Do Coalition Partners Drift Apart or Stick Together?
An analysis of party platform changes in 8 Western European countries

Abstract

Coalition governments are the norm in West European democracies. Yet, we do not know whether governing together affects parties' calculations about setting their policy position in their next election manifesto. Therefore we ask: do coalition parties drift apart or stick together after a spell in office? We hypothesize that government parties stick together in anticipation of government continuation. Coalition parties are more likely to expect continuation if they are popular, have no inter-party conflict and have experience in co-governing. If this is not the case, coalition parties drift apart as they seek new coalition formation opportunities. We empirically substantiate our hypotheses with an innovative measure of party platform change analyzing 1,193 platform changes in 8 European democracies between 1968 and 2013 using new opinion poll data and several existing data sets. We demonstrate that parties plant the seeds of future coalition participation in their platforms: the more experienced and the more popular coalition parties are, the more they converge. Encountering conflict, on the contrary, leads them to diverge.

Key words: *Political Parties' Strategies, Coalition Government, Coordination of Party Platforms, Political Decision Making*

In 1982, the mutual dislike between Joop den Uyl, the leader of the Dutch Social Democrats (*PvdA*), and Dries van Agt, the leader of the Christian Democrats (*CDA*), had reached its zenith. The coalition government consisting of these two parties and *D66* collapsed. A few months later, new elections followed, where the *CDA* had shifted their position to the right, closer to its alternative coalition partner the Liberal Conservatives (*VVD*). These two parties formed a new coalition government and despite difficult economic times and painful policy decisions, the two were a 'happy couple'. In the following elections (1986), the two parties (*CDA* and *VVD*) even converged their platforms further. After the 1986 elections, however, cracks appeared in their 'happy marriage', and, eventually, the two fell 'out of love' and the coalition government fell apart. In the next elections (1989) the *CDA* shifted its platform to the left, to again, be closer to their alternative coalition partner, the *PvdA*. These cases in Dutch politics illustrate that parties plant the seeds of future coalitions in their election platform. But are these cases unique? In other words, can factors such as intra-coalition conflict, experience, and also, coalition popularity predict whether two coalition partners *drift apart* (i.e. diverge their platforms), and when they *stick together* (i.e. converge their platforms)?

Office is a key goal for political parties (Müller and Strøm, 1999). To obtain this goal, parties typically need to form a coalition: Of all governments in Western Europe formed between 1945 and 2016, 70% has been a coalition government (Andersson et al., 2014). Due to increased levels of electoral fractionalization, coalition governments also emerged in countries accustomed to one-party majority government (e.g. the UK from 2010 till 2015). In sum, coalition politics is the norm in European politics. Following recent studies (e.g. Martin and Vanberg, 2008; Sagarzazu and Klüver, 2015), we argue

that parties' election platforms are influenced by coalition politics. That is, the issues parties emphasize, and the positions they take, are influenced by the future coalition options parties have. Coalition politics requires parties to anticipate the preferences of other parties, and cooperate and coordinate with them (Müller and Strøm, 2000). An example hereof is that parties formally (pre-electoral coalitions) and/or informally (coalition signals) signal their preferences for future coalition partners (Golder, 2005, 2006; Gschwend et al., 2017).

The primary explanation for party platform change is shifts in public opinion (for overviews of the literature, see Adams, 2012; Fagerholm, 2015). This is surprising, because a vote-seeking strategy does not help parties win office. Vote-seeking is only beneficial if the party becomes the largest party and is therefore appointed as the *formateur* of the coalition government (Mattila and Raunio, 2004). Even then, coalition politics require coordination and cooperation between parties. In this paper we analyze the implications of this for parties' platform choices.

We use work on coalition formation and party platform change to distill two competing arguments. First, the literature on coalition formation argues that ideological proximity is the key predictor of coalition formation (Martin and Stevenson, 2001, 2010). To ensure future cooperation parties should stick together. Second, because citizens perceive parties in a coalition government to be ideologically closer (Adams et al., 2016; Fortunato and Adams, 2015; Fortunato and Stevenson, 2013; Spoon and Klüver, 2017) and punish parties for this policy convergence (Fortunato, 2017), parties have an incentive to signal in their electoral platform that they did not 'sell out their principles for power'. To do so, parties could diverge from their current partner - i.e. drift apart. Both actions - sticking together

or drifting apart - are plausible. However, specific conditions make it more likely for coalition parties to stick together than to drift apart. Particularly, parties stick together when the coalition can plausibly be continued (i.e. it is popular in the polls) and when the coalition is working (i.e. no conflict, experience). In case of conflict or unpopularity coalition partners drift apart and seek out alternative options among the opposition parties.

To demonstrate when coalition parties drift apart or stick together, we need to measure the similarity of two parties' election platforms. This requires a more fine-grained measure of election platform change (our dependent variable): *the change in issue distance between two parties*, or so-called *proto-coalitions*. Specifically, we analyze proto-coalitions with government parties, and proto-coalitions with one government party and one opposition party.[1] For each of these proto-coalitions, we calculate the distance between the two parties on 19 issue categories. These 19 issues consist of positional issues (e.g., positive references to multiculturalism versus negative references to multiculturalism) and valence issues (e.g., mentions of environmental issues) and are shown in the Supportive Information (SI A) (for a detailed discussion on this re-categorization of the Manifesto Project scheme, see Schumacher etal. 2015). Our dependent variable and unit of analysis (i.e. the unique proto-coalition per national election) differ markedly from the practice in the empirical party shifts literature that focuses on left-right party shifts with parties as units of analysis.[2] We deviate from this standard for two reasons: (1) our theory concerns the relation between two parties, not a sole characteristic of a single party; and

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[1] In the Data, Operationalization & Method section, we elaborate on the decision to take proto-coalitions, as a unit of analysis.

[2] The effective number of manifesto issues (ENMI) is an example of different use of manifesto data and is similar to our measure (Greene 2015).

(2) we analyze change in issue distance because a) issue competition has become more important (Green-Pedersen 2007); and b) because the parties we analyze are engaged in political competition on multiple dimensions (Laver and Benoit 2006).

We have calculated the issue distance for 1,193 proto-coalitions in 8 countries in the period 1986-2013.[3] We use times-series cross-sectional analyses clustered on proto-coalitions to account for the interdependence of the data. We demonstrate that on average, coalition parties increase their issue distance. Being more familiar with your coalition partner and being popular, makes coalition partners more likely to stick together. Bad cooperation (terminating the coalition due to conflict) makes coalition partners more likely to drift apart.

Drifting Apart or Sticking Together?

Almost all parties in parliamentary democracies need to form a coalition government in order to enjoy office pay-offs. In a coalition government, two or more parties need to cooperate and coordinate. Parties likely need to sacrifice a part of their policy preferences (Müller and Strøm, 1999, 2000; Strøm et al., 2008). Yet, parties expect to receive office pay-offs in return (Bäck et al., 2011; Browne and Franklin, 1973; Gamson, 1961; Warwick, 2001). These pay-offs are materialized in the form of ministerial portfolios. These portfolios, in turn, allow parties to execute some of their preferred - and pledged - policies, typically with success (Thomson et al., 2017). Hence, coalition government facilitates parties in achieving their *office* and *policy* goals (de Swaan, 1973; Müller and

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[3]Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden. SI B gives an overview of the country-election waves that are included.

Strøm, 1999; Riker, 1962). While extensive research reports that parties' ideological proximity explains coalition formation (e.g. de Swaan, 1973; Laver and Shepsle, 1996; Martin and Stevenson, 2001, 2010; Warwick, 2001, 2005), parties in coalitions do have different policy preferences. Compromises are therefore always required among coalition partners. Hence, coalitions obscure the relationship between what a party promises and what it delivers. Thereby, partaking in a coalition could potentially harm the parties' carefully established policy profile, and by extension the party's *vote* goals (Fortunato, 2017). Indeed from the perspective of voters, coalition parties are harder to distinguish and more likely to be identified as ideologically similar (Adams et al., 2016; Fortunato and Adams, 2015; Fortunato and Stevenson, 2013) and more alike in terms of their valence attributes (Clark, 2009).[4] Therefore parties diverge from their current coalition partner in an attempt to circumvent punishment of any perceived compromise (Fortunato, 2017). In fact, Bawn and Somer-Topcu (2012) demonstrate that government parties perform better in elections if they present a more radical electoral platform after governing (see also Fortunato and Adams, 2015). Sagarzazu and Klüver (2015) describe that coalition partners emphasize the same issues in their press releases, but the closer the new elections, the more their issue emphases diverge. Hence, parties differentiate from their partners to strengthen their own policy profile at the end of the legislative term. In a nutshell, coalition government participation positions parties between a rock and a hard place: They need to form a united front while in government, but at the same time display a distinctive profile for votes (Martin and Vanberg, 2008; Sagarzazu and Klüver, 2015). This is the so-called '*coalition dilemma*' (Sagarzazu and Klüver, 2015, p.333). Parties

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[4]Experts perceive coalition partners to shift in the same direction too (Cahill and Adams, 2015).

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arguably solve this dilemma by running on an electoral platform highly distinctive from their coalition partner(s). Following these arguments one expects coalition partners to drift apart, rather than stick together.

At the same time, multiple studies also point to the opposite direction: Coalition parties converge their position at the next election. Why? The literature on coalition formation proposes two mechanisms. First, if numerically possible, parties seem to have a preference to continue existing coalition governments after fresh elections - the so-called 'incumbency advantage' (Martin and Stevenson, 2001, 2010). Second, extensive research reports that parties' ideological proximity explains coalition formation (e.g. de Swaan, 1973; Laver and Shepsle, 1996; Martin and Stevenson, 2001, 2010; Warwick, 2001, 2005). Thus, when coalition partners value both ideological proximity and continuation, they should propose ideologically similar platforms when contesting elections. A third mechanism resulting in convergence stems from the party position literature: the more radical party in the coalition has an electoral disadvantage compared to the more moderate party in the coalition due to the fact that voters cluster in the middle of ideological distributions. For that reason, Adams and co-authors (Adams et al., 2012; Adams and Merrill III, 2009) predict that the more radical party shifts to the center, and thus becomes more like its more moderate coalition partner. Given that the literature provides us with two competing expectations, we ask *when* do coalition parties drift apart (i.e. diverge) or stick together (i.e. converge)? In theorizing about this we look at combinations of two parties (i.e proto-coalitions). This is because our dependent and independent variables are about the shared characteristics of these parties. Game-theoretical and experimental studies have demonstrated that if a coalition consists of more than two parties, oftentimes

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two parties start negotiating and once they agree, they look for a third partner (Baron and Diermeier, 2001; Budge and Laver, 1986; Diermeier et al., 2002; Grofman and Landa, 1983). As such, the proto-coalition is the relevant unit of analysis.

Because coalition politics is a strategic game between parties, anticipation is the crux (Müller and Strøm, 2000). We build upon Müller and Strøm (2000)'s empirically substantiated claim and propose that parties plant the seeds of their future coalition plans in their election manifestos. How do parties decide to do so? We put forward that as long as a coalition is performing well, parties stick to what they have. If they receive information that the coalition is not working (any more), they will try to defect to another coalition. We assume that if parties value office, they aim to safeguard future coalition participation. To do so, parties deliberate whether (1) they gain a majority together with the future partner - do I put my eggs in the right basket? - and (2) they get out of the negotiation process what they can reasonably expect - can I get the ministerial portfolios I aim at? Can I implement the policies I prefer?

There are several factors that go into parties' calculations regarding whether their current partner is worth teaming-up with after the elections. First, a coalition should be numerically possible. Opinion polls tell (coalition) parties much about their future electoral prospects. By consequence they can evaluate the prospect of forming the same coalition again. If chances are high that a coalition can continue we expect parties to stick together. If, however, opinions polls signal that the current coalition will not maintain its majority, we expect coalition parties to drift apart (*Hypothesis 1a*).

Second, coalition government requires extensive cooperation and coordination. Therefore, experience in governing with the coalition partner helps. Parties that have worked

together share mutual trust and understanding which facilitates future collaboration (Browne and Franklin, 1973; Franklin and Mackie, 1983, 1992; Martin and Stevenson, 2010). Also continuing cooperation with the current partner is less costly or risky than striking new bargains with other parties (Martin and Stevenson, 2010; Warwick, 1996). Therefore, we expect that the more experience two government parties have in governing together, the more likely they are to continue their cooperation. To signal their willingness to continue to cooperate to the voter, they are more likely to stick together than drift apart (*Hypothesis 1b*).

Third, recent conflict between two government parties is likely to motivate the two to drift apart. Parties are unlikely to team up again in a coalition government if their coalition broke down due to conflict (Tavits, 2008).

Importantly, factors such as experience, popularity and conflict can coincide. For example, a proto-coalition may have much experience of governing together, but may have had a conflict. In this case we expect conflict to override the effect of experience, because terminating due to conflict breaks the trust between the partners more than experience could build (TAVITS, 2007).

H1a: *The more popular a proto-coalition in government is in opinion polls, the more it decreases its issue distance at the next election.*

H1b: *The more experience a proto-coalition in government has in governing together, the more it decreases its issue distance at the next election.*

H1c: *Parties in a proto-coalition increase their issue distance if their government coalition terminated due to conflict, whereas the parties decrease issue distance when*

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there was no conflict.

We expect popularity, experience and the absence of conflict to contribute to a decrease in issue distance between government parties in a proto-coalition. Lack of popularity, lack of experience, and conflict lead to an increase in issue distance. An implication of these hypotheses is that government parties will look for a new coalition partner, if the current coalition is unpopular, inexperienced or conflict-ridden. We expect that in this situation government parties will decrease the issue distance with one or more opposition parties to facilitate future coalition formation. We need additional theory to theorize about which opposition party a government party will move to in this situation. Therefore, in this paper we will only conduct exploratory analyses regarding the effects of experience, conflict and popularity on government party-opposition party proto-coalitions.

Data, Operationalization & Method

Our sample consists of countries with a tradition of coalition governments. Based on data availability, this gives us a sample of 8 European countries from 1986 till 2013 with 105 country-election waves. We included all parties present in the Manifesto Project Dataset (Klingemann et al., 2006; Volkens et al., 2014) in at least two subsequent elections and for which we have polling data (Askham-Christensen, 2012; Jennings and Wlezien, 2016; van der Velden, 2014). Our unit of analysis is the proto-coalition, that is a combination of two parties (of which at least one is a government party) in a national parliament. This yields us with 1,193 observations (304 unique proto-coalitions). Hence, we make a com-

parison between proto-coalitions that consist of two coalition parties and proto-coalitions that consist of one coalition party and one opposition party. The primary purpose of including the proto-coalitions of one coalition party and one opposition party is to have cases that contrast with the proto-coalitions consisting of two government parties.

