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Political Support and Candidate Choice*

Hannes Mueller†

Abstract

This paper proposes a simple model of political supporters in an environment of spatial political competition. We assume that supporters are driven by sympathy for a candidate with similar preferences on their side of the policy space and by fear of a candidate with different preferences on the other side. If parties maximize support in their candidate selection, political platforms can diverge significantly. We show that radical candidates have a positive effect on support for the other party. If candidate choice internalizes this externality, platforms converge and overall support decreases to a minimum.

Keywords: Party competition, activism, conflict.
JEL: D72, D74.

"The political parties participate in the forming of the political will of the people."
- Article 21, 1 of the German constitution

1   Introduction

It is conventional wisdom that party platforms in many European countries have converged. Prominent examples are Spain, the UK and Germany. In the UK and Germany left parties under charismatic leaders have managed to break long periods of conservative rule by shifting away from old "left" ideals and risking a conflict within their own parties. In Spain it were the conservatives under Aznar who were able to beat the Spanish Socialist Worker's Party by moving to the "centre"[1].

The analysis of possible reasons behind converging or diverging political platforms has a long history in economic modelling. Most commonly it is analyzed in regard to voter preferences. However, the focal point in this paper is not the voter but the party activists, supporters or "multiplicators". They are individuals that are able to change voter turnout and possibly voter convictions through information or manipulation and are driven by a desire to help their preferred candidate or party. The reason these people are in the focus of this paper is simple - they seem to disappear. A crude measure for this is the decline of party membership. In their study on party membership in Europe, Mair and van Bietzen (2001) summarize

"However, the most striking feature to be noted is the sheer extent and consistency of membership decline through to the end of the 1990s. [...] As these data clearly reveal, parties in contemporary Europe are rapidly losing their capacity to engage citizens."[2]

And membership decline is not the only sign of decreasing activism. Whitely and Seyd (2002) conduct several surveys with members of the two major parties in the United Kingdom. They find that the hours worked by activists decreased significantly for Labour and the Conservatives throughout the 1990s. Looking at different activities, they find that generally the "high intensity"[3] activities have decreased the most.

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[1] In Germany, the social democrats explicitly campaigned with stressing their role in the "neuen Mitte".

[2] Mair and van Bietzen (2001), Abstract

[3] These activities are: attending meetings, canvassing voters and standing for office

While the decline of activism might not be such a dramatic phenomenon by itself, it could have drastic consequences for the political system. Due to their unique position within parties, activists are an important link between politicians and voters. Without their support, parties become more dependant on other sources for resources.

The theoretical model brought forward in this paper describes the main motivations of party supporters and how these interact with considerations at the party level. It can be shown that a growing weight for strategic considerations in the candidate selection at the party level is linked to converging political platforms and decreasing political support.

We start with the observation that voluntary support for parties is of considerable importance for their survival and success. Members alone contribute significantly by providing income and labor resources[4]. If a party wants to survive political competition it has to mobilize voluntary contributions. It is assumed here that this mobilization can only be achieved if the candidate of a party is supported by a group of engaged party members and volunteers.

The amount of effort these supporters put into mobilization depends on the strength of two psychological drives: sympathy and fear. A candidate with similar policy visions as the activist will motivate the activist to campaign for him (sympathy) while a candidate that has radically different views will motivate the activist to campaign for the opposition (fear).

Given these main driving forces in activist motivation, we model two different factors for candidate selection at the party level: internal support and support raised in the other party. It seems evident that candidates with more support from their supporters have some edge in winning the internal struggle for leadership. It will be shown, however, that this factor is not consistent with a strategic approach of mobilization for winning an election against another candidate.

The results of the model are simple. If parties select their candidates to maximize support from the multiplicators, candidates will diverge in their political platforms. If parties fully internalize the effect a radical candidate on their side has on supporters in the other camp, platforms converge and support for the candidates drops to a minimum. This implies that if institutional, social and technological changes lead to a higher weight of strategic con-

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[4]See Scarrow (1996) for some evidence.

siderations in the candidate selection, less political support for parties on both sides of the spectrum will be the result.

This paper is structured as follows. To motivate our approach and main assumptions we discuss related literature in section 2 and review some evidence in section 3. Section 4 introduces the model and derives the main results. Section 5 concludes.

2   Related Literature

The approach and topic chosen in this paper is linked to several streams in the literature. First of all it is closely related to the classical contribution of Downs (1957). While Downs is best known for postulating convergence in political competition he recognized that parties face two political margins: an extensive margin at which parties compete against each other for voters and an intensive margin where each party attempts to bring his own voters into the voting booth or elicit support from members. It is important to note that if one assumes spatial competition, these two forces determine convergence and divergence of policy platform. If competition at the extensive margin is more important, parties will converge because they seek to please the median voter. If competition at the intensive margin determines election fortunes parties will diverge in order to increase turnout. A conclusion which is reconfirmed in our model.

