

Variable	Mean	Std Dev	Min	Max	Obs
Laws Defence	5.8	5.6	0	23.9	139
Laws Macroeconomics	9	8.6	0	35	139
Laws Education	2.8	2.6	0	15	139
Laws Environment	2.9	2.6	0	14.5	139
Laws Health	3.6	3.2	0	20	139
Laws Housing	2.5	3.1	0	18.9	139
Laws Law and Crime	9.2	6.4	0	31.5	139
Laws Welfare	2.1	2.3	0	11.5	139
Public Priorities Defence	18.1	15.7	0	64.8	128
Public Priorities Macroeconomics	32.4	22.4	3.8	84.7	125
Public Priorities Education	2.6	2.5	0.1	11.7	112
Public Priorities Environment	1.6	1.8	0.1	12.1	76
Public Priorities Health	6.2	6.8	0	34.7	94
Public Priorities Housing	2.8	3.2	0.1	15.3	77
Public Priorities Law and Crime	8.7	7.6	0.2	32.7	115
Public Priorities Welfare	3.7	2.5	0.1	12.1	114
Gov't Electoral Vulnerability	4.1	24.9	-43.6	66.8	139
Gov't Ideology			0	1	139
Election Year			0	1	139
Least Squares Index	8	4.8	0.6	17.8	139
Political Constraint Index	0.4	0	0.3	0.5	139
US Second Term			0	1	139
Unemployment	8	5.4	1.1	24.2	132
Inflation	4.9	4	-0.4	24.2	131

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