

Matthieß, Theres

**Article — Published Version**

## Retrospective pledge voting: A comparative study of the electoral consequences of government parties' pledge fulfilment

European Journal of Political Research

**Provided in Cooperation with:**  
WZB Berlin Social Science Center

*Suggested Citation:* Matthieß, Theres (2020) : Retrospective pledge voting: A comparative study of the electoral consequences of government parties' pledge fulfilment, European Journal of Political Research, ISSN 1475-6765, Wiley, Oxford, Vol. 59, Iss. 4, pp. 774-796, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12377>

This Version is available at:  
<http://hdl.handle.net/10419/214620>

**Standard-Nutzungsbedingungen:**

Die Dokumente auf EconStor dürfen zu eigenen wissenschaftlichen Zwecken und zum Privatgebrauch gespeichert und kopiert werden.

Sie dürfen die Dokumente nicht für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, öffentlich zugänglich machen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Sofern die Verfasser die Dokumente unter Open-Content-Lizenzen (insbesondere CC-Lizenzen) zur Verfügung gestellt haben sollten, gelten abweichend von diesen Nutzungsbedingungen die in der dort genannten Lizenz gewährten Nutzungsrechte.

**Terms of use:**

*Documents in EconStor may be saved and copied for your personal and scholarly purposes.*

*You are not to copy documents for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the documents publicly, to make them publicly available on the internet, or to distribute or otherwise use the documents in public.*

*If the documents have been made available under an Open Content Licence (especially Creative Commons Licences), you may exercise further usage rights as specified in the indicated licence.*



<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

## ONLINE APPENDIX

# **Retrospective pledge voting: A comparative study of the electoral consequences of government parties' pledge fulfilment (Theres Matthieß)**

### **Reliability of the coding procedure**

The Comparative Party Pledges Project has conducted several reliability tests for both coding steps, the identification of pledges and the categorisation of the status of pledge fulfilment. Regarding the reliability test for the first stage of coding: the average paired reliability of nine scholars who independently coded a part of the Canadian Conservative Party's electoral programme published in 2008 was 74%. Additional tests for the first stage of coding have been conducted in individual countries with the following results: 80% of agreement in Ireland, 88% in the Netherlands, 87% in Spain, 94% in Sweden, 84% in the US and the UK (the two latter used a broader definition of pledges when conducting the reliability test). For testing the categorisation of the status of pledge fulfilment: 40 pledges from eight different countries were randomly selected and examined by seven scholars. The average agreement rate was 93% (Thomson et al. 2017, 533f, see also supplementary material).

### **Measurement of government clarity**

For government clarity, the following components have been considered: single party vs. coalition government (1 vs. 0), a government's majority status (1 for majority vs. 0 for minority government), non-existence of bicameral opposition (1 for non-existence and 0 for existence), and ideological cohesion within the government (continuous measure: 1 for maximum cohesion, 0 for minimum distance). This composition of the government clarity index deviates slightly from Hobolt et al.'s proposition who originally included the following items in their index for government clarity: the dominance of one party (head of government party's share of cabinet posts), single party government, absence of cohabitation and a government's ideological cohesion (Hobolt, Tilley, and Banducci 2013). My measure of government clarity does not include the dominance of one party and absence of cohabitation. The former has not been included because I measure the relation between pledge performance and voting at the government party level, whereas Hobolt et al. have stayed on the government level and implicitly assumed that the head of government party is most responsible for performances. In their study, the notion of performance links to the general state of a country and not, as this study does, to the individual policy offers of each single coalition party. Absence of cohabitation is not included in my government clarity measure because there is no instance of cohabitation in my country sample. As Hobolt et al. have suggested, my government clarity measure also comprises party vs. coalition government (1 vs. 0) and ideological cohesion within the government. However,

this study is more precise in the way in which ideological cohesion is calculated. Hobolt et al. have considered ideological cohesion as the proportion of seats held by government parties that are of the same ideology as the governing party, as indicated by their belonging to an European Parliament party group dividing parties into left or right. In this study, ideological cohesion is calculated by considering variation between ideological positions (also within political camps): it is measured as the ideological distance between the leftmost and rightmost parties in coalitions, using the positions on a left-right-dimension as indicated by the "rile" variable in the Manifesto Project Dataset (Volkens et al. 2017) and rescaled to run from 0 to 1. In single party governments, ideological cohesion is coded as 1. Additionally, in following Powell and Whitten (1993) my government clarity measure considers a government's majority status (1 for majority vs. 0 for minority government) and non-existence of bicameral opposition (1 for non-existence and 0 existence).