The problem with an explanation of divergence through competition at the intensive margin is that turnout to elections remains very hard to model[5] and often require ad hoc working assumptions. Glaeser at al (2005) for example state

"Our key assumption is that awareness of a politician's message is higher among the politician's supporters than among his opponent's supporters. This asymmetry means that when a politician's policies deviate from those preferred by the median voter, he energizes his own supporters (who are more likely to be aware of this deviation) more than he energizes his opponent's supporters (who are less likely to be aware of this deviation)."

While our model follows a very similar logics, we will not assume differences in awareness.

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[5] See Feddersen (2004) and Merlo (2005) for an overview.

Instead, we refer back to another branch in the literature reaching back to Coleman (1971). This branch has recognized that parties and politicians often do not follow the narrow goal of winning a federal election. Firstly, candidates have to be chosen within parties before they can compete against candidates of other parties. And secondly, individuals in politics - like voters - are at least partly motivated by a fight for the "right" policies not power[6].

We follow the former line of thought by modelling the struggle for power within parties as a struggle for support from activists. Starting with the observation that politicians need internal support in order to become candidates (see next section) we show that this dependence on internal support might lead to diverging platforms if political activists can only be motivated through political conflict.

Our way of modelling activist motivation closely resemble the concept of intrinsic motivation described in Besley and Ghatak (2005). In their contribution on public organizations, the authors stress the importance of intrinsic motivation for resolving agency problems within organizations. Activists in parties are often solely motivated by through a close ideological match between them and their candidate and the idea of a "mission" as described by Besley and Ghatak certainly applies. But we stress here that it is not only the mission match within the party that motivates activists but also the mission mismatch to the opposite party.

In order to be able to focus on activists we assume a very simplistic voter. In our model voters exist only at the intensive margin - the only decision they make is whether to turn up on the voting booth or not. Our view on voters links this paper to Shachar and Nalebuff (1999). They assume that votes are a function of the effort put into campaigning by the political leaders. The effort exerted by politicians in their model depends on the probability of being pivotal and, thus, turnout is higher when elections are close.

3 Political Support in Politics

This section discusses the evidence on the role of support in candidate selection and voter turnout. The analysis presented here does by now means prove the mechanisms proposed

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[6]See Roemer (2001, 2004) for a simple formal formulation of this arguement in a non-strategic setting. The citizen-candidate model proposed by Besley and Coase (1997) has a similar assumption at its core.

and should only serve as a motivation for our main modelling assumptions.

Already a brief look at Germany and the United Kingdom reveals that candidate selection in parties strikes a balance between electability and internal power struggles. Networking within the party is a crucial prerequisite for power in the European political landscape and if a politician wants to become a candidate he/she has to gather as much support within the party as possible. Getting to the top and staying there is unthinkable without internal support. But even enemies within parties are all united by the aim to win the election - an interesting conflict of interest.

This conflict is visible in several pairs of politicians as they struggled and struggle for power. In Germany these pairs are for example Gerhard Schroeder vs. Oskar Lafontaine for the Social Democratic Party (SPD) or Angela Merkel vs. Edmund Stoiber in the conservative camp (CDU/CSU) while in the British context the pair Tony Blair vs. Gordon Brown in the Labour party tells a similar story. All these couples contain a significantly more moderate and a more radical candidate and while electability usually speaks for the more moderate candidate the outcome of internal power struggle is not clear.[7]

We argue that one of the main driving forces deciding these conflicts is the attention parties put to the external conflict - the upcoming election - when choosing their candidate. If we take this viewpoint it is no surprise that both Tony Blair before elections in 1997 and Gerhard Schroeder before the 1998 campaign stressed electability as the determining factor of candidate selection.[8] In line with this shift of focus, both politicians stressed the importance of "modernization" and "professionalization" before and during election campaigns. The terms "spin doctor" and "think tank" gained importance and Gerhard Schroeder's election campaign team even moved geographically from its traditional spot in the party centre into a new building - the "Kampa". For both candidates it was a matter of political survival to break traditional forces that had governed party politics.