Dependent variable: Δ Issue Distance

We use the Manifesto Project Dataset to measure ideological divergence and convergence in proto-coalitions. Our dependent variable, which we call Δ *Issue Distance*, measures the change in distance between the electoral platforms of two parties over two subsequent elections (see Equation 1):

$$\Delta\ Issue\ Distance = \Sigma|P_{i,k,t} - P_{j,k,t}| - \Sigma|P_{i,k,t-1} - P_{j,k,t-1}| \tag{1}$$

We take the sum of the absolute distances between the position of party i on issue k at time t $(P_{i,k,t})$ and the position of party j on issue k at time t $(P_{j,k,t})$. We create 19 issue categories from the Manifesto Project Data using a re-categorization scheme that includes positional issues such as the party's position on the economy and positional issues or valence issues such as the party's attention to the environment (Schumacher et al., 2015). SI A gives an overview of which CMP categories belong to which issue. Figure 1 shows the total distribution of Δ *Issue Distance* in our data set.

Figure 1: Distribution of Δ Issue Distance
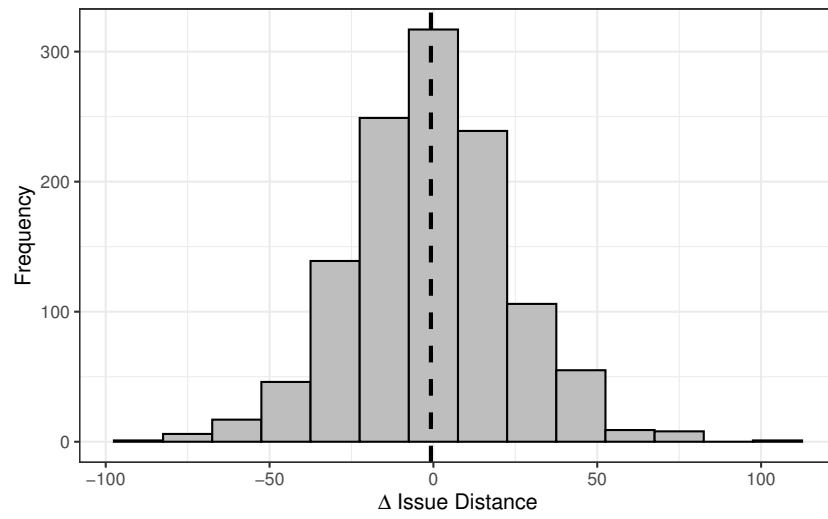
Note: The X-axis displays the values of Δ Issue Distance and the Y-axis shows the frequency of any of the values of Δ Issue Distance. The dashed line indicates the mean score of Δ Issue Distance.

Table 1: Example of Δ Issue Distance Measure

| | Issue (Scale) | 2009 | | | 2013 | | | Δ |
| | | CDU | SPD | *Issue* | CDU | SPD | *Issue* | **Issue** |
				Distance			*Distance*	**Distance**
1	*Economic Policy*	-1.4	-15.9	*14.5*	-1.3	-13.3	*12.0*	**-2.5**
	(-74.3 - 63.8)							
2	*Welfare Policy*	4.8	7.7	*2.9*	9.2	14.6	*5.4*	**2.5**
	(-16.7 - 63.4)							
3	*Europe*	2.0	3.2	*1.2*	1.4	2.2	*0.8*	**-0.4**
	(-17.2 - 25.7)							
4	*Multiculturalism*	1.5	1.2	*0.3*	-0.5	0.9	*1.5*	**1.2**
	(-16.1 - 33.0)							
5	*International Issues*	2.9	5.6	*2.7*	2.4	4.2	*1.9*	**-0.8**
	(-40.9 - 40.7)							
6	*Special Relations*	0.6	0.4	*0.2*	0.2	0.1	*0.1*	**-0.1**
	(-12.2 - 16.7)							
7	*Constitutional Issues*	0.2	0.5	*0.3*	0.1	0.0	*0.2*	**-0.1**
	(-43.8 - 42.6)							
8	*(De)centralization*	1.5	0.1	*1.4*	2.3	1.8	*0.5*	**-0.9**
	(-13.3 - 24.2)							
9	*Traditional Issues*	6.8	0.8	*6.0*	5.0	0.3	*4.8*	**-1.2**
	(-11.7 - 50.0)							
10	*Democracy*	3.0	6.3	*3.3*	4.6	7.0	*2.4*	**-0.8**
	(0.0 - 49.0)							
11	*Treatment of Groups*	10.0	17.7	7.7	6.0	11.7	5.7	**-2.0**
	(0.0 - 57.5)							
12	*Government Organization*	6.8	6.1	*0.7*	4.4	4.1	*0.2*	**-0.5**
	(0.0 - 72.6)							
13	*Economic Growth*	15.1	12.3	*2.8*	14.5	9.4	*5.2*	**2.4**
	(0.0 - 60.6)							
14	*Cultural Issues*	3.4	2.6	*0.8*	3.9	1.9	*2.1*	**1.3**
	(0.0 - 35.4)							

To illustrate how we constructed the measure, Table 1 displays issue position and issue attention of the German parties CDU/CSU and SPD at the 2009 and 2013 elections on the 19 re-categorized issues.[5] The first number (-1.4) in Table 1 is the position of the CDU/CSU on economic policy. This is calculated by taking the percentage of quasi-sentences in the CDU/CSU 2009 election manifesto dedicated to right-wing economic topics (e.g. free markets) minus the percentage of quasi-sentences dedicated to left-wing economic topics (e.g. nationalization, see SI A for the full list of topics). For each issue at each election year, we calculate the distance between the proto-coalition CDU/CSU-SPD. The largest distance in this proto-coalition is on the category "economic policy" with the SPD taking a left-wing position and CDU a centrist position. Our interest is in the change in distance. Also here "economic policy", together with "welfare policy" and the valence category "economic growth", produces the highest value. Issues that are typically not salient for both parties – say "farmer's issues – have very low values, because parties only dedicate one or two sentences to them in their election manifestos. By consequence, the changes in distances on these issues will also be tiny. The final step is to the distances. In our example, our dependent variable takes a value of -0.6. This means that at the 2013 election, the issue distance between CDU/CSU and SPD decreased compared to the 2009 election. In other words, the platforms of these two parties became more alike. Figure 2 demonstrates the Δ Issue Distance between the two parties over time.

SI E shows that the results we present in the next section do not depend on how we define our issue categories. We replicate the models using a dependent variable in which we aggregate the distance between proto-coalitions using: a) all 56 CMP categories;

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[5]SI C demonstrates descriptive information of change in issue distance per country.

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Figure 2: Average Δ Issue Distance between CDU/CSU and SPD over Time
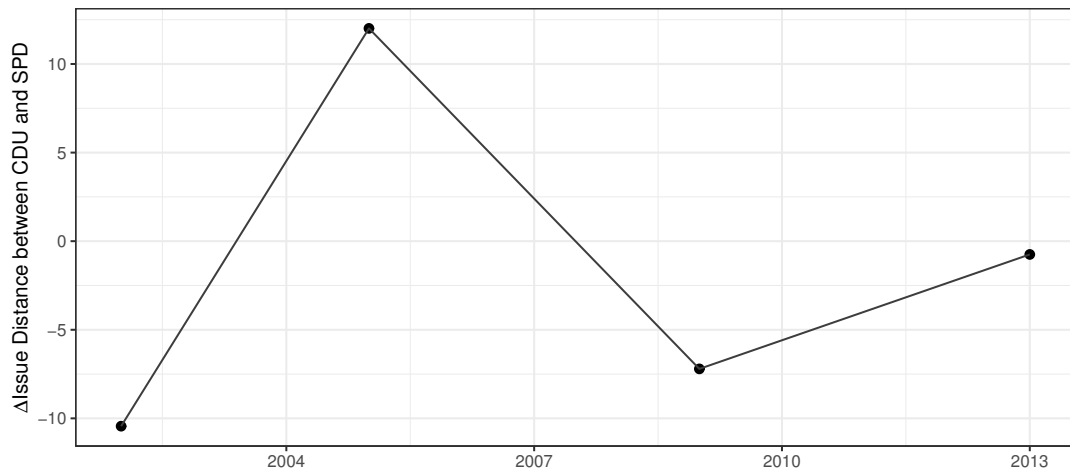
b) the seven CMP policy areas (i.e., international relations, liberal democracy, political organization, economy, welfare, morality and culture, interest groups); c) Lowe and co-authors' definition of CMP issue scales (Lowe et al., 2011); and d) a separate aggregate measure for positional and valence issues.

While the Manifesto Project Dataset (Klingemann et al., 2006; Volkens et al., 2014) has its drawbacks too, we use this data for two main reasons: (1) this data is not affected by institutional parliamentary differences between countries of which for instance parliamentary speeches would suffer; and (2) a party's manifesto is an authoritative document that reflects the concessions made within the party too (Greene, 2016). To overcome some of these drawbacks, it has become customary in the party responsiveness literature to replicate findings using dependent variables constructed also from expert surveys and voter surveys of party positions, we do not do replicate our models using these data sources. Expert surveys and voter surveys of party positions are strongly influenced by what parties do in government (Adams et al., 2016; Cahill and Adams, 2015; Fortunato and Adams, 2015; Fortunato and Stevenson, 2013). In other words, we know that experts

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and voters think that coalition parties become more alike simply because they jointly approved policy while in government. This biases the results towards finding evidence of convergence. Our interest here is how parties deal with the coalition dilemma: what will they tell voters? Will they emphasize what they did in government, or will they propose a distinct policy profile. The election manifesto is one obvious source of information that parties may turn to, to communicate agreement or disagreement with their former coalition partner. To put it differently, our theory is about expressed party positions in party communication, not in perceived party positions.

Independent variables

We explain party platform change based on anticipation of coalition government. That is, we add a three-way interaction between how the coalition terminated (Conflict), the experience of governing together (Experience) and the proto-coalition's popularity (Popularity).

We use the Parlgov database (Döring and Manow, 2015) to determine the coalition composition of the *Proto-Coalition* and the *Experience* of governing of the proto-coalition. Proto-coalitions that consist of two parties in the coalition are coded as 1 and all other proto-coalitions are coded as 0. *Experience* is operationalized as the number of times a proto-coalition has been in the coalition together since 1950 weighted by the number of occasions one of the two parties in the pair have been in government divided by two. If our *Experience* variable has a value of 1, the party pair has only been in government together, and a value of 0 means that the party pair has never been in government together (see left part of Figure 3). As this variable is skewed to the value of 0 (never been in a coalition

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together), we create a dichotomy of the Experience variable (0 never been in a coalition together; 1 ever been in a coalition together) to the analyses too, to control for the fact that we otherwise only pick up the effect of not being a coalition. We re-run our analyses specifying our Experience variable with this dummy, as log + 1 and categorizing in into three categories: not experienced (0), somewhat experienced (values between 0 and 0.5) and very experienced (values between 0.5 and 1), which yield the same results (see SI F).

We use the Comparative Parliamentary Democracy Data Archive's measure of government termination (Strøm et al., 2008) to code our *Conflict* variable. Table 2 summarizes for all the countries in our data how many coalition governments have terminated and why, ranging from disagreement with the Parliament, intra-coalition disagreement on policy, personal conflicts or intra-party conflicts. If a proto-coalition was in a government together and terminated because of a conflict we coded it as 2. If a proto-coalition was in government together but did not experience conflict we coded a 1. Proto-coalition that were not together in a coalition are coded as 0. Hence, we only indicate a conflict when the coalition actually terminated and not when conflicts did not lead to termination of the coalition. This may be less fine-grained than is desirable. Yet, by only including these 'extreme' terminal cases of conflict, we make it harder to find an effect of *Conflict*. Also, in our main analyses, we do not dis-aggregate conflict to specific types of conflict, in SI J we show that the results hold even when we do dis-aggregate to specific conflicts.

To measure a proto-coalition's chances to govern together again, we look at the *Popularity* of the proto-coalition. For this we used polling data in the last 6 months prior to the election. For this we used the data sets of Jennings and Wlezien (2016), Askham-

Table 2: Overview of Types of Conflict in Coalition Resulting in Termination

	Parliament	Policy	Personal	Intra-Party	Total
Austria	0	4	1	3	*8*
Belgium	0	13	0	3	*16*
Denmark	9	2	0	1	*12*
Germany	2	5	2	8	*17*
Ireland	3	3	3	6	*15*
Netherlands	1	6	0	1	*8*
Norway	0	2	0	2	*4*
Sweden	0	3	0	0	*3*
TOTAL	**15**	**38**	**6**	**24**	**83**

Christensen (2012) and Van der Velden (2014) for the opinion polls.[6] What matters here is which proto-coalition is the best, most popular one, out of all proto-coalitions parties are part of. To create a measure that is comparable between small and large parties and cross-nationally using raw electoral numbers is not helpful. For that reason we devised a ranking of proto-coalitions that can be used across parties and countries. This ranking is devised as follows: (1) we calculated the average polled seats of a proto-coalition in the last six months prior to the election; (2) for each party we rank order the popularity of the proto-coalitions, the higher the rank, the more popular a proto-coalition; (3) for each proto-coalition we sum the rank it has for each party in the proto-coalition and divide it by the total number of proto-coalitions one of the parties is in. This produces an index from 0 to 2, where the highest value means that for both parties in the proto-coalition this one is most popular. The lowest value means that for both parties in the proto-coalition this one is the least popular. Table 3 demonstrates an example of the construction of our *Popularity* measure for the German 2009 elections. For each proto-coalition, we determined the sum of the polled seat share as displayed by the second column. We rank-ordered these sums, see the third column in Table 3, in the following

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[6]The attrition in the model we estimate (see SI D) is due to limited availability of opinion polls.

way: for each proto-coalition we looked at the most preferable - that is most polled seats - option. In the first four rows of Table 3, the most preferable option for the CDU/CSU is the proto-coalition with the SDP - as it holds a majority. This option gets ranked highest for the CDU/CSU. The proto-coalition most preferable from the SDP's side is also with the CDU/CSU - again a score of 4. So, to calculate our *Popularity* measure, we sum the scores of the ranking of proto-coalitions CDU/CSU-SPD and SPD-CDU/CSU and divide this number (8) by the total number of proto-coalitions each party is in (4). This yields a *Popularity* score of 2 - i.e. the maximum score of our measure - meaning that for both parties, this is the most popular proto-coalition. SI G demonstrates that our results remain unchanged for using the sum of polled seat share. Additionally, SI G also controls for the fact that the effects of the polls could be driven by the newly presented manifesto too, and show that our results our robust using the average predicted vote share during the electoral cycle.