### **Additional robustness checks of analysis**

Table 5 reports the results when alternative economic measures to the EMI are considered, to acknowledge that previous studies have used different economic measures (Kousser 2004; Powell and Whitten 1993). In all models, the results for the variables of interest do not substantially change: pledge performance reports a positive, statistically significant effect in all models 1, and the interaction terms in the models 2 are negative and not statistically significant. The following alternative economic measures instead of the mean of EMI have been considered: 1. the average GDP growth (model M1/2.1), 2. economic shocks (M1/2.2), 3. change in inflation, change in GDP, and unemployment at the year of election according to Powell and Whitten (1993) (M1/2.3), 4. separate components of the average EMI – average inflation and unemployment rate (M1/2.4), 5. change in EMI (M1/2.5). For 2., the European financial crises database (ESRB 2017) and an own data collection for non-European countries have been used. For 5., before the log was calculated, positive values of  $\Delta$  EMI have been created by adding the minimum value (-1044.813) to all values. Most of the economic measures report the expected effect, for example the appearance of economic shocks appears to decrease electoral support (M1.2). For the change in EMI, a positive effect is reported (M1/2.5). This result appears to be mainly driven by the change in inflation which is included in the EMI index and also reports a positive, albeit small and not statistically significant direct effect in M1/2.3.

Table 5. The effect of pledge fulfilment on electoral performance – alternative economic control variables

DV: $\Delta$ vote share	M1.1	M2.1	M1.2	M2.2	M1.3	M2.3	M1.4	M2.4	M1.5	M2.5
Pledge performance	0.161*** (0.037)	0.412 (0.287)	0.163*** (0.029)	0.384 (0.284)	0.169*** (0.049)	0.501 (0.264)	0.160** (0.045)	0.417 (0.310)	0.166*** (0.034)	0.601* (0.230)
Institutional clarity	–	-0.017 (0.055)	–	-0.042 (0.056)	–	0.019 (0.079)	–	0.062 (0.098)	–	-0.010 (0.053)
Inst. clarity*PP	–	-0.055 (0.116)	–	-0.013 (0.455)	–	-0.123 (0.137)	–	-0.169 (0.159)	–	-0.063 (0.111)
Government clarity	–	0.148 (0.299)	–	0.151 (0.299)	–	0.184 (0.276)	–	0.116 (0.301)	–	0.334 (0.246)
Gov. clarity*PP	–	-0.241 (0.459)	–	-0.237 (0.455)	–	-0.284 (0.440)	–	-0.176 (0.494)	–	-0.493 (0.383)
Previous vote share	-0.229* (0.093)	-0.228* (0.090)	-0.229* (0.091)	-0.299* (0.088)	-0.217** (0.072)	-0.225** (0.068)	-0.219** (0.075)	-0.226** (0.074)	-0.202*** (0.061)	-0.205** (0.060)
Distance median	0.032 (0.048)	0.057 (0.048)	0.025 (0.048)	0.051 (0.047)	0.032 (0.061)	0.059 (0.053)	0.012 (0.048)	0.032 (0.053)	0.035 (0.056)	0.083 (0.055)
GDP (mean)	0.004 (0.003)	0.003 (0.002)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Economic shocks	–	–	-0.033* (0.015)	-0.030 (0.015)	–	–	–	–	–	–
Unempl.at t <sub>4</sub>	–	–	–	–	-0.003 (0.002)	-0.003 (0.003)	–	–	–	–
$\Delta$ Inflation	–	–	–	–	0.000*** (0.000)	0.000*** (0.000)	–	–	–	–
$\Delta$ GDP	–	–	–	–	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	–	–	–	–
Infl. (mean, log)	–	–	–	–	–	–	-0.009 (0.007)	-0.006 (0.010)	–	–
Unempl. (mean)	–	–	–	–	–	–	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.002 (0.003)	–	–
$\Delta$ EMI (log)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.016*** (0.001)	0.017*** (0.001)
Constant	-0.082** (0.026)	-0.209 (0.219)	-0.064*** (0.019)	-0.180 (0.214)	-0.058 (0.039)	-0.233 (0.192)	-0.045 (0.051)	-0.184 (0.221)	-0.193*** (0.025)	-0.463** (0.169)
Observations	92	92	92	92	92	92	92	92	92	92
R <sup>2</sup>	0.192	0.235	0.22	0.258	0.243	0.296	0.216	0.250	0.309	0.360
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.154	0.161	0.184	0.186	0.190	0.209	0.171	0.168	0.277	0.299

Notes: Results from an OLS regression with clustered robust standard errors. EMI – Economic Misery Index, Gov. clarity – Government clarity, Infl. – Inflation, Unempl. – Unemployment, PP – pledge performance. \*\*\*p<0.001, \*\*p<0.01, \*p < 0.05, .p<0.1.