Interestingly, commentators in the following years saw the political landscape in a crisis. At the outset of the German election campaign 2002 supporters were described in the following way *"Former activists appear tired, speechless, without impetus and orientation, often passive,*

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[7] Merkel lost her first struggle against Stoiber in 2002 while Blair might even loose his Premiership to Brown in 2006.
[8] Schroeder did this quite dramatically by putting himself to a test in Niedersachsen.

almost standing aside."[9] and the turnout in British elections decreased drastically. While turnout had been constantly above 70 percent for decades it dropped to 59 percent in 2001 and only rose slightly to 61 percent in 2005. The low turnout of 2001 triggered discussion about the reasons. According to a Brian Wheeler, BBC News Political Reporter, *"The problem could lie with the parties themselves - and the perceived lack of difference between their policies."*[10]

Wheeler's statement points to a central mechanism in determining support - ceteris paribus individuals will be more interested in politics if politics is dominated by a conflict. One example of such a conflict could be observed in the 2004 presidential campaign of the United States. In the campaign the Republican candidate George W. Bush and his proposed policies polarized the nation along partisan lines[11]. And while causality is not necessarily clear, turnout sky-rocketed in that election year. Data from US statistics shows that voter turnout increased drastically in 2004. While it had already marked a significant increase from 1996 to 54 percent of eligible voters in 2000, turnout soared to 61 percent of eligible voters in 2004[12].

But could the motivation of rank and file within the party be responsible for changes in turnout? Gerber and Green (2000) stress the importance of direct canvassing for turnout and provide strong evidence for it. If the provision of cheap labour by activists facilitates for this kind of contact within the community, activism and turnout could be closely linked. However, there is some contradicting evidence on the overall effect of voter mobilization and turnout[13].

In any case, decreasing membership and support for parties threatens their power and source of funding. A staggering 30 to 40 percent of the total income in 1996 of the two biggest German parties for example were coming from members[14]. If membership numbers drop, parties will have to look for alternative sources of funding. This opens the doors to interest group influence and further diminishes the role of parties.

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[9] Walter (2002), http://www.bpb.de/publikationen/CLAJO6,0,0,Die_Mitte_im_Programmloch.html
[10] Brian Wheeler (2001) UK politics: Dead or dormant?
[11] See Abramowitz and Stone (2006) for evidence of this polarization and correlation with activism and turnout.
[12] See McDonald (2004).
[13] See Goldstein and Ridout (2002) and Green and Smith (2003) for two examples.
[14] Scarrow (1996), p. 178

4 The Model

We assume a one dimensional policy space $X = [0, 1]$. Two political parties compete for votes by choosing a candidate with policy preferences $x_L, x_R \in X$. Candidates are assumed to be policy motivated and follow their preferred policy once elected. Candidates are chosen by the parties.

The time structure is as follows. In a first period, parties on each side of the spectrum the two parties (L and R) choose candidates with x_L, x_R. After each party announced their candidate, activists choose a level of support they give to one of the two parties. The level of activism mobilizes the partisan voters. Voters give their vote to one of the candidates. The candidate with most votes wins the elections and implements her preferred policy.

4.1 Voters

Voters are modelled as passive partisans[15]. These individuals always vote for "their" party in case they cast their vote at all. Once contacted by an activist, the probability that a partisan voter goes voting is significantly increased. It is this ability to mobilize voters that gives activists their role in the political competition. We assume for now that votes by partisan voters are proportional to the time and effort an activist puts into his activities. This has the important implication that votes from partisan voters are proportional to the sum of support from party activists.

Adding well informed, independent voters does not modify our results qualitatively. Assuming the standard setting, these voters would create a pressure on the parties to chose a moderate candidate with a platform at $x = 0.5$ and the more important the group of independent voters, the less will results deviate from that policy platform. For simplicity, we focus on the partisan voters and contrast our results to the standard median voter result of converging platforms.

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[15] See Green et al (2002) for the importance of these voters in determining the outcome of political competition.

4.2 Activists

In the categorization given by Grossman and Helpman (1995), activists are not driven by an *influence motive* but by an *electoral motive*. They are assumed to be "policy takers", i.e. they do not intend to change the policy of the candidate they support by casting support, they just want to make her win. The intensity of their support is a genuine reaction to a certain constellation of candidates. More specifically, the effort activists exert depends on their sympathy towards the candidate in their own party and the fear of the candidate in the other party.

We assume a continuum of activists with policy preferences $x_i \in [0, 1]$, who are able to mobilize partisan voters. Activists always support the candidate that offers the policy platform closest to them. The activist with the policy preference $x_i = \frac{x_L + x_R}{2}$ supports none. Assume a linear utility function in policies so that the expected utility of an activist of party L can be written

$$U_{iL}(e_i, x_i, x_L, x_R) = p(e_i)\left[-|x_i - x_L|\right] + (1 - p(e_i))\left[-|x_i - x_R|\right] - \frac{c}{2}e_i^2$$

Where e_i is the effort activists i exerts when campaigning for party L, $\frac{c}{2}e_i^2$ denotes the cost of effort and $p(e_i)$ is the resulting probability that party L wins the election. Note that the activist believes that she will have an impact on the election outcome. This assumption is analogous to the assumption that voters believe they have an impact on the election outcome. While there is considerable controversy over this assumption, it seems reasonable in the context of activists who spend considerable time and money campaigning for their preferred party.