In our analyses, we control for economic indicators (GDP, unemployment, inflation), as one might expect that sluggish growth and strong unemployment motivate dissociation, whereas good economic times motivate association with the ruling coalition (i.e. stick together). To measure economic performance, we use GDP, the percentage of change in GDP growth rate one year before the election and the *Misery Index* (Okun, 1962), the percentage of change in unemployment rate one year before the election plus the percentage of change in inflation one year before the election. To account for the fact that parties on opposite sides of the ideological left-right scale are per definition further apart than parties on the same side, we also control for the ideological variation within proto-coalitions. The *Ideological Position* of proto-coalitions is measured using the CMP

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Table 3: Example of Popularity Measure for the the 2009 German Elections

Proto-Coalition	Polled Seat Share	Rank	Popularity
CDU/CSU - Grüne	46.29	2	1.50
CDU/CSU - Linke	45.29	1	1.25
CDU/CSU - SDP	59.70	4	2.00
CDU/CSU - FDP	49.43	3	1.75
SDP - Grüne	35.28	2	1.25
SDP - Linke	34.27	1	1.00
SDP - CDU/CSU	59.70	4	2.00
SDP - FDP	38.42	3	1.50
Linke - Grüne	20.87	1	0.50
Linke - SPD	34.27	3	1.00
Linke - CDU/CSU	45.29	4	1.25
Linke - FDP	24.00	2	0.75
FDP - Grüne	25.01	2	1.00
FDP - Linke	24.00	1	0.75
FDP - SPD	38.42	3	1.50
FDP - CDU/CSU	49.43	4	1.75
Grüne - Linke	20.87	1	0.50
Grüne - SPD	35.28	3	1.25
Grüne - CDU/CSU	46.29	4	1.50
Grüne - FDP	25.01	2	1.00

Note: This table lists all possible party combinations. In the analysis, we only include unique party combinations as proto-coalitions. That is, when we have the proto-coalition *CDU/CSU - Grüne*, *Grüne - CDU/CSU* is not included.

CDU/CSU= Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union, FDP = Free Democratic Party, Grüne = Greens, Linke = the Left, SDP = Social Democratic Party

'rile' measure (Klingemann et al., 2006; Volkens et al., 2014), giving the proto-coalitions a value of 0 when they are on the same ideological side and a value of 1 when the proto-coalitions are on opposite sides (e.g. a left-wing party and a right-wing party being a proto-coalitions).[7] In the main analyses, we defined the 0 as the cut-off point for whether or not a proto-coalition is on the same ideological side, but in SI P, we also show the results using the mean and median value of the party system as the cut-off point, which yields similar results. Finally, we account for the complexity of the multiparty system by

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[7]Using a Cramer's V, we calculated the association between our control of being on the same ideological side and our dependent variable change in issue distance. The association between the two is 0.02, which means that the two are unrelated.

controlling for the *effective number of parties* (ENPS) within the system using the Comparative Political Data Set I (Armingeon et al., 2014) and the *number of coalition parties* (NCP), measured by the ParlGov dataset (Döring and Manow, 2015). The ENPS is an index of the number of parties relative to the seats they gained at the election (Laakso and Taagepera, 1979). Finally, we account for the complexity of the multiparty system by controlling for the *effective number of parties* (ENPS) within the system using the Comparative Political Data Set I (Armingeon et al., 2014) and the number of coalition parties, measured by the ParlGov dataset (Döring and Manow, 2015). The ENPS is an index of the number of parties relative to the seats they gained at the election (Laakso and Taagepera 1979). Table 4 shows the descriptive information of the dependent and independent variables of this study.

Table 4: Operationalization and Descriptive Statistics of Variables

DV	Operationalization	Mean (SD)	Min.-Max.
Δ Issue Distance	Sum of changes on each issue between proto-coalitions	-0.76 (24.14)	-92.67 - 106.16
Continuous IV's			
Popularity	Relative Popularity of Party Dyad	1.21 (0.46)	0.22 - 2.00
Experience	History of Being a Cabinet Dyad	0.20 (0.33)	0.00 - 1.00
NCP	Number of Coalition Parties	2.91 (1.36)	0 - 5
ENPS	Effective Number of Parties	77.87 (8.49)	52.86 - 88.98
GDP	% Change GDP Growth	2.36 (2.52)	-4.98 - 9.70
Misery Index	Change % Inflation + Unemployment	11.14 (4.54)	2.72 - 30.87
Dichotomous IV's		**0**	**1**
Ideological Position	0 same side of left-right scale,1 opposite side	659 (55%)	534 (45%)
Categorical IV's			
Conflict	0 Conflict, 1 No conflict, 2 No Cabinet Dyad		
	Conflict	1,161 (98%)	32 (2%)
	No Conflict	1,099 (92%)	94 (8%)
	Not a Government Proto-Coalition	362 (30%)	831 (70%)

Method of Estimation

To explain whether coalition formation influences parties' changes in issue distances, we are dealing with variation between proto-coalitions, across countries as well as over time. Hence, we have to estimate a model that deals with the interdependency between a pair of observations (i.e. the dyadic structure of the data), the cross-sectional structure (i.e., panel differences based on countries and parties) as well as time dependencies (i.e., issues relating to autocorrelation). To deal with the interdependency of proto-coalitions and years, we use simple party combinations nested in year panel setup. Recently, Erikson and co-authors have warned scholars for the possibility of underestimating the size of standard errors and overestimating the power of hypothesis tests when using dyadic data (Erikson et al., 2014). To overcome this estimation flaw, they propose randomization test (for specifics on randomization test, see Erikson et al., 2014, p. 2; for an application within the party politics literature, see Meyer and Wagner, 2016). The applications of dyadic data they are warning for are cases in which the independent variables are not on the dyadic level. This is, however, not the case in our study. We, therefore, are not able to conduct this randomization test. We do deal with the dyadic data structure by clustering on the dyad level, i.e. the proto-coalition. We additionally run a fixed effects model SI Q and to account for the possibility that specific country characteristics are driving the analysis, we re-run the models with one country dropped at the time SI S.

Party combinations nested in year panel setup alone, however, does not solve all issues arising when using a panel data-estimation strategy. We have to account for heteroskedastic error terms, as it is very likely that the error terms have different variances between panels and are also correlated across different panels. Furthermore, it is likely

that the observations of change in issue distance (our dependent variable) are correlated across time within panels. Consequently, we use a Prais-Winsten solution to address the panel-specific AR(1) error structure (Greene, 1990, p. 473) to eliminate autocorrelation.[8] In SI R we show the results of a Error Correction Model (ECM).

Do Coalition Parties Drift Apart or Stick Together?

What is the effect of past coalition participation on party platform change? And how do future coalition considerations influence parties' platform choice? Figure 3 shows that the mean change in issue distance of proto-coalitions consisting of two government parties is positive (divergence), while the mean change in issue distance of proto-coalition consisting of one government party and one opposition party is negative (convergence).

Now, we explain these different patterns with indicators of experience, conflict and popularity. We model this using three separate analyses: (1) an interaction between the popularity of the proto-coalitions with a variable distinguishing between proto-coalitions of only government parties and proto-coalitions of one government and one opposition party. With this we test H1a: the more popular a government proto-coalition, the more it decreases its issue distance. (2) An interaction between the proto-coalition's experience in governing together with the variable distinguishing the type of proto-coalitions. With this we test H1b: the more experience a proto-coalition of government parties has, the more it decreases its issue distance in the next election. (3) We investigate the effect

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[8]We do not use an AR(1) process with a lagged dependent variable as recent studies indicate that a lagged dependent variable introduces biases associated with trending in the independent variables and the error term and washes out the effects of the main theoretical model (Achen, 2000; Plumper et al., 2005).

Figure 3: Difference between Type of Proto-Coalitions on Δ Issue Distance
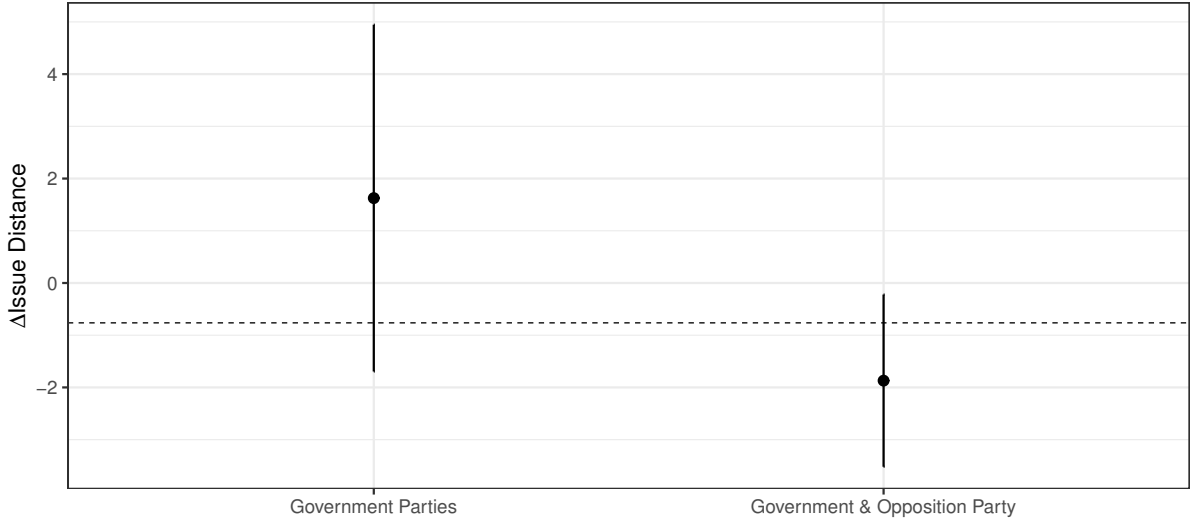
Note: The X-axis displays the different types of proto-coalitions and the Y-axis shows the average values of Δ Issue Distance for different types of proto-coalitions. The dashed line indicates the mean score of Δ Issue Distance across all types of proto-coalitions.

of conflict as the reason of the government coalition termination (see Table 4 for the operationalization and descriptive information). In line with the recommendations of Brambor, Clark, and Golder (Brambor et al. (2006)), we calculate and visualize (see Figures 4, 5, 6 and a full model with a three-way interaction between the three variables, is shown in S.I. U) the marginal effects and standard errors to demonstrate the effect of past coalition participation and future coalition considerations on party platform change. We now move to discussing these three analyses.

First, Figure 4 displays the marginal effect of government proto-coalitions on the change in issue distance for different levels of popularity in the opinion polls. The effect is negative and significant. This implies that very unpopular government proto-coalitions (values on the x-axis lower than 0.5) diverge issue distance. Very popular proto-coalitions (values on the x-axis higher than 1.5) converge issue distance. How to interpret the size of

the effects? At the unpopular end we report a shift of 22 points, and at the popular end a shift of -8. Our measure of Δ Issue Distance indicates the sum of the difference of a party's position and attention to 19 issue areas, and ranges from -92.67 till 106.16 (see Table 4). While the difference of 30 units between unpopular and popular governing proto-coalitions might seem modest over a range of approximately 200 units, we argue that for parties, which are conservative organizations (Harmel and Janda, 1994), a change of 15% of the platform is a substantively meaningful change. In fact, with a standard deviation of 24.14, the difference between unpopular and popular governing proto-coalitions is more than a standard deviation in the issue distance variable. These results provide evidence for hypothesis 1a: when proto-coalitions of government parties are popular in the polls they converge, if they are unpopular they diverge.

Second, Figure 5 visualizes the marginal effect of government proto-coalition on the change in issue distance for having experience of governing together. The line is decreasing, and for the most part the 95% confidence intervals do not cross the zero line. This means that the more experience of governing together a proto-coalition has, the more likely it is that they converge their issue distance. For proto-coalitions in government with very little experience of governing together (values smaller than 0.2 on the x-axis) our model actually estimates that the proto-coalition diverges. Also here the effects are sizeable, the difference between an inexperienced proto-coalition in government and an experienced one is approximately 18 points. This is approximately 3/4 of a standard deviation in the dependent variable. The five German coalitions led by Helmut Kohl between the Christian Democrats and the Free Democratic Party form a good illustration of this effect. They were accustomed to governing together (an Experience value varying