One additional concern for the analysis might be that pre-electoral coalitions (PEC) who release joint manifestos bias the results of which there are some in the CPPP dataset. The models in table 6 accounts for this: models 1.1 and 2.1 add PEC as an additional control variable and models 1.2 and 2.2 run the analyses without these cases. Again, the robustness check shows that the results do not substantially change.

Table 6. The effect of pledge fulfilment on electoral performance – PEC

DV: $\Delta$ vote share	Model 1.1	Model 2.1	Model 1.2	Model 2.2
Pledge performance	0.149*** (0.039)	0.435 (0.255)	0.164*** (0.046)	0.669* (0.301)
Institutional clarity	–	0.100 (0.098)	–	0.037 (0.104)
Inst. clarity*PP	–	-0.199 (0.156)	–	-0.096 (0.165)
Government clarity	–	0.123 (0.276)	–	0.349 (0.323)
Gov. clarity*PP	–	-0.203 (0.427)	–	-0.550 (0.488)
PEC	-0.037 (0.022)	-0.038 (0.027)	–	–
Previous vote share	-0.228* (0.092)	-0.227* (0.091)	-0.235* (0.108)	-0.249* (0.110)
Distance median	0.017 (0.049)	0.041 (0.055)	-0.004 (0.061)	0.040 (0.070)
EMI (log)	-0.027*** (0.007)	-0.025* (0.012)	-0.025*** (0.007)	-0.021 (0.012)
Constant	0.007 (0.057)	-0.158 (0.207)	-0.001 (0.055)	-0.312 (0.234)
Observations	92	92	83	83
R <sup>2</sup>	0.257	0.283	0.251	0.286
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.214	0.205	0.212	0.209

Notes: Results from an OLS regression with clustered robust standard errors. PP – pledge performance, PEC – pre-electoral coalition, EMI – Economic Misery Index. Model 1/2.2: all PECs excluded.  
 \*\*\*p<0.001, \*\*p<0.01, \*p < 0.05, ,p<0.1.

All models have been also calculated without the distance to median position. The results of the variables of interest do not substantially change. Table 7 shows the results for the model A variant.

Table 7. The effect of pledge fulfilment on electoral performance – w/o distance median

DV: $\Delta$ vote share	Model 1	Model 2
Pledge performance	0.152*** (0.042)	0.378 (0.242)
Institutional clarity	–	0.078 (0.079)
Inst. clarity*PP	–	-0.182 (0.140)
Government clarity	–	0.100 (0.242)
Gov. clarity*PP	–	-0.134 (0.392)
Previous vote share	-0.214** (0.078)	-0.220** (0.080)
EMI (log)	-0.026*** (0.007)	-0.024* (0.011)
Constant	-0.002 (0.051)	-0.137 (0.179)
Observations	92	92
R <sup>2</sup>	0.236	0.263
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.21	0.201

Notes: Results from an OLS regression with clustered robust standard errors. PP – pledge performance, EMI – Economic Misery Index.

\*\*\*p<0.001, \*\*p<0.01, \*p < 0.05, .p<0.1.

## References

- ESRB. 2017. "European Financial Crises Database: 1970-2017." <https://www.esrb.europa.eu/pub/financial-crises/html/index.en.html>.
- Hobolt, Sara, James Tilley, and Susan Banducci. 2013. "Clarity of Responsibility: How Government Cohesion Conditions Performance Voting." *European Journal of Political Research* 52 (2): 164–87.
- Kousser, Thad. 2004. "Retrospective Voting and Strategic Behavior in European Parliament Elections." *Electoral Studies* 23 (1): 1–21. doi:10.1016/S0261-3794(02)00030-6.
- Powell, G. B., and Guy D. Whitten. 1993. "A Cross-National Analysis of Economic Voting: Taking Account of the Political Context." *American Journal of Political Science* 37 (2): 391. doi:10.2307/2111378.
- Thomson, Robert, Terry Royed, Elin Naurin, Joaquín Artés, Rory Costello, Laurenz Ennsner-Jedenastik, Mark Ferguson, Petia Kostadinova, Catherine Moury, François Pétry, and Katrin Praprotnik. 2017. "The Fulfillment of Parties' Election Pledges: A Comparative Study on the Impact of Power Sharing." *American Journal of Political Science* 61 (3): 527–42. doi:10.1111/ajps.12313.
- Volkens, Andrea, Pola Lehmann, Theres Matthieß, Nicolas Merz, Sven Regel, and Bernhard Weßels. 2017. *Manifesto Project Dataset (Version 2017b)*. Berlin: Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin Für Sozialforschung.