Left activists maximize their expected utility by picking a level of effort according to the first order condition

$$ce_i = \frac{\delta p(e_i)}{\delta e_i}\left[-|x_i - x_L|\right] - \frac{\delta p(e_i)}{\delta e_i}\left[-|x_i - x_R|\right]$$

For simplicity, we assume that $\frac{\delta p(e_i)}{\delta e_i} = c$. The optimal level of effort is then

$$e_{iL}(x_i, x_L, x_R) = -|x_i - x_L| + |x_i - x_R| \tag{1}$$

for every $x_i < \frac{x_L + x_R}{2}$ (i.e. all activists that support the L party) and analogously

$$e_{iR}(x_i, x_L, x_R) = -|x_i - x_R| + |x_i - x_L|$$

for every $x_i > \frac{x_L + x_R}{2}$.

Thus, given the two candidates with policy preferences x_L, x_R the effort of multiplicators is dependant on two factors - sympathy and fear.

- Support derived from sympathy is proportionally increasing in the similarity between the multiplicator's personal bliss point x_i and their preferred candidate. The maximum sympathy can be gained by a candidate whose position coincides with the one of the multiplicator. The further the candidate is away in terms of ideology the less support the multiplicator provides.

- The amount of support driven by fear is determined by the distance from the worse option to the multiplicator. The further away this option, the more the multiplicator fears that candidate wins the election and therefore exerts a higher effort in his support activities.

An important implication of this support function is that support for one party is determined by the platforms chosen by both candidates. It also means that the share of the multiplicators supporting one or the other party is driven by the candidate choices of the two parties. Candidate choice has therefore an impact on who in the population hands out leaflets or publicly calls for support of a party and how motivated these supporters are. We follow this thought now.
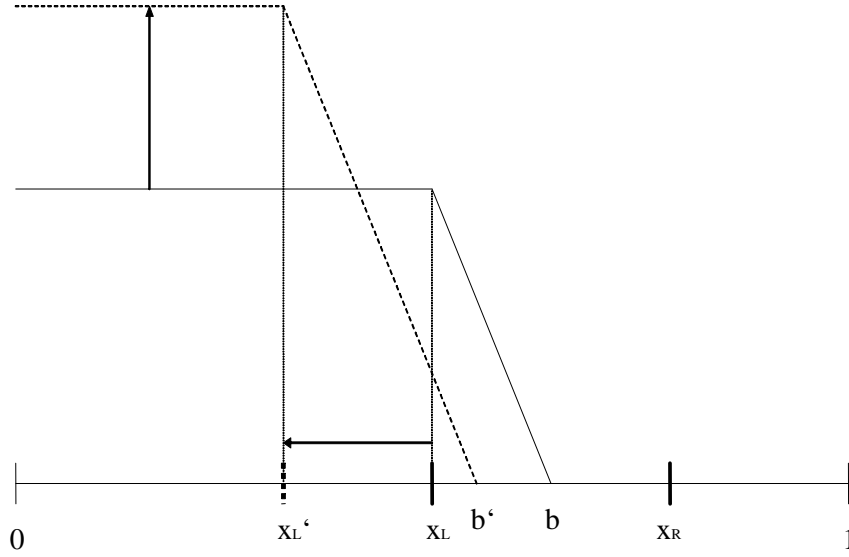
Figure 1: The effect of a radical candidate L on aggregate support in party L

4.3   Aggregate Support

Given the individual support decision described by equation 1 we now turn towards the aggregate level of support. Figure 1 gives a graphic illustration of the different intensities of support created by two candidates. Given candidate R prefers the platform x_R, a candidate with platform x_L would rally support from activists between 0 and b. Since the multiplicator at point b prefers a policy exactly between x_R and x_L, she is not willing to support any of them. This is because sympathy and fear are equally weak, i.e. the two terms in equation 1 cancel. However, any supporter to her left will support the candidate that proposes x_L. The difference in support is caused by both an increase in sympathy for candidate L and increasing fear due to the growing distance to candidate R's preferred policy. To the left of candidate L, sympathy for her decreases again and that effect cancels with the increasing fear of the policy x_R. In the figure 1 this results in a constant level of support to the left of point x_L.

If another candidate with preferences $x'_L < x_L$ is evaluated, both the border of the supporters shifts towards the left from b to b' and the maximum support increases. The program x'_L leads to less but more motivated supporters. This is an important trade-off. The next section shows how it determines candidate choice.