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Figure 4: Marginal Effect for Government Proto-Coalitions at Different Levels of Popularity
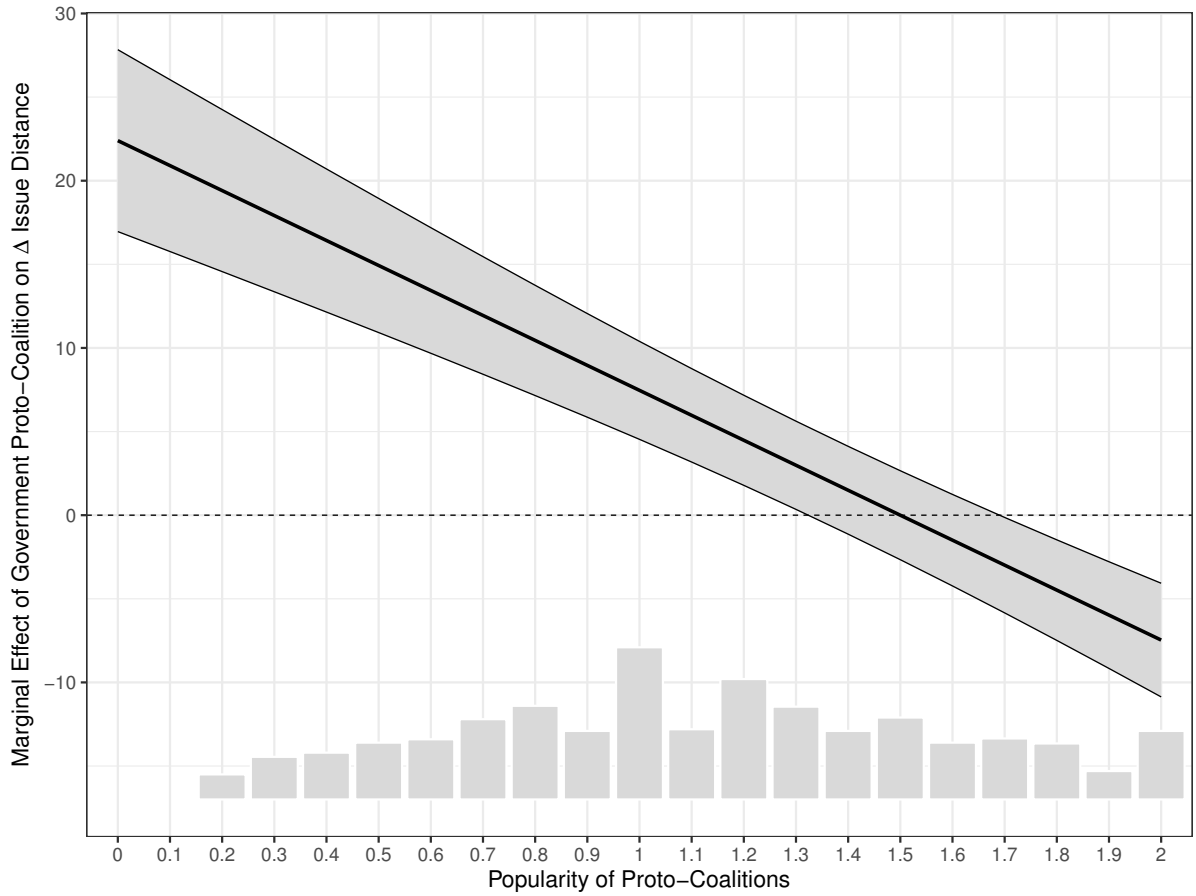
Note: The y-axis shows the effect (b-coefficient) of Government Proto-Coalitions on Δ Issue Distance for different levels of Popularity. The thicker line demonstrate the effect and thinner lines indicate the boundaries of the 95% confidence intervals. Positive values indicate that Government Proto-Coalitions diverged, whereas negative values indicate the reverse (i.e. converged).

between 0.60 and 0.70) and they consistently decreased their Δ Issue Distance over the years they were in government (1982-1998). In sum, our analyses are in support of h1b: experienced proto-coalitions in government converge, inexperienced ones diverge.

Finally, we look at the effect of conflict, while controlling for the other variables. Figure 6 shows, on average, that the issue distance between proto-coalitions that have governed together and experienced conflict (see left effect displayed in Figure 6) diverges. The average effect is approximately 25 points. This is a strong effect as it is a single

Figure 5: Marginal Effect of Government Proto-Coalition for Different Values of Experience
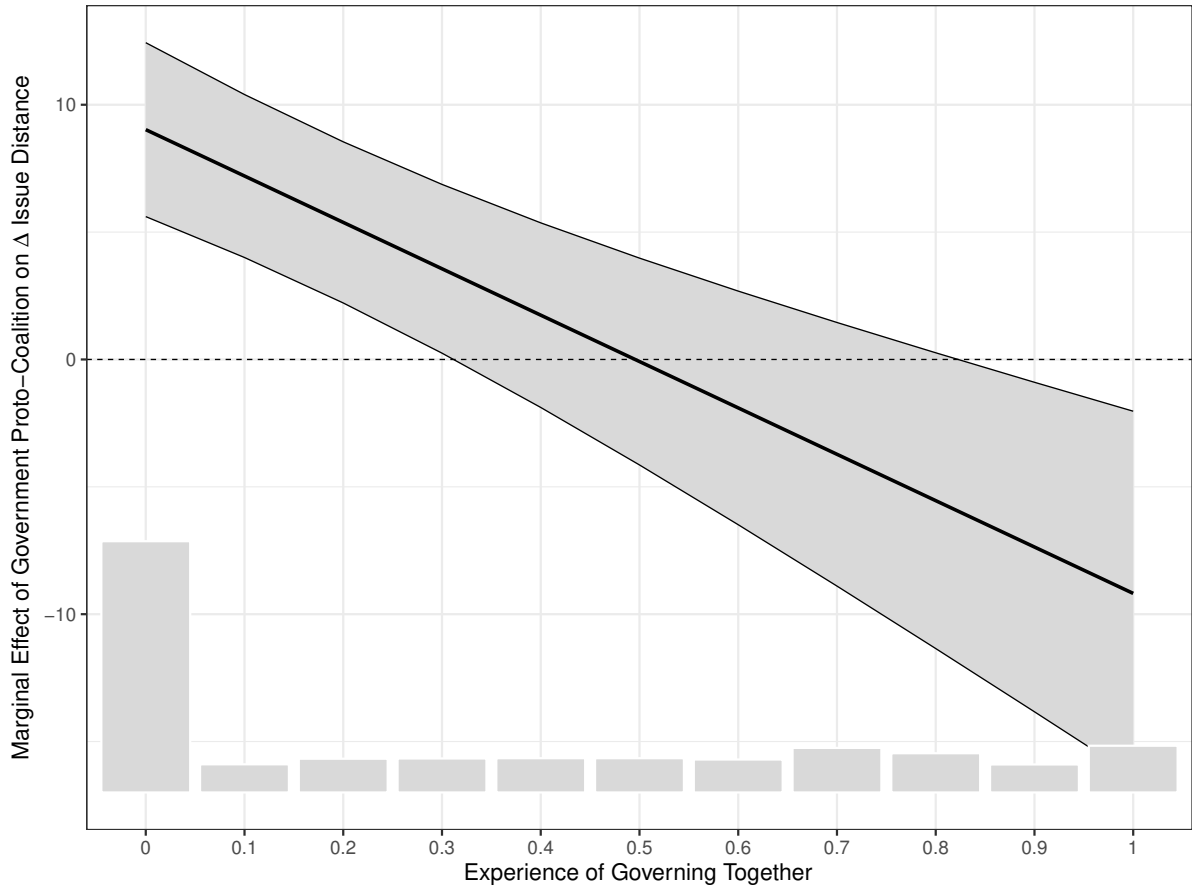
Note: The y-axis shows the effect (b-coefficient) of Government Proto-Coalitions on Δ Issue Distance for different levels of Experience. The thicker line demonstrate the effect and thinner lines indicate the boundaries of the 95% confidence intervals. Positive values indicate that Government Proto-Coalitions diverged, whereas negative values indicate the reverse (i.e. converged).

standard deviation of the dependent variable. More importantly, the effect for proto-coalitions that have governed together, but have not endured conflict is much smaller and negative (see right effect displayed in Figure 6). This means that in the absence of conflict proto-coalitions of governing parties converge. This is evidence in favor of H1c. This is also in line with Tavits (2008), who argued that parties dissociate themselves after their coalition broke down due to conflict. To illustrate this effect with an example, in the 2005 German elections, the Social Democrats and the Greens diverged after the

coalition terminated due to conflict.

Figure 6: Marginal Effect of Government Proto-Coalition for Different Values of Conflict
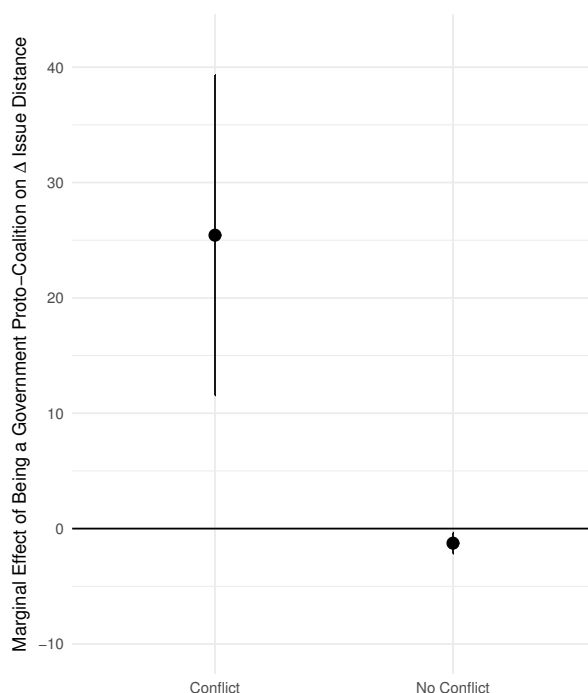
Note: The dots demonstrate the effect and the surrounding lines the 95% confidence intervals of Proto-Coalitions. The y-axis shows the effect (b-coefficient) of Conflict on Δ Issue Distance. Positive values indicate that Proto-Coalitions diverged their platforms, whereas negative values indicate the reverse (i.e. converged).

Hence, the analyses as presented in Figures 4, 5 and 6, all point in the same direction, supporting our hypotheses. If government parties receive cues that allow them to antici-pate continuing governing together - that is, if proto-coalitions have experience governing together with the absence of conflicts or when they are popular - they are more likely to converge their platform. Low levels of popularity and experiencing conflict, to the contrary, diminish parties' prospects of governing again, and they anticipate by diverging their platforms. In our model (see S.I. U), we have controlled for economic circumstances and coalition characteristics. The control variables show the following effects: a growth in GDP leads to a slight decrease in issue distance, while an increase in the Misery Index

has the opposite effect. The Effective Number of Parties (ENPS) has no effect on a party dyad's issue distance. The more parties in government, party dyads increase their issue distance. Furthermore, the ideological position effect shows that if parties are on opposite ends of the ideological left-right scale, they increase their issue distance.

Robustness Checks

There are several alternative explanations for our findings. To address these, we report briefly several robustness checks that are discussed in detail in the SI. Note that the robustness checks with alternative operationalizations of variables and different model specifications are discussed in the Sections Data, Operationalization & Method and Method of Estimation.

First, some scholars argue that *small parties behave differently from large parties* (e.g. Adams et al. 2006; Meguid 2005). But restricting our analyses to party dyads with at least 10%, 25% and 40% of the vote share did not produce different findings (see SI H).

Second, the causal arrow may be reversed: *divergence in party platforms between elections causes conflict*, rather than conflict causing a divergence of a party dyad. SI I presents a table with cases in which party dyads with an increased issue distance split up a coalition due to conflict. This table shows that in four out of seventeen cases in which a government terminated due to conflict and the party dyads increased their issue distance, a policy reason determined the termination of the coalition (which is 6% of all the cases in which conflict is the reason for government termination and the coalition party dyads did diverge). These coalition are: cabinet Lubbers II (The Netherlands,

1986-1989); cabinet Kok II (The Netherlands, 1998-2002); cabinet Balkenende II (The Netherlands, 2003-2006); and, cabinet Fitzgerald II (Ireland, 1982-1987). The majority of cases of coalition governments terminated because of internal party conflicts, see SI I. By taking a closer look at those cases (see SI K for a detailed description of the cases), the changes in policy as proposed by the coalition government where against the existing party line of the resigning party. In other words, a change in coalition position led to conflict. For example, cabinet Lubbers II terminated because the Liberal Party did not support the policy proposal to increase taxes on commuter transport. Moreover, SI L additionally shows even if we re-run the analysis without these cases, the results still hold. In sum, the alternative route of causation could still be true, but with only four coalition governments terminating due to a policy conflict, it seems to be an exception rather than the main explanation.

Third, conflict between two parties could simply be a symptom of unpopularity and thus not an independent cause of party divergence. To test this, SI M tests whether popularity explains conflict. This model shows that popularity - controlled for experience, economic performance, and party system indicators - does not have a significant effect. This non-finding makes it unlikely that being an unpopular government is an indicator for terminating due to a conflict. We, therefore, can conclude that experiencing conflict leads parties to drift apart.

Fourth, conflict between two parties could arise because there are personal disagreements between members of cabinet. To exclude the fact that the specific type of conflict drives our findings, SI J shows the analyses for the dis-aggregated measure of conflict. Regardless of the type of conflict, our finding that conflict leads coalition parties to drift

apart holds.

Fifth, the context in which parties strike coalitions matters. Pre-electoral coalition agreements (PEC) (Golder, 2005, 2006) are an example of this. In SI N we detail that this is a rare phenomenon in our sample (<5%). Including PECs as a variable in our analyses yields a significant and negative effect. The main findings of the paper do not change. Moreover, in SI O we control for the duration of the government. Our results are robust to this specification too.

In sum, Table 5 provides an overview of all the robustness checks we have conducted to test our hypotheses, against which are results are robust and in which section of the SI they are reported.

Discussion

Do coalition parties stick together or drift apart? Our analyses of 1,193 party platform changes in 8 European democracies demonstrate that political parties anticipate coalition government participation. That is, when the odds of governing together are stacked in the governing proto-coalition's favor, these parties tend to converge their platforms. Our finding suggest, contrary to the overwhelming majority of the party position shifting literature (see, Adams, 2012; Fagerholm, 2015 for overviews), that political parties do look ahead - i.e. anticipate future coalition participation - when crafting their electoral strategy. This finding is in line with the so-far untested argument of Strøm et al. (2008), who put forward that parties have to anticipate future possible coalitions.

To be able to be future-oriented, we assumed that political parties pick up cues during

Table 5: Overview of Robustness Checks

Results Robust Against	Alternative	SI
Operationalization of DV	(1) Categories of Lowe et al. (2011)	
	(2) Categories defined by CMP	
	(3) All categories of CMP	SI E
	(4) Only positional issues	
	(5) Only valence issues	
Operationalization of Experience	(1) Log-transformed variable	
	(2) Creating a categorical variable	SI F
	(3) Creating a dichotomous variable	
Operationalization of Conflict	Using types of conflict	SI J
Operationalization of Popularity	(1) Using party dyads' sum of polled votes	SI G
	(2) Using party dyads' sum of the average predicted vote share during the electoral cycle	SI G
	(3) Using party dyads' ranking of the average predicted vote share during the electoral cycle	SI G
Operationalization of Same Ideological Side	Using Country mean value and country median value as cut-off points	SI P
Model Specification	(1) Fixed Effects Model	SI Q
	(2) Error Correction Model	SI R
Specific Country Characteristics	(1) Country-Wise Deletion	SI S
	(2) Pre-Electoral Coalition Agreements	SI N
	(3) Allowance for Early Elections (all but Norway)	SI S
	(4) Duration of the Government	SI O
Party Size Differences	Analysis with party dyads >10%, >25%, and >40% vote share	SI H
Reversed Causality of Conflict	(1) Case studies	SI K
	(2) analyses without conflict cases	SI L
	(3) Using popularity to predict conflict	SI M

the electoral cycle. Thereby, we followed a recent trend in theoretical models of party behavior by assuming that parties do not calculate optimal responses to their environment, but use rules of thumb to decide their strategy (Bendor et al., 2011; Laver, 2005; Laver and Sergenti, 2012). The complexity and uncertainty parties in multi-party systems face in their quest for vote, office or policy pay-offs prohibits the calculation of optimal re-

sponses. We proposed that parties drift apart in response to bad signals (conflict, lack of experience, and unpopular proto-coalitions) and stick together in response to positive signals (no conflict, experience of governing together and popular in the polls). Our results demonstrate that indeed the more familiar proto-coalitions are, the more likely they are to stick together. Conflict motivates governing proto-coalitions to drift apart and a popular governing proto-coalition is likely to stick together if conflict is absent. Our findings indicate that when coalition parties receive signals of bad cooperation, they strategically choose not to defend the government policy, but rather emphasize the party's own policy priorities in their election platforms; i.e. drift apart.