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Given the individual support it is reasonable to assume that the support for a party can be modelled as the sum over individual support described in equation 1. Under the assumptions $x_L, x_R \in [0,1]$ and $x_L \leq x_R$ one can therefore write

$$S_L(x_L, x_R) = x_L(x_R - x_L) + \frac{1}{4}(x_R - x_L)^2 \tag{2}$$

Where the first term describes the rectangular area to the left of x_L in figure 1 and the second term the triangular area between x_L and b. As long as x_L is not equal to x_R both of these areas exist.

For candidate R support can be written as

$$S_R(x_R, x_L) = (1 - x_R)(x_R - x_L) + \frac{1}{4}(x_R - x_L)^2 \tag{3}$$

With these support functions, the trade-off between motivation of activists and the number of activists described above can be made clear. The conflict in politics is given by the distance $x_R - x_L$, the larger the distance the more motivated are activists in both parties. On the other hand, a radical candidate in the L party, i.e. a low x_L in equation 2 leads to a lower number of activists and therefore harms support.

These two effects can also be understood graphically in figure 1. If the internal battles within the parties lead to a radical candidate the rectangular area will be very high but also very thin. If a more centrist politician succeeds, the rectangular area will be very low but therefore much broader.

The result of this trade-off in terms of aggregate support is shown in figure 2. It displays the aggregate support function in equation 2 for a given x_R. Overall support is relatively low at $x_L = 0$. This is due to the fact that there are relatively radical supporters but only a minimal number of them. At $x_L = 0$ the candidate is more radical than anyone else in the population and sympathy for the candidate is relatively low at that point.

Support increases first as x_L grows because multiplicators are still fairly motivated but also grow in numbers. But as x_L gets closer and closer to $x_R = 0.6$ multiplicators get so de-
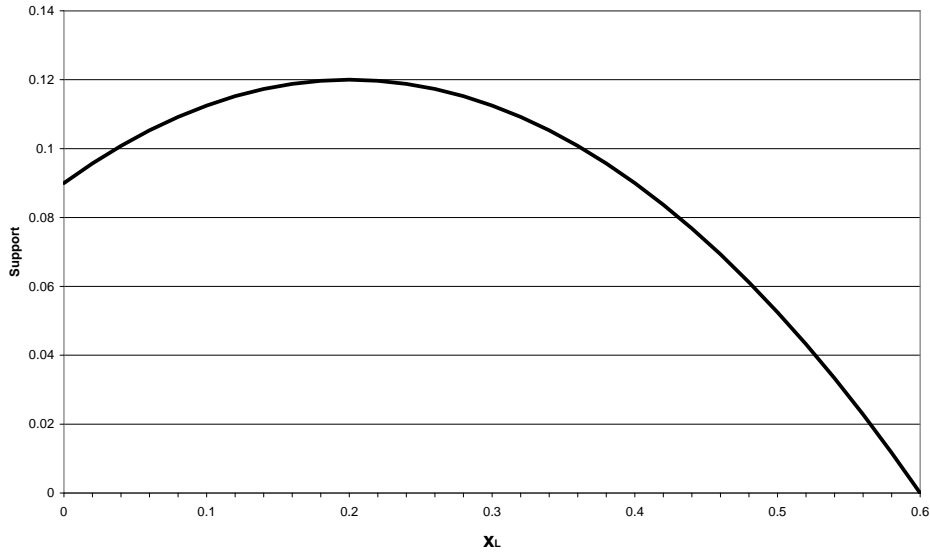
Figure 2: Aggregate support for party L at x_R =0.6

motivated that their increasing number cannot make up for the decrease in effort per supporter. When $x_L = x_R$ multiplicators are indifferent and do not support the candidate. If the candidates follow identical platforms, no multiplicator wants to put effort into convincing her surrounding of any of them.

Note that as long as $x_R > 0$ the support function, $S_L(x_L, x_R)$ always has a maximum. This fact proves helpful when thinking about the mechanism for candidate choice within the parties.

4.4 Parties and Political Equilibrium

We assume that candidates entering the race have their own preferred policy and activists know that politicians cannot commit to any other policy than their favorite policy. This assumption gives very little role for the party in terms of deriving a policy. However, the choice of candidate becomes a crucial factor. We assume that inner party politics can me modelled as some maximization problem over aggregate support which picks one candidate from a spectrum of candidates with preferences on X^{16}. While the mechanism for choosing

[16] Following the citizen candidate model one could think of the process as having more than one stage. Endogenous candidate entry, entry costs close to zero and non-strategic behavior by supporters would probably lead to the described

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the candidate is not modelled in detail it can be thought of as a mixture of public discussions and political intrigues. A major problem in analyzing the rules of candidate selection within parties is that significant parts of it happen behind the scenes. Even in countries that have primary elections in place, the run up to these elections is still governed by intransparent mechanisms.

This section models two major criteria in candidate selection. As discussed in the European cases, one factor in candidate selection seems to be the support from within the own camp for a candidate. It should be clear that politicians are support maximizers to a certain extent. Partly due to reasons of political survival within the party and partly for the pure benefit of enjoying support[17]. On the other hand, if the goal is to win the elections against another party, support in the other camp has to be taken into account, too. A party is not likely to succeed in electoral competition if its candidate mobilizes large shares of the population against herself. The second criterion in candidate selection is therefore the effect on support for the opponent.

4.4.1 Maximizing Support

A first approach to candidate selection is the assumption that parties are relatively inward looking and the success of a candidate is only dependant on support for her. The politician with most support from multiplicators is then chosen to become the candidate.

In that case the candidate selection process can be modelled by the maximization of equations 2 and 3. In short, party L solves the maximization problem

$$\max_{x_L} S_L(x_L, x_R) \tag{4}$$

on the other side of the spectrum party R solves

$$\max_{x_R} S_R(x_R, x_L) \tag{5}$$

result.

[17]When an interviewer asked Gerhard Schröder about his main concerns before giving a speech to a larger audience he replied that he always peeks to see whether the venue is packed.

Given that the support functions in equations 4 and 5 are dependant on the policy choice of the other party, we need to specify what assumptions parties make about the competitor's platform choice. Under the assumption that candidate selection takes into account that the other party chooses a candidate following the same mechanism we have to find a Nash Equilibrium in a simultaneous draw from candidates on X to solve equations 4 and 5.

An an equilibrium is then defined by a situation in which no candidate on either side of the political spectrum can rally more support for himself given the rational expectations about the candidate on the other side of the spectrum. The solution to this problem is summarized in the following proposition.

Proposition 1 *Assume the candidate selection process solves the maximization problems described by equations 4 and 5. In addition, candidate selection is made under complete information about the selection process in the other party. Under these conditions there exists a unique Nash equilibrium with $x_L^*(x_R^*) = \frac{1}{4}$ and $x_R^*(x_L^*) = \frac{3}{4}$.*

A proof of this result can be found in the appendix. Interestingly the maximization of support seems to lead to a certain degree of divergence. To understand this result it is useful to regard figure 2 once more. The maximum in support for party L is defined by a mixture of maximizing the sum of aggregate sympathy and fear. Clearly, complete convergence at $x_L = 0.6 = x_R$ causes indifference with all multiplicators and therefore no support. If an equilibrium exists, it cannot be one with complete convergence. Since aggregate support functions feature one unique equilibrium it is straightforward to show that a simultaneous solution of both maximization problems implies a unique equilibrium.

4.4.2 Maximizing Support and Minimizing Resistance

Up to now we assumed that the intra-party race for candidacy is depending only on the support that party members can gather from multiplicators. Parties therefore choose a candidate who maximizes support within the party. However, as shown in the German and British case this criterion of candidate evaluation seems to be joined by an evaluation of how the candidate will fare in the political competition against the other party. What is the difference? If
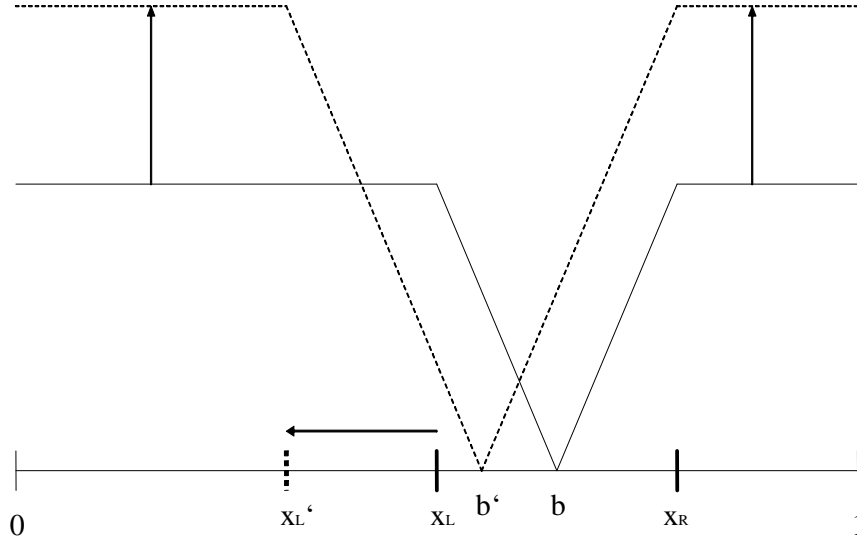
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Figure 3: The effect of a radical candidate L on aggregate support in party L and R.

winning against the other party is an important factor in choosing the candidate the party members will also evaluate what effect their candidate has on the support on the other side of the spectrum.