In addition to establishing these empirical regularities our paper has four contributions to the broader political science literature. First, for models of government formation our results inform the post-election coalition bargaining process by demonstrating that parties use their positioning to signal preferences for a coalition partner. Another addition to this literature is that we demonstrate that the popularity of the outgoing government (proto-coalition) affects how close or distant existing coalition partners position themselves.

Second, for models of policy-making, our results suggest that the extent to which parties commit to their own policy agenda or moderate for joint government policy varies with the trust in and popularity of the (proto-)coalition. Models of policy making have relied on the veto-player logic (Tsebelis, 1995, 2002) to explain which policies governments choose (for an overview of this literature, see König et al. 2010). Tommassi et al. (2013) add to these models that the extent to which actors give in to create joint policy or stick to their own guns depends on the interplay between the actors over time. Consistent with this theoretical prediction, we empirically demonstrate that the strategic decision of

a party to emphasize the policy issues in their manifestos that give them more electoral benefits (i.e. commit) instead of defending joint government policy (i.e. adapt) depends on how well the coalition works. Our analyses show that parties only want to adapt their position to a partner they know will honor the bargained agreement in the future.

Third, to studies of party policy shifts, we contribute a new way of conceptualizing party platform change. Our dependent variable, change in issue distance, expresses changes in the degree of ideological overlap between parties. Rather than analyzing party shifts in isolation, our measure analyzes party shifts relative to other parties. This way we are better able to capture parties' strategic behavior vis-à-vis potential rivals and potential coalition partners.

Fourth, what does this mean for democracy? Our results show that on average the 'give-and-take' game of coalition politics motivate parties to drift away from their coalition partners for electoral benefits instead of defending joint government policy (Fortunato, 2017; Fortunato and Stevenson, 2013). This ideological drift of coalition partners can be seen as harmful for democracy, because parties do not take responsibility for their policies and therefore are not accountable to the electorate. Yet, divergence from the current government policy can also be seen as parties being responsive to the public. Our results demonstrate that coalition partners respond to opinion polls, dissociating from their current coalition partner could be the way to signal to voters that if they would select the party into future government, they will propose more congruent government policies.

Finally, an avenue for further research is how parties independently from one another adapt their platform after coalition government participation. While our theory is a first

step towards how parties react on coalition participation, the dyadic approach we use has also its drawbacks. It does not allow to draw conclusions about which party adapts. Questions worth exploring in future research is (1) whether junior partners are more likely to adapt to senior partners (Fortunato and Adams, 2015)? and (2) are unpopular parties more likely to adapt their platform to popular parties?

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Supportive Information

Drifting Apart or Sticking Together? An analysis of party platform changes in 8 Western European countries

SI A   Classification of CMP issues

Issue	CMP Variables	
Economic policy	((Free Market Economy + Incentives + Protectionism: Negative Regulation + Labor Groups: Negative + Economic Orthodoxy) – (Economic Planning + Corporatism + Protectionism: Positive + Keynesian Demand Management + Controlled Economy + Nationalization + Marxist Analysis + Labor Groups: Positive + Market Regulation)	(per401 + per402 + per407 + per414 + per702) – (per404 + per405 + per406 + per409 + per412 + per413 + per415 + per701 + per403)
Welfare policy	(Welfare State Expansion + Education Expansion) – (Welfare State Limitation + Education Limitation)	(per504 + per506) – (per505 + per507)
Europe	(EU: Positive – EU: Negative	per108 – per110
Multiculturalism	Multiculturalism: Positive – Multiculturalism: Negative	per607 – per608
International issues	(Anti-Imperialism + Military: Negative + Peace + Internationalism: Positive) – (Military: Positive + Internationalism: Negative)	(per103 + per105 + per106 + per107) – (per104 + per109)
Special relations	Foreign Special Relations: Positive – Foreign Special Relations: Negative	per101 – per102
Constitutional issues	Constitutionalism: Positive – Constitutionalism: Negative	per203 – per204
(De)Centralization	Decentralization – Centralization	per301 – per302
Traditional issues	(National Way of Life: Positive + Traditional Morality: Positive) – (National Way of Life: Negative + Traditional Morality: Negative)	(per601 + per603) – (per602 + per604)
Democracy	Freedom and Human Rights + Democracy	per201+ per202
Treatment of groups	Equality + Underprivileged Minority Groups + Non-Economic Demographic Groups	per503 + per705 + per706
Government organization	Governmental and Administrative Efficiency + Political Corruption + Political Authority	per303 + per304 + per305
Economic growth	Economic Goals + Economic Growth: Positive + Technology and Infrastructure	per408 + per411 + per416
Cultural issues	Culture: Positive	per502
Law and order	Law and Order: Positive	per605
Social harmony	Social Harmony	per606
Farmers' issues	Agriculture and Farmers: Positive	per703

Issue	CMP Variables	
Middle class issues	Middle Class: Positive	per704
Environmental issues	Anti-Growth Economy: Positive + Environmental Protection	per416 + per501

SI B   Country election waves in the data

Country	Election Years	# of Elections
Austria	1986; 1990; 2002; 2006; 2008;	5
Belgium	1987; 1991; 1995; 1999; 2003; 2007; 2010;	7
Denmark	1987; 1988; 1990; 1994; 1998; 2001; 2005; 2007; 2011;	9
Germany	1987; 1990; 1994; 1998; 2002; 2005; 2009; 2013;	8
Ireland	1987; 1989; 1992; 1997; 2002; 2007; 2011;	7
Netherlands	1986; 1989; 1994; 1998; 2002; 2003; 2006; 2010;	8
Norway	1989; 1993; 1997; 2001; 2005; 2009;	6
Sweden	1988; 1991; 1994; 1998; 2002; 2006; 2010;	7

SI C Descriptive information of change in issue distance per country

Figure C shows large variation in change in issue distance between countries (the dashed line presents the overall average). On average, in Denmark parties the change in issue distance between parties is the largest, and Belgium the change in issue distance is the smallest.

Figure C1: Mean Variation in Δ of Issue Distance between Countries
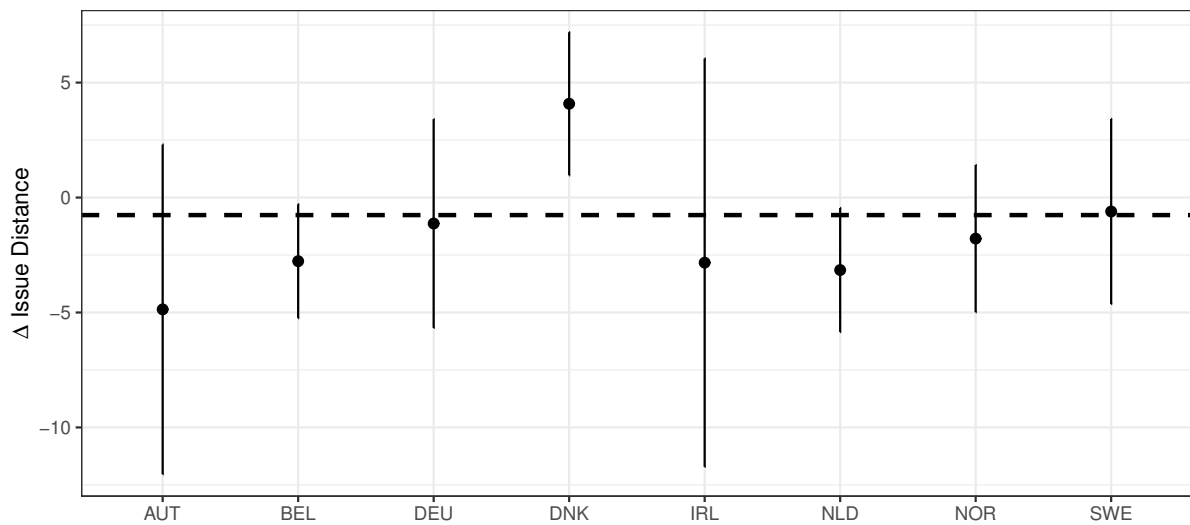
Note: The dots demonstrate the average per country and the surrounding lines the 95% confidence intervals. The dashed line demonstrates the overall average.

SI D   Full model with and without interactions

Table D1 demonstrates the full based on which Figure 4, 5 and 6 in the main text are plotted. Additionally, Table D2 demonstrates the full model without any interactions, substantively similar patterns are shown.

Table D1: Regression table: Models of Figure 4, 5, and 6

Y: Δ Issue Distance	H1a	H1b	H1c
Coalition_Dyad	41.38***	34.02***	
	(25.52)	(20.01)	
Popularity	0.0252	-1.462**	3.577***
	(0.02)	(-2.97)	(21.84)
Coalition_Dyad × Popularity	-10.41***		
	(-6.87)		
Experience	4.169***	6.237***	2.703***
	(5.40)	(3.32)	(5.39)
Coalition_Dyad × Experience		-19.11***	
		(-8.20)	
Not_a_Coalition_Dyad_(*ref._ H1c*)			
No_Conflict Coalition	-30.73***	-28.87***	10.55***
	(-19.82)	(-25.37)	(5.09)
Conflict_Coalition(*ref_ H1a,_ H1b*)			54.05***
			(6.67)
GDP	1.632***	1.729***	-0.622***
	(6.21)	(6.44)	(-3.73)
Misery_Index	0.433***	0.388***	0.526***
	(5.33)	(3.44)	(4.00)
ENPS	0.176***	0.161***	0.419***
	(7.15)	(4.76)	(11.38)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	2.446***	2.079***	-2.494**
	(7.44)	(5.19)	(-3.09)
Ideological Position_(*ref._ =_ same_ side*)	2.406***	2.425***	3.392***
	(4.73)	(3.81)	(3.84)
Constant	-29.44***	-25.99***	-42.17***
	(-8.06)	(-7.38)	(-9.99)
Observations	307	307	322

t statistics in parentheses

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

Table D2: Regression table: Full Model with Three-Way Interaction

	(1) **Y:** $\Delta IssueDistance$
No_Conflict Coalition	8.999***
	(4.95)
Conflict	23.02
	(0.63)
Experience	2.680
	(1.96)
Conflict × Experience	-97.95
	(-0.92)
Popularity	0.617
	(0.86)
No_Conflict Coalition × Popularity	-5.772***
	(-5.34)
Conflict × Popularity	2.859
	(0.10)
No_Conflict Coalition × Experience × Popularity	-3.439***
	(-3.60)
Conflict × Experience × Popularity	45.01
	(0.67)
GDP	0.534*
	(2.34)
Misery_Index	-0.147
	(-1.51)
ENPS	-0.114***
	(-4.70)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	1.962***
	(4.95)
Ideological Position_(*ref._=_same_side*)	1.081*
	(2.12)
Constant	0
Observations	623

t statistics in parentheses

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

SI E   Regression results with alternative operational-ization of dependent variable

We present the results of our regression analyses as presented in Figures 4, 5, and 6 in the paper, using 5 different possible operationalizations of our dependent variable Δ Issue Distance (see Tables E3 till E7): (1) the 31 categories created by Lowe and colleagues (Lowe et al., 2011); (2) the categories as defined by the CMP; (3) all categories that the CMP consists of; (4) only positional issues; and (5) only valence issues (i.e. where there is no positive-negative distinction). Figure E2 demonstrates the correlations between the measures. As the first row indicates, all operationalizations correlate between 0.70 and 0.90 with our dependent variable Δ Issue Distance.

Table E3: Regression table

Y: Lowe et al.	H1a	H1b	H1c
Coalition_Dyad	39.93***	34.35***	
	(24.17)	(19.49)	
Popularity	-0.162	-1.408	2.679*
	(-0.22)	(-1.79)	(2.35)
Coalition_Dyad × Popularity	-9.449***		
	(-5.55)		
Experience	5.138**	9.514***	3.214*
	(3.06)	(3.74)	(2.05)
Coalition_Dyad × Experience		-23.88***	
		(-5.88)	
Not_a_Coalition_Dyad_(*ref._ H1c*)			
No_Conflict Coalition	-28.33***	-27.00***	5.895***
	(-13.52)	(-11.95)	(3.71)
Conflict_Coalition(*ref_ H1a,_ H1b*)		42.56***	
		(5.46)	
GDP	1.808***	1.815***	-0.702**
	(6.27)	(5.83)	(-2.76)
Misery_Index	0.328*	0.318*	0.0469
	(2.39)	(2.25)	(0.36)
ENPS	0.0929**	0.0881***	0.364***
	(3.25)	(3.31)	(5.68)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	1.635***	1.609***	-2.088***
	(5.10)	(4.72)	(-3.56)
Ideological Position_(*ref._ =_ same_ side*)	1.536*	1.833***	5.595***
	(2.28)	(3.38)	(6.11)
Constant	-21.04***	-19.71***	-31.77***
	(-6.25)	(-5.68)	(-5.62)
Observations	299	299	319

t statistics in parentheses

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

Table E4: Regression table

Y: CMP Domains	H1a	H1b	H1c
Coalition_Dyad	23.47***	26.08***	
	(21.36)	(21.12)	
Popularity	0.803	0.667*	-1.115
	(1.50)	(2.09)	(-1.96)
Coalition_Dyad × Popularity	-0.895		
	(-1.36)		
Experience	5.224***	7.774***	3.552***
	(9.25)	(12.71)	(5.39)
Coalition_Dyad × Experience		-12.02***	
		(-11.06)	
Not_a_Coalition_Dyad_(ref._H1c)			
No_Conflict Coalition	-21.76***	-20.54***	16.28***
	(-21.12)	(-18.33)	(7.06)
Conflict_Coalition(ref_H1a,_H1b)			33.73***
			(5.04)
GDP	-0.222*	-0.168	0.0484
	(-1.98)	(-1.47)	(0.19)
Misery Index	-0.430***	-0.495***	0.307*
	(-7.64)	(-6.45)	(1.99)
ENPS	0.0526***	0.0500***	0.163*
	(4.64)	(4.54)	(2.49)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	1.909***	1.639***	-4.128***
	(8.35)	(7.20)	(-5.15)
Ideological Position_(ref._=_same_side)	2.897***	3.102***	3.924***
	(4.74)	(4.98)	(4.23)
Constant	-9.136***	-8.088***	-16.61**
	(-5.06)	(-4.09)	(-3.00)
Observations	299	299	319