The difference between the two motives can be made clear with figure 3. Like figure 1 it shows the reaction of supporters for the left party in case the party chooses a more radical candidate x'_L instead of x_L. Only this time the reaction of supporters of candidate R to the change in candidate L is included in the picture. It can be seen that in the camp of supporters for candidate R grows *and* puts in more effort. The reason is that while sympathy for candidate R has stayed constant the fear of the policy applied in case of a victory of L has grown.

If the party has to decide on their candidate it is possible that it takes this effect into account. Denoting this internalization of the external effect with $\lambda \in [0, 1]$ the candidate platform of party L now solves

$$\max_{x_L} S_L(x_L, x_R) - \lambda S_R(x_R, x_L) \tag{6}$$

and the platform by candidate R, with internalization $\gamma \in [0, 1]$ solves

$$\max_{x_R} S_R(x_R, x_L) - \gamma S_L(x_L, x_R) \tag{7}$$

Note that $\lambda = \gamma = 0$ implies the basic model set up. The case $\lambda = \gamma = 1$ on the other hand implies a selection process of a candidate that is entirely based on the difference in support between the candidates. It should be stressed that the optimal x_R and x_L are now functions of γ and λ

The outcome of this model can be summarized as follows.

Proposition 2 *Assume the candidate selection process can be described by equations 6 and 7. In addition, candidate selection is made under complete information about the selection process in the other party and the parameters λ and γ. Under these conditions there exists a unique Nash equilibrium with*

$$x_L^*(\lambda, \gamma) = \frac{1 + 2\lambda + \gamma\lambda}{4 + 2\lambda + 2\gamma}$$

and

$$x_R^*(\lambda, \gamma) = \frac{3 + 2\lambda - \gamma\lambda}{4 + 2\lambda + 2\gamma}$$

A proof of this result is given in the appendix. It can be shown that positive values of λ, the partial derivative $\frac{\delta x_L^*}{\delta\lambda}$ is also positive. That means that the more the candidate selection in party L internalized the effect of their candidate choice on support for candidate R the more moderate will be their candidate. In fact, it can be easily seen that the equilibrium platform for candidate L converges to $\frac{1}{2}$ for $\lambda \to 1$. That is, party platform L converge towards the median multiplicator if the party internalizes the effect of their candidate choice on support for candidate R. This is true regardless of the value for γ. Equivalent results hold $\gamma \to 1$.

It is obvious that the party internal selection processes with internalization leads to a more moderate candidate than the candidate selection based only on maximization of support. This implies that support drops with growing internalization.

On the other hand the reaction of the candidate L, to growing internalization in party R is $\frac{\delta x_L^*}{\delta\gamma} = \frac{2\lambda^2 - 2}{(4 + 2\lambda + 2\gamma)^2}$ which is negative for all values of $\lambda < 1$. This is a rather surprising effect.

It means that with increasing internalization on the other side of the spectrum candidate L becomes ceteris paribus more radical. To understand this result it is helpful to remember that the derivative $\frac{\delta x_L^*}{\delta \gamma}$ describes a change in equilibrium behavior. In case of a rise of internalization in party R from γ to $\bar{\gamma}$, the party will put more weight on eroding support in party L and therefore move towards the median multiplicator. As long as $\lambda < 1$, party L is still putting a higher weight on maximizing support than on eroding support in party R and will therefore move to the left.

How much the optimal platform hinges on the degree of internalization is becoming even more clear if one assumes equal internalization across parties. For $\lambda = \gamma$, x_L^* simplifies to

$$x_L^* = \frac{1 + \lambda}{4}$$

and analogously x_R^* to

$$x_R^* = \frac{3 - \lambda}{4}$$

These results show in a very simple way how the different weights on support in the own and opposing camp shape the selection process within parties. Parties choose candidates with identical platforms if they fully internalize the effect of their candidate on support in the other camp.

It is important to note that this complete convergence implies collapse in overall support. This last result is due to the fact that identical preferred platforms of the two candidates lead to an exact neutralization of fear and sympathy for all supporters. They are indifferent to which candidate wins the election and will therefore not put any effort into making one of them win.

As shown in this section the parameters γ and λ have a huge impact both on political platforms and the support from multiplicators. One way of distinguishing between this model and a more standard approach where parties try to satisfy a party median position at the same time as winning the election is that support in both parties goes down if one

parameter γ or λ goes up. Convergence by one party then leads to a support crisis in both.

If the chance of winning an election is increasing in the distance between the aggregate support for the two candidates, we would expect the party with the higher level of internalization to win more elections. However, if we assume that the work of supporters is actually beneficial to a democratic societies, i.e. based on information rather than manipulation, democracies could face a public good problem. In a way, conflict in politics is then beneficial because it leads to participation and an incentive for multiplicators to get active. On the other hand the party that invokes conflict will probably loose the election[18].

5   Conclusion

This paper offers a simple model of political supporters and their motivation for political support. As opposed to the common view that effort in a campaign or financial support for a party hinges on the ability to influence policy, supporters in the model presented here are not interested in influencing the policy choice of their own party. Their support is a genuine reaction to a certain constellation of candidates chosen by a party mechanism. We assume that activists are motivated by sympathy for their own candidate and fear of the policies proposed by the opposition. Given this motivation we derive two main results.

Firstly policy platforms diverge if power struggle within parties lead to a candidate choice that maximizes aggregate support for the candidate. This divergence is not complete due to the fact that rising motivation of radical supporters is weighed against loosing more moderate supporters to the other party.

Secondly, party platforms converge if candidate selection internalizes the effect of candidate choice on support for the political enemy. If aggregate support for the own candidate and for the opponent enter with equal weights, convergence is complete and overall support drops to a minimum.

In the light of our discussion in section 3 the model postulates a link between decline in activism and changes in candidate selection in parties in Germany and the UK. There are

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[18] As noted in the introduction, this arguement needs an objective dimension of policy like quality to work.

indicators that both Blair and Schroeder won internal party struggles by stressing electability concerns. Convergence therefore went hand in hand with more "spin doctoring" - the concentration on polls to fine tune political statements and a high weight for media appearance. This change of the parties communication channels, away from the grass roots level towards the mass media reflects a less inward-looking approach by party functionaries.

One ambition of this paper was to model a basic trade-off governing candidate selection in parties. In order to further our understanding of this selection we have to understand the combined impact of two important factors governing individual behavior in politics: policy and power. We assumed here that supporters are driven by policy only - this prevents motivation through power, i.e. career concerns. An assumption that might be justified in many cases but neglects an important part of party politics.

If being a supporter is seen as a precondition to becoming a politician, we would expect different policy platforms to attract different types of supporters and therefore to create a different type of politician. Conflict could then indeed be a mechanism to attract policy motivated individuals to parties. A dynamic aspect that resembles the way Caselli and Morelli (2004) model the emergence of "bad politicians".

There is a certain notion of a public good in the model presented in this paper. The public good could be called "political conflict". A party that chooses a radical candidate creates conflict and therefore political support on both sides of the spectrum. It can be argued that this support is actually a "good". For example, support could mean that more voters are informed about the different policy choices and therefore cast their vote on a more informed basis. But as shown above, creating conflict always implies that the political enemy gains support, too. As a result, the provision of political conflict negatively affects the probability of being elected. If this is true, parties could be caught in a prisoners dilemma. They converge and loose not only their base but also the ability to influence the "will" of the people through voluntary support.

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A   Divergence due to Support Maximization

Given the two conditions for the political platforms of the party leaders $x_L^*(x_R) = \arg\max S_L(x_L, x_R)$ and $x_R^*(x_L) = \arg\max S_R(x_R, x_L)$ these platforms have to solve to first order conditions

$$x_R - 2x_L^* - \frac{1}{2}(x_R - x_L^*) = 0$$

and

$$1 - 2x_R^* + x_L + \frac{1}{2}(x_R^* - x_L) = 0$$

Both second order conditions show that the extreme values x_L^* and x_R^* are maxima. An equilibrium requires that both platforms are best responses to the platform of the other party. Only then there will be no other candidate within the party that can threaten the position of the party leader. Solving for x_L^* yields $x_L^* = \frac{1}{3}x_R$. Plugging the optimal decision rule of party L into the first order condition for x_R^* yields the equilibrium values of $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$ respectively.

B   Equilibrium Values with Internalization

The first order condition for the optimal choice of x_L is

$$x_R - 2x_L^* - \frac{1}{2}(x_R - x_L^*) - \lambda\left[x_R - 1 - \frac{1}{2}(x_R - x_L^*)\right] = 0$$

this simplifies to

$$\lambda + \frac{(1-\lambda)}{2}x_R = \frac{(3+\lambda)}{2}x_L^* \tag{8}$$

The first order condition for the optimal choice of x_R is

$$1 - 2x_R^* + x_L + \frac{1}{2}(x_R^* - x_L) - \gamma \left[x_L + \frac{1}{2}(x_R^* - x_L) \right] = 0$$

and simplifies to

$$1 + \frac{(1 - \gamma)}{2} x_L = \frac{(3 + \lambda)}{2} x_R^* \tag{9}$$

Solving for x_R^* in equation 9, plugging into equation 8 and some algebra yields the equilibrium value for x_L^*. If that result is then plugged back into equation 8 some manipulation reveals the equilibrium value for x_R^*.