t statistics in parentheses

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

Table E5: Regression table

Y: CMP Categories	H1a	H1b	H1c
Coalition_Dyad	46.45***	42.75***	
	(15.40)	(14.30)	
Popularity	1.230	0.243	2.654***
	(0.91)	(0.30)	(5.70)
Coalition_Dyad × Popularity	-6.381***		
	(-4.01)		
Experience	4.744***	9.244**	5.744***
	(6.61)	(3.04)	(4.16)
Coalition_Dyad × Experience		-21.42***	
		(-6.67)	
Not_a_Coalition_Dyad_(*ref._ H1c*)			
No_Conflict Coalition	-38.85***	-35.62***	5.990*
	(-16.52)	(-16.35)	(2.09)
Conflict_Coalition(*ref_ H1a,_ H1b*)			49.99***
			(4.41)
GDP	1.122*	1.204**	-1.421***
	(2.55)	(2.83)	(-4.94)
Misery Index	0.563*	0.542*	0.671***
	(2.44)	(2.56)	(4.28)
ENPS	-0.0911*	-0.0952	0.112*
	(-2.02)	(-1.91)	(2.42)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	2.230***	2.147***	-1.419
	(3.72)	(3.32)	(-1.43)
Ideological Position_(*ref._ =_ same_side*)	3.507**	3.472***	5.567***
	(3.01)	(3.39)	(5.60)
Constant	-12.75*	-11.86*	-20.89***
	(-2.04)	(-2.24)	(-5.58)
Observations	299	299	319

t statistics in parentheses

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

Table E6: Regression table

Y: Positional Issues	H1a	H1b	H1c
Coalition_Dyad	24.26***	15.69***	
	(12.92)	(5.38)	
Popularity	0.633	-0.627	3.572***
	(1.08)	(-1.35)	(14.09)
Coalition_Dyad × Popularity	-7.801***		
	(-8.17)		
Experience	6.628***	8.119***	2.953***
	(8.53)	(4.25)	(16.21)
Coalition_Dyad × Experience		-9.155***	
		(-4.78)	
Not_a_Coalition_Dyad_(ref._H1c)			
No_Conflict Coalition	-15.78***	-14.22***	1.754
	(-8.95)	(-5.01)	(1.07)
Conflict_Coalition(ref_H1a,_H1b)			27.04***
			(5.26)
GDP	0.946***	1.083***	0.697***
	(4.84)	(7.23)	(4.10)
Misery_Index	0.0262	-0.0305	0.636***
	(0.22)	(-0.25)	(8.19)
ENPS	0.0746***	0.0630**	0.417***
	(3.29)	(2.72)	(25.10)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	-0.643*	-0.841***	-0.429
	(-2.18)	(-3.35)	(-0.82)
Ideological Position_(ref._=_same_side)	0.973*	0.978**	0.771***
	(2.38)	(2.87)	(3.55)
Constant	-10.96***	-8.217**	-45.96***
	(-3.65)	(-2.58)	(-24.45)
Observations	299	299	319

t statistics in parentheses

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

Table E7: Regression table

Y: Salience Issues	H1a	H1b	H1c
Coalition_Dyad	9.570**	12.09***	
	(2.68)	(3.73)	
Popularity	-1.686**	-1.564**	0.767
	(-3.06)	(-3.17)	(1.69)
Coalition_Dyad × Popularity	-0.216		
	(-0.14)		
Experience	-2.477**	-0.721	-0.749
	(-2.60)	(-0.44)	(-0.77)
Coalition_Dyad × Experience		-11.14***	
		(-5.82)	
Not_a_Coalition_Dyad_(*ref._H1c*)			
No_Conflict Coalition	-11.01***	-8.772**	4.782**
	(-3.55)	(-2.71)	(2.73)
Conflict_Coalition(*ref_H1a,_H1b*)			15.87**
			(2.94)
GDP	0.546*	0.530*	-0.928***
	(2.51)	(2.38)	(-5.44)
Misery_Index	0.355***	0.341***	0.0621
	(4.08)	(4.15)	(0.71)
ENPS	-0.00859	-0.00504	-0.156***
	(-0.55)	(-0.24)	(-5.09)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	2.389***	2.330***	-1.462**
	(7.74)	(7.89)	(-2.58)
Ideological Position_(*ref._=_same_side*)	0.648	0.851	1.266*
	(1.34)	(1.74)	(2.38)
Constant	-5.732**	-6.424***	12.67***
	(-2.91)	(-3.35)	(4.12)
Observations	299	299	319

t statistics in parentheses

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

Figure E2: Correlation plot of different operationalizations of DV
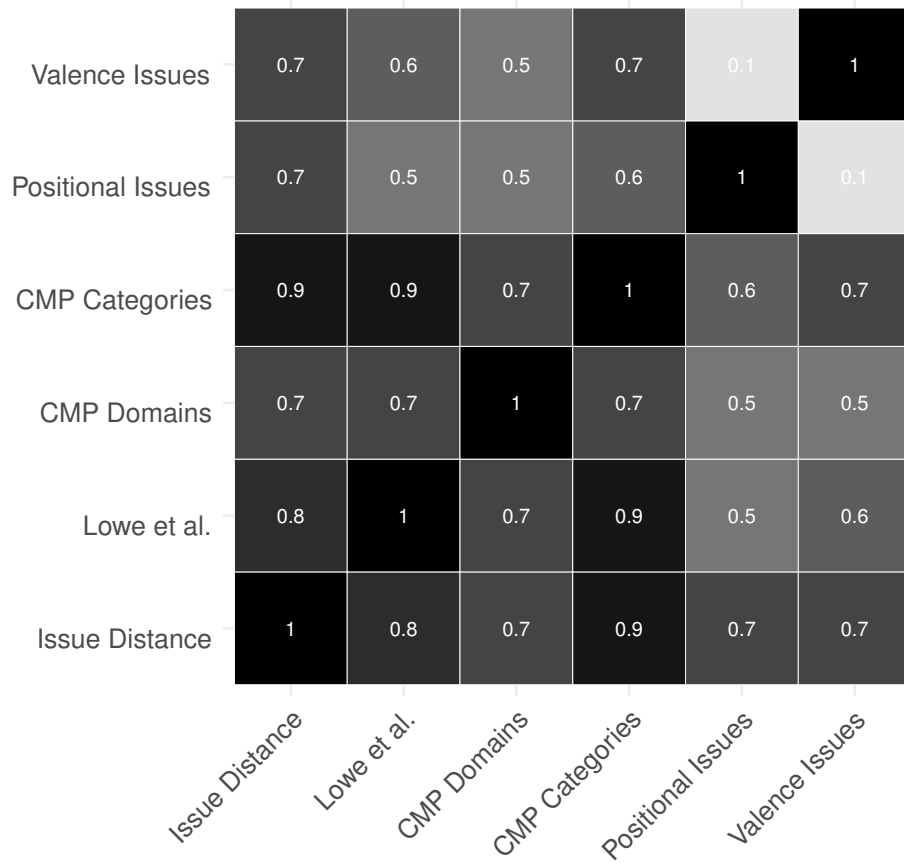
SI F Regression results with different specifications of experience

As our Experience variable is not normally distributed, we used three different operationalizations: (1) adding a dummy to control for the possibility of only estimating the effect of not being experienced with each other (Table F8); (2) a log-transformed variable (Table F9); and (3) categorizing the experience variable into not-experienced, somewhat experienced and very experienced (Table F10). Regardless of the operationalization, our main finding holds.

Table F8: Regression table

Δ Issue Distance	H1a	H1b	h1c
Coalition_Dyad	42.53***	33.36***	
	(22.62)	(19.00)	
Popularity	1.060	-0.464	3.721***
	(1.02)	(-0.72)	(29.04)
Coalition_Dyad × Popularity	-11.23***		
	(-6.50)		
Having_Experience	-4.366***	-3.640**	1.132
	(-4.01)	(-3.22)	(0.84)
Experience	10.28***	11.16***	
	(14.14)	(26.37)	
Coalition_Dyad × Having_Experience		-11.24***	
		(-8.55)	
Not_a_Coalition_Dyad(*ref._ H1a, H1b*)			
No_Conflict Coalition			9.705***
			(3.82)
Conflict_Coalition(*ref._ H1a, H1b*)			52.70***
			(6.47)
GDP	1.664***	1.724***	-0.521*
	(7.45)	(8.00)	(-2.42)
Misery_Index	0.440***	0.364**	0.494***
	(4.41)	(2.66)	(3.63)
ENPS	0.197***	0.191***	0.396***
	(6.59)	(6.46)	(8.96)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	2.349***	2.159***	-2.268**
	(6.10)	(5.71)	(-2.70)
Ideological_Position_(*ref._ =_ same_ side*)	2.802***	2.593***	3.070**
	(5.25)	(5.16)	(3.28)
Constant	-31.84***	-28.86***	-40.36***
	(-8.26)	(-7.58)	(-8.79)
Observations	307	307	322
Constant	-31.84***	-28.86***	-40.36***
	(-8.26)	(-7.58)	(-8.79)
Observations	307	307	322

t statistics in parentheses

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

Table F9: Regression table

Δ Issue Distance	H1a	H1b	h1c
Coalition_Dyad	41.27***	33.94***	
	(25.02)	(20.32)	
Popularity	0.114	-1.453**	3.569***
	(0.11)	(-3.06)	(23.27)
Coalition_Dyad × Popularity	-10.47***		
	(-7.13)		
Experience_Log+1	5.472***	7.562***	3.580***
	(4.92)	(3.45)	(4.48)
Coalition_Dyad × Experience_Log+1		-24.29***	
		(-8.63)	
Not_a_Coalition_Dyad(*ref._ H1a, H1b*)			
No_Conflict Coalition	-30.70***	-28.93***	10.41***
	(-19.95)	(-24.59)	(4.95)
Conflict_Coalition(*ref._ H1a, H1b*)			53.88***
			(6.62)
GDP	1.657***	1.712***	-0.614***
	(6.56)	(6.57)	(-3.56)
Misery_Index	0.441***	0.383***	0.523***
	(5.57)	(3.81)	(3.96)
ENPS	0.173***	0.162***	0.416***
	(7.07)	(4.96)	(11.12)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	2.456***	2.101***	-2.461**
	(7.26)	(5.40)	(-3.04)
Ideological_Position_(*ref._ =_ same_ side*)	2.379***	2.399***	3.389***
	(4.67)	(3.93)	(3.80)
Constant	-29.45***	-25.97***	-41.98***
	(-8.07)	(-7.67)	(-9.90)
Observations	307	307	322

t statistics in parentheses

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

Δ Issue Distance	H1a	H1b	h1c
Coalition_Dyad	42.12***	32.88***	
	(23.61)	(19.78)	
Popularity	0.709	-1.116**	3.639***
	(0.68)	(-2.82)	(10.29)
Coalition_Dyad × Popularity	-10.39***		
	(-6.68)		
Little_Experience	-0.499	-1.139	-0.857
	(-0.60)	(-0.72)	(-0.37)
Lots_of_Experience	2.813***	4.519*	2.616
	(3.76)	(2.38)	(1.91)
Coalition_Dyad × Little_Experience		-3.538*	
		(-2.41)	
Coalition_Dyad× Lots_of_Experience		-13.36***	
		(-6.17)	
Not_a_Coalition_Dyad(*ref._ H1a, H1b*)			
No_Conflict Coalition	-31.31***	-28.83***	10.40***
	(-15.26)	(-16.68)	(4.16)
Conflict_Coalition(*ref._ H1a, H1b*)			54.15***
			(6.67)
GDP	1.658***	1.831***	-0.614***
	(7.49)	(9.75)	(-4.07)
Misery_Index	0.435***	0.350*	0.550***
	(5.06)	(2.29)	(4.10)
ENPS	0.193***	0.175***	0.431***
	(7.54)	(7.17)	(10.52)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	2.259***	2.128***	-2.485**
	(6.03)	(5.68)	(-3.02)
Ideological_Position_(*ref._ =_ same_side*)	2.768***	2.294***	3.752***
	(5.65)	(3.95)	(3.80)
Constant	-30.95***	-26.99***	-43.51***
	(-8.25)	(-7.96)	(-9.84)
Observations	307	307	322

t statistics in parentheses

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

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SI G   Different operationalizations of popularity

To present an alternative for our ranked popularity measure, Tables G11 and G13 demonstrates the models using a continuous variable, being the sum of the party-dyads polled vote share averaged out over 6 months. Using this alternative measure does not change our results.

To control for the fact that the effects of the polls could be driven by the newly presented manifesto too, Tables G12 and G13 shows respectively that our results are robust using the average predicted vote share during the electoral cycle.

Table G11: Regression table

Y: Δ Issue Distance	H1a	H1b	H1c
Coalition_Dyad	33.04***	32.08***	
	(20.88)	(19.68)	
Popularity	0.0261	0.0354	0.0649***
	(0.83)	(1.64)	(5.61)
Coalition_Dyad × Popularity	-0.0773		
	(-1.68)		
Experience	4.126***	5.800***	3.121***
	(3.92)	(4.07)	(4.07)
Coalition_Dyad × Experience		-18.14***	
		(-8.87)	
Not_a_Coalition_Dyad_(*ref._H1c*)			
No_Conflict Coalition	-33.47***	-27.28***	8.045***
	(-22.59)	(-32.25)	(3.79)
Conflict_Coalition(*ref_H1a,_H1b*)			50.32***
			(6.16)
GDP	1.509***	1.864***	-0.611*
	(6.40)	(7.17)	(-2.45)
Misery_Index	0.478***	0.579***	0.411**
	(5.08)	(6.69)	(3.11)
ENPS	0.205***	0.179***	0.407***
	(6.49)	(4.04)	(9.04)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	2.628***	2.554***	-1.662*
	(7.67)	(6.69)	(-2.13)
Ideological Position_(*ref._=_same_side*)	2.364***	1.988***	3.386***
	(4.05)	(4.38)	(3.56)
Constant	-33.11***	-33.89***	-38.83***
	(-8.27)	(-7.29)	(-8.49)
Observations	307	307	322

t statistics in parentheses

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

Table G12: Regression table

Y: Δ Issue Distance	H1a	H1b	H1c
Coalition_Dyad	16.66***	27.52***	
	(3.72)	(13.56)	
Popularity	0.114***	0.0945**	-0.0937***
	(3.59)	(3.12)	(-3.81)
Coalition_Dyad × Popularity	0.157		
	(1.56)		
Experience	-3.173*	3.958**	1.440
	(-2.00)	(2.75)	(1.16)
Coalition_Dyad × Experience		-21.56***	
		(-8.84)	
Not_a_Coalition_Dyad_(*ref._H1c*)			
No_Conflict Coalition	-19.35***	-18.77***	-1.829
	(-4.40)	(-10.12)	(-1.20)
Conflict_Coalition(*ref_H1a,_H1b*)			15.26*
			(2.18)
GDP	1.137***	1.068***	-0.306
	(6.70)	(4.74)	(-1.53)
Misery_Index	0.589***	0.799***	0.523***
	(4.95)	(5.97)	(6.16)
ENPS	-0.118*	-0.163*	-0.0161
	(-2.34)	(-2.57)	(-0.64)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	1.758***	1.321**	1.323***
	(4.44)	(2.95)	(4.33)
Ideological Position_(*ref._=_same_side*)	3.741***	4.233***	5.232***
	(5.93)	(5.32)	(9.57)
Constant	-13.85**	-11.75*	-9.495***
	(-3.28)	(-2.43)	(-4.21)
Observations	455	455	439

t statistics in parentheses

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

Table G13: Regression table

Y: Δ Issue Distance	H1a	H1b	H1c
Coalition_Dyad	13.65***	27.24***	
	(4.09)	(11.84)	
Popularity	0.446	0.121	-0.0135
	(0.61)	(0.20)	(-0.03)
Coalition_Dyad × Popularity	7.259**		
	(2.99)		
Experience	-2.227**	3.799*	1.161
	(-2.97)	(2.40)	(0.97)
Coalition_Dyad × Experience		-22.64***	
		(-8.19)	
Not_a_Coalition_Dyad_(*ref._H1c*)			
No_Conflict Coalition	-21.28***	-18.45***	-1.390
	(-7.38)	(-9.03)	(-0.99)
Conflict_Coalition(*ref_H1a,_H1b*)			15.32*
			(2.15)
GDP	1.131***	1.045***	-0.296
	(5.96)	(4.81)	(-1.57)
Misery_Index	0.543***	0.764***	0.459***
	(6.03)	(5.99)	(5.63)
ENPS	-0.103	-0.177**	0.0200
	(-1.83)	(-2.61)	(0.83)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	0.935**	0.728	1.286***
	(2.95)	(1.62)	(4.00)
Ideological Position_(*ref._=_same_side*)	3.927***	4.299***	5.308***
	(5.96)	(5.47)	(10.19)
Constant	-8.911*	-5.463	-13.69***
	(-2.01)	(-1.04)	(-7.04)
Observations	455	455	439

t statistics in parentheses

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

SI H Regression results with party dyads with $>10\%$, $>25\%$, and $>40\%$ vote share

An alternative hypothesis is that small parties behave different than large parties. We therefore re-ran our analysis leaving out all party dyads that together have less than 10, 25, and 40 percent of the vote share. Tables H14, H15, and H16 demonstrate that the results of the main analyses are robust.

Table H14: Regression table: Party Dyads with >10%,

Y: Δ Issue Distance	H1a	H1b	H1c
Coalition_Dyad	56.21***	33.48***	
	(8.72)	(5.67)	
Popularity	-0.613	-1.448*	-1.368***
	(-0.48)	(-2.07)	(-11.23)
Coalition_Dyad × Popularity	-19.81***		
	(-10.43)		
Experience	2.564**	5.485**	2.811***
	(2.64)	(2.90)	(15.37)
Coalition_Dyad × Experience		-22.83***	
		(-8.13)	
Not_a_Coalition_Dyad_(*ref._H1c*)			
No_Conflict Coalition	-30.85***	-25.34***	9.108***
	(-5.04)	(-4.25)	(3.66)
Conflict_Coalition(*ref_H1a,_H1b*)	0	0	49.17***
			(5.97)
GDP	1.569***	1.691***	-0.721*
	(5.47)	(4.73)	(-2.47)
Misery_Index	0.382***	0.382***	0.437*
	(3.64)	(3.41)	(2.42)
ENPS	0.151***	0.164***	0.287***
	(6.11)	(6.11)	(8.27)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	2.792***	2.229***	-1.613
	(8.32)	(5.10)	(-1.89)
Ideological Position_(*ref._=_same_side*)	3.465***	3.096***	4.583***
	(6.36)	(4.19)	(8.22)
Constant	-26.85***	-26.38***	-26.68***
	(-6.91)	(-7.53)	(-5.99)
Observations	299	299	275

t statistics in parentheses

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

Table H15: Regression table: Party Dyads with >25%

Y: Δ Issue Distance	H1a	H1b	H1c
Coalition_Dyad	43.91***	32.54***	
	(5.23)	(5.62)	
Popularity	0.951	-0.595	-2.970*
	(0.55)	(-0.43)	(-2.13)
Coalition_Dyad × Popularity	-11.05*		
	(-2.38)		
Experience	1.510	7.636*	2.234
	(0.65)	(2.33)	(1.14)
Coalition_Dyad × Experience		-22.11***	
		(-4.90)	
Not_a_Coalition_Dyad_(ref._H1c)			
No_Conflict Coalition	-31.37***	-28.14***	13.11***
	(-4.82)	(-4.66)	(4.46)
Conflict_Coalition(ref_H1a,_H1b)			55.96***
			(7.16)
GDP	1.480***	1.659***	-0.647**
	(3.54)	(3.81)	(-2.67)
Misery_Index	0.489*	0.487*	0.909***
	(2.32)	(2.40)	(4.94)
ENPS	0.0816	0.0482	0.608***
	(0.99)	(0.98)	(16.41)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	2.557***	2.514***	-3.245**
	(3.41)	(3.80)	(-3.03)
Ideological Position_(ref._=_same_side)	2.457	1.491	4.195**
	(1.70)	(1.04)	(3.25)
Constant	-23.75***	-19.90***	-50.98***
	(-4.94)	(-6.17)	(-8.57)
Observations	250	250	140

t statistics in parentheses

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

Table H16: Regression table: Party Dyads with >40%

Y: Δ Issue Distance	H1a	H1b	H1c
Coalition_Dyad	24.08	32.80***	
	(1.36)	(4.19)	
Popularity	1.723	1.817	-10.87
	(0.56)	(0.66)	(-1.29)
Coalition_Dyad × Popularity	0.395		
	(0.04)		
Experience	2.491	6.324	-0.438
	(0.65)	(1.66)	(-0.06)
Coalition_Dyad × Experience		-25.42**	
		(-2.73)	
Not_a_Coalition_Dyad_(*ref._H1c*)			
No_Conflict Coalition	-33.44***	-33.49***	-7.443
	(-3.98)	(-4.28)	(-1.56)
Conflict_Coalition(*ref_H1a,_H1b*)			46.28***
			(5.13)
GDP	1.344*	1.405*	-0.812
	(2.31)	(2.45)	(-0.71)
Misery_Index	0.145	0.0913	1.537
	(0.52)	(0.34)	(1.75)
ENPS	0.180	0.149	0.0355
	(1.21)	(1.08)	(0.16)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	1.904	1.469	10.26**
	(1.46)	(1.15)	(3.19)
Ideological Position_(*ref._=_same_side*)	1.090	0.755	13.96**
	(0.53)	(0.38)	(2.69)
Constant	-26.36*	-23.63*	-26.19
	(-2.17)	(-2.12)	(-1.80)
Observations	202	202	35

t statistics in parentheses

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

SI I   Table with government termination due to conflict and increase issue distance

Proto-Coalition	Period in Government	Cabinet Name	Country	Reason to Terminate Coalition
Progressive Party & Independence Party	1995–1999	Oddsson II	Iceland	Unknown
Progressive Party & Independence Party	1999–2003	Oddsson III	Iceland	Unknown
The Alliance & Left Green Movement	2009–2013	Sigurdardottir II	Iceland	Unknown
Christian Democratic Party & People's Party for Freedom and Democracy	1986–1989	Lubbers II	the Netherlands	Policy Difference: Motion of VVD faction on decreasing travel costs
People's Party for Freedom and Democracy & Labour Party People's Party for Freedom and Democracy & Democrats '66 Labour party & Democrats '66	1998–2002	Kok II	the Netherlands	Policy Difference: Srebrenica
People's Party for Freedom and Democracy & Christian Democratic Party People's Party for Freedom and Democracy & List Pim Fortuyn Christian Democratic Party & List Pim Fortuyn	2002–2003	Balkenende I	the Netherlands	Intra-party conflict (LPF)

Note: Highlighted rows indicate a government termination due to a policy conflict.

Proto-Coalition	Period in Government	Cabinet Name	Country	Reason to Terminate Coalition
People's Party for Freedom and Democracy & Christian Democratic Party People's Party for Freedom and Democracy & Democrats '66 Christian Democratic Party & Democrats '66	2003–2006	Balkenende II	the Netherlands	Policy difference: Elected mayor
Social Democratic Party of Germany & The Greens	2002–2005	Schroeder II	Germany	Intern party conflict (Greens)
Austrian Freedom Party & Austrian Social Democratic Party	1986–1987	Vranitzky I	Austria	Intra-party conflict (FPÖ)
Austrian People's Party & Austrian Social Democratic Party	1997–2000	Klima I	Austria	Internal conflict
Austrian People's Party & Austrian Freedom Party	2000–2003	Schuessel I	Austria	Intra-party conflict (FPÖ)
Labour Party & Family of the Irish	1982–1987	Fitzgerald II	Ireland	Policy Difference: Restrictions on contraception
Soldiers of Destiny & Progressive Democrats	2002–2007	Ahern II	Ireland	Internal conflict

Note: Highlighted rows indicate a government termination due to a policy conflict.

SI J Analyzes with disaggregated measure of conflict

To account for the fact that a particular type of coalition conflict drives our analyses, Tables J17[9], J18, and J19 estimate the results without cases where respectively coalition government terminated due to conflict with parliament, based on policy, or intra-party reasons as coded by Bergman et al. (2013). Do note that in our cases, none of the terminated coalitions due to personal conflict led to new elections (for the results with no cases of known personal conflict, see Table J20). The results (limited to the year 2000) demonstrate that our findings hold regardless of the type of conflict.

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[9]Note: Due to unsufficient observations, testing H1b in Table J17 is not possible.

Table J17: Regression table: No Parliamentary Conflict

Y: Δ Issue Distance	H1a	H1b	H1c
Coalition_Dyad	42.16***	0	
	(22.05)		
Popularity	-0.226	-4.400***	4.505***
	(-0.21)	(-13.20)	(15.53)
Coalition_Dyad × Popularity	-11.44***		
	(-5.83)		
Experience	4.339***	-4.024***	2.650***
	(4.68)	(-3.37)	(4.12)
Coalition_Dyad × Experience		-8.816***	
		(-6.39)	
Not_a_Coalition_Dyad_(ref._H1c)			
No_Conflict Coalition	-29.87***	-3.261***	10.61***
	(-13.60)	(-8.24)	(5.58)
Conflict_Coalition(ref_H1a,_H1b)			53.96***
			(6.70)
GDP	1.630***	7.640***	-0.639***
	(5.89)	(66.84)	(-6.29)
Misery_Index	0.377***	1.727***	0.556***
	(3.90)	(43.20)	(4.66)
ENPS	0.164***	-0.364***	0.412***
	(4.54)	(-36.84)	(9.79)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	2.078***	0	-2.542**
	(5.47)		(-3.13)
Ideological Position_(ref._=_same_side)	2.560***	-10.60***	3.218***
	(4.46)	(-24.64)	(3.39)
Constant	-26.62***	0	-42.71***
	(-6.00)		(-10.33)
Observations	300	300	312

t statistics in parentheses

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

Table J18: Regression table: No Policy Conflict

Y: Δ Issue Distance	H1a	H1b	H1c
Coalition_Dyad	41.38***	34.02***	
	(25.52)	(20.01)	
Popularity	0.0252	-1.462**	3.577***
	(0.02)	(-2.97)	(21.84)
Coalition_Dyad × Popularity	-10.41***		
	(-6.87)		
Experience	4.169***	6.237***	2.703***
	(5.40)	(3.32)	(5.39)
Coalition_Dyad × Experience		-19.11***	
		(-8.20)	
Not_a_Coalition_Dyad_(ref._H1c)			
No_Conflict Coalition	-30.73***	-28.87***	10.55***
	(-19.82)	(-25.37)	(5.09)
Conflict_Coalition(ref_H1a,_H1b)			54.05***
			(6.67)
GDP	1.632***	1.729***	-0.622***
	(6.21)	(6.44)	(-3.73)
Misery_Index	0.433***	0.388***	0.526***
	(5.33)	(3.44)	(4.00)
ENPS	0.176***	0.161***	0.419***
	(7.15)	(4.76)	(11.38)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	2.446***	2.079***	-2.494**
	(7.44)	(5.19)	(-3.09)
Ideological Position_(ref._=_same_side)	2.406***	2.425***	3.392***
	(4.73)	(3.81)	(3.84)
Constant	-29.44***	-25.99***	-42.17***
	(-8.06)	(-7.38)	(-9.99)
Observations	307	307	322

t statistics in parentheses

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

Table J19: Regression table: No Intraparty Conflict

Y: Δ Issue Distance	H1a	H1b	H1c
Coalition_Dyad	41.38***	34.02***	
	(25.52)	(20.01)	
Popularity	0.0252	-1.462**	3.577***
	(0.02)	(-2.97)	(21.84)
Coalition_Dyad × Popularity	-10.41***		
	(-6.87)		
Experience	4.169***	6.237***	2.703***
	(5.40)	(3.32)	(5.39)
Coalition_Dyad × Experience		-19.11***	
		(-8.20)	
Not_a_Coalition_Dyad_(*ref._ H1c*)			
No_Conflict Coalition	-30.73***	-28.87***	10.55***
	(-19.82)	(-25.37)	(5.09)
Conflict_Coalition(*ref_ H1a,_ H1b*)			54.05***
			(6.67)
GDP	1.632***	1.729***	-0.622***
	(6.21)	(6.44)	(-3.73)
Misery_Index	0.433***	0.388***	0.526***
	(5.33)	(3.44)	(4.00)
ENPS	0.176***	0.161***	0.419***
	(7.15)	(4.76)	(11.38)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	2.446***	2.079***	-2.494**
	(7.44)	(5.19)	(-3.09)
Ideological Position_(*ref._ =_ same_ side*)	2.406***	2.425***	3.392***
	(4.73)	(3.81)	(3.84)
Constant	-29.44***	-25.99***	-42.17***
	(-8.06)	(-7.38)	(-9.99)
Observations	307	307	322

t statistics in parentheses

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

Table J20: Regression table: No Personal Conflict

Y: Δ Issue Distance	H1a	H1b	H1c
Coalition_Dyad	41.38***	34.02***	
	(25.52)	(20.01)	
Popularity	0.0252	-1.462**	3.577***
	(0.02)	(-2.97)	(21.84)
Coalition_Dyad × Popularity	-10.41***		
	(-6.87)		
Experience	4.169***	6.237***	2.703***
	(5.40)	(3.32)	(5.39)
Coalition_Dyad × Experience		-19.11***	
		(-8.20)	
Not_a_Coalition_Dyad_(ref._H1c)			
No_Conflict Coalition	-30.73***	-28.87***	10.55***
	(-19.82)	(-25.37)	(5.09)
Conflict_Coalition(ref_H1a,_H1b)			54.05***
			(6.67)
GDP	1.632***	1.729***	-0.622***
	(6.21)	(6.44)	(-3.73)
Misery_Index	0.433***	0.388***	0.526***
	(5.33)	(3.44)	(4.00)
ENPS	0.176***	0.161***	0.419***
	(7.15)	(4.76)	(11.38)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	2.446***	2.079***	-2.494**
	(7.44)	(5.19)	(-3.09)
Ideological Position_(ref._=_same_side)	2.406***	2.425***	3.392***
	(4.73)	(3.81)	(3.84)
Constant	-29.44***	-25.99***	-42.17***
	(-8.06)	(-7.38)	(-9.99)
Observations	307	307	322

t statistics in parentheses

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

SI K   Brief description of conflict cases

To explore whether divergence in party platforms between elections causes conflict, rather than conflict causing a divergence of a party dyad, we studies the four cases of SI I in which coalition termination was known and the conflict was about a policy change instead of intra- or internal party conflicts. In each case we study, we find that the coalition government moves its position against one of the coalition partner's policy line. This coalition move leads to the conflict, as we describe for each of the cases below.

Cabinet Lubbers II, the Netherlands (1986-1989)

This cabinet terminated because the liberal-conservative (VVD) faction chair Voorhoeve filed a motion against its own party line. The VVD-minister Nijpels had proposed a new "National Environment plan" including the proposal to abolish the flat-rate travel expenses (Kabinet- Lubbers II (1986-1989) n.d.). This disagreement within the liberal conservative party let the government to propose early elections.

Cabinet Kok II, the Netherlands (1998-2002)

After the Dutch Institute of War Documentation (NIOD) released the report on the massacre of Srebrenica (July 1995), all (junior) ministers offered their resignation to the Queen. The report of the NIOD explained the role of the Dutchbat that should have protected the Muslim citizens in Srebrenica (Kabinet-Kok II (1998-2002) n.d.).

Cabinet Balkenende II, the Netherlands (2003-2006)

The Democrats '66 withdraw from the cabinet after the faction in Parliament filed a

motion of no confidence at the liberal conservative minister Verdonk. Because the cabinet did not want to fire minister Verdonk, the Democrats âĂŹ66 left the government (Kabinet-Balkenende II (2003-2006) n.d.).

Fitzgerald II, Ireland (1982-1987)

The cabinet terminated because a referendum to ease the ban on divorce was defeated in 1986, while a bill to ease restrictions on contraception, passed in 1985, was supported by Desmond O'Malley, who was expelled as a result from Fianna Fáil.

SI L   Analysis without conflict cases

It might be that divergence in party platforms between elections causes conflict, rather than conflict causing a divergence of a party dyad. We re-run the analysis without the four cases described in SI K. Table L21 demonstrates that this does not change our results.

Table L21: Regression table

Y: Δ Issue Distance	H1a	H1b	H1c
Coalition_Dyad	46.09***	37.71***	
	(22.46)	(17.27)	
Popularity	-0.0521	-1.468	3.930***
	(-0.04)	(-1.89)	(7.65)
Coalition_Dyad × Popularity	-9.147***		
	(-5.92)		
Experience	4.586***	7.250***	4.409***
	(5.75)	(3.34)	(4.72)
Coalition_Dyad × Experience		-15.37***	
		(-5.09)	
Not_a_Coalition_Dyad_(ref._H1c)			
No_Conflict Coalition	-36.83***	-34.72***	4.119***
	(-18.33)	(-19.81)	(3.47)
Conflict_Coalition(ref_H1a,_H1b)			55.73***
			(6.12)
GDP	1.610***	1.689***	-0.596***
	(4.77)	(5.36)	(-3.50)
Misery_Index	0.378***	0.332**	0.504***
	(3.37)	(2.58)	(3.90)
ENPS	0.226***	0.198***	0.478***
	(4.79)	(3.63)	(10.97)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	2.005***	1.861***	-0.781
	(4.49)	(3.74)	(-1.17)
Ideological Position_(ref._=_same_side)	2.352**	2.182**	3.312***
	(2.65)	(2.87)	(3.42)
Constant	-31.21***	-27.35***	-49.30***
	(-5.87)	(-4.92)	(-13.19)
Observations	293	293	318

t statistics in parentheses

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

SI M   Regression result of predicting conflict

It might be that the absence of popularity between coalition dyads causes conflict, rather than conflict causing a divergence of a party dyad. Table M22, therefore, demonstrates the result when we use the presence (1) or absence (0) of conflict as a dependent variable and popularity as an independent variable. Popularity does not predict conflict.

Table M22: Regression table

Y: Conflict	Model
Popularity	0.128
	(0.17)
Experience	3.311**
	(2.86)
GDP	0.109
	(1.22)
Misery_Index	0.0932
	(1.61)
ENPS	-0.0670
	(-1.75)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	-0.924***
	(-5.05)
Ideological Position_($ref._=_same\_side$)	0.815
	(1.93)
Observations	304

t statistics in parentheses

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

SI N   Pre-electoral coalition agreements

Parties in multi-party systems are hardly able to reach a majority on their own. An option to reduce post-electoral coalition bargaining costs, is to form pre-electoral coalition agreements (Golder 2006). The definitions of what constitutes such an agreement differ: from a publiclystated intention on the part of participating parties to cooperate following the election if they won enough support at the polls to form a government (Golder 2006) to a strict written document comparable to a coalition agreement (StrÃÿm, Muller, and Bergman 2008). As additional analyses, we first replicated our main results with the stricter definition. In this case, in only 3% of the elections in our sample (5 elections out of 161), parties agreed on a pre-electoral coalition agreement. The regression results based on the data provided by Strom, MuÌĹller and Bergman, shown in Table **??**, do not change our main results. The coefficient for pre-electoral coalition agreements is positive, meaning that if parties have a written pre-electoral coalition agreement, they diverge their platforms. Yet, when we look at Golders' less strict definition and use her data, pre-electoral coalition agreements are not a rare event at all: in 62 out 161 elections (40%) pre-electoral coalition agreements have been made. Although this is still only less than 5% of the total dyads in our analysis. Though our main results still do not change by using Golders' definition (see Table N24), the effect for preelectoral coalition formation is reversed.

Table N23: Regression table

Δ Issue Distance	H1a	H1b	h1c
Coalition_Dyad	41.24***	34.24***	
	(25.06)	(20.57)	
Popularity	-0.102	-1.576**	3.658***
	(-0.10)	(-2.90)	(21.47)
Coalition_Dyad × Popularity	-10.23***		
	(-6.77)		
Experience	4.240***	6.528***	2.894***
	(5.42)	(3.37)	(8.04)
Coalition_Dyad × Experience		-19.19***	
		(-8.07)	
Not_a_Coalition_Dyad(*ref._ H1a, H1b*)			
No_Conflict Coalition	-30.73***	-29.10***	9.691***
	(-19.76)	(-25.24)	(4.53)
Conflict_Coalition(*ref._ H1a, H1b*)			53.37***
			(6.58)
GDP	1.650***	1.659***	-0.694***
	(6.48)	(6.10)	(-3.53)
Misery_Index	0.445***	0.363**	0.509***
	(5.54)	(3.07)	(3.82)
ENPS	0.180***	0.166***	0.390***
	(7.39)	(5.31)	(10.13)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	2.505***	2.232***	-2.362**
	(7.41)	(5.43)	(-2.88)
Ideological_Position_(*ref._ =_ same_side*)	2.432***	2.625***	3.810***
	(4.85)	(4.03)	(4.19)
Having_a_PEC	7.104	8.544*	-2.832
	(1.93)	(2.23)	(-1.48)
Constant	-30.11***	-26.38***	-39.93***
	(-8.22)	(-7.53)	(-9.32)
Observations	307	307	322

t statistics in parentheses

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

Table N24: Regression table

Δ Issue Distance	H1a	H1b	h1c
Coalition_Dyad	49.93***	32.39***	
	(17.73)	(16.10)	
Popularity	2.849*	1.701*	7.151***
	(2.46)	(2.47)	(77.58)
Coalition_Dyad × Popularity	-15.56***		
	(-10.58)		
Experience	3.399***	7.172*	5.246***
	(6.92)	(2.17)	(10.74)
Coalition_Dyad × Experience		-18.05***	
		(-5.24)	
Not_a_Coalition_Dyad(*ref._ H1a, H1b*)			
No_Conflict Coalition	-33.73***	-31.78***	2.422
	(-13.93)	(-18.30)	(1.00)
Conflict_Coalition(*ref._ H1a, H1b*)			50.81***
			(6.40)
GDP	2.389***	2.353***	-0.634***
	(6.69)	(7.03)	(-3.61)
Misery_Index	0.198	0.0987	0.257
	(0.95)	(0.50)	(1.83)
ENPS	0.155***	0.121***	0.342***
	(4.62)	(3.90)	(6.78)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	4.043***	4.655***	-1.595
	(6.94)	(8.74)	(-1.77)
Ideological_Position_(*ref._ =_ same_ side*)	1.807**	1.595***	2.580*
	(3.14)	(3.94)	(2.31)
Having_a_PEC	-15.56***	-14.18***	-3.250*
	(-9.77)	(-8.93)	(-2.06)
Constant	-25.27***	-22.73***	-34.93***
	(-5.01)	(-4.54)	(-7.70)
Observations	233	233	244

t statistics in parentheses

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

SI O Regression Results Controlling for Duration of the Government

To control for the fact that the effects could be driven by the duration of a coalition government, Table O25 shows that our results our robust using duration of the government as an additional control.

Table O25: Regression table

Δ Issue Distance	H1a	H1b	H1c
Coalition_Dyad	43.15***	31.28***	
	(11.68)	(13.06)	
Popularity	0.543	-1.882*	3.631***
	(0.41)	(-2.47)	(7.96)
Coalition_Dyad × Popularity	-10.19***		
	(-5.83)		
Experience	3.655***	6.754***	2.761***
	(3.49)	(4.20)	(4.00)
Coalition_Dyad × Experience		-18.64***	
		(-6.88)	
Not_a_Coalition_Dyad(*ref._ H1a, H1b*)			
No_Conflict Coalition	-32.26***	-27.01***	8.116**
	(-14.82)	(-15.89)	(3.00)
Conflict_Coalition(*ref._ H1a, H1b*)			48.77***
			(5.62)
GDP	1.665***	1.854***	-0.320
	(8.63)	(6.65)	(-1.14)
Misery_Index	0.529***	0.525***	0.652***
	(4.39)	(6.07)	(3.82)
ENPS	0.230**	0.112	0.348***
	(3.03)	(1.77)	(4.44)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	2.186***	2.097***	-1.742
	(5.16)	(5.04)	(-1.86)
Ideological_Position_(*ref._ =_ same_side*)	2.737***	1.987***	3.616***
	(4.71)	(3.35)	(3.32)
Government_Duration	0.00145	0.00275**	0.00296
	(1.29)	(2.85)	(1.93)
Constant	-35.97***	-25.73***	-42.31***
	(-5.81)	(-5.58)	(-7.85)
Observations	307	307	322

t statistics in parentheses

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

SI P Different operationalizations of being on the same side ideologically

To account for possible party system differences on ideological placement, Tables P26 and P27 use two different operationalizations - looking at the mean and a median as a split-off - on whether or not parties are on the same ideological side. This does not change our results.

Table P26: Regression table: Mean as Cut-Off

Y: Δ Issue Distance	H1a	H1b	H1c
Coalition_Dyad	40.66***	33.64***	
	(35.83)	(42.61)	
Popularity	-0.932*	-1.881***	3.646***
	(-1.98)	(-6.44)	(10.59)
Coalition_Dyad × Popularity	-8.904***		
	(-6.06)		
Experience	3.501***	8.833***	1.668
	(3.69)	(4.19)	(1.77)
Coalition_Dyad × Experience		-21.40***	
		(-9.50)	
Not_a_Coalition_Dyad_(ref._H1c)			
No_Conflict Coalition	-31.94***	-29.77***	10.83***
	(-13.53)	(-54.95)	(4.94)
Conflict_Coalition(ref_H1a,_H1b)			53.71***
			(6.70)
GDP	1.678***	1.750***	-0.564**
	(10.58)	(10.99)	(-2.86)
Misery_Index	0.292**	0.119**	0.518***
	(3.21)	(3.05)	(3.76)
ENPS	0.0806*	0.0372**	0.384***
	(2.54)	(2.99)	(9.96)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	2.450***	2.634***	-2.740***
	(8.77)	(19.56)	(-3.35)
Ideological Position_(ref._=_same_side)	-3.773***	-3.902***	-2.835***
	(-14.60)	(-18.79)	(-6.33)
Constant	-16.65***	-12.12***	-35.90***
	(-6.52)	(-15.02)	(-8.72)
Observations	307	307	322

t statistics in parentheses

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

Table P27: Regression table: Median as Cut-Off

Y: Δ Issue Distance	H1a	H1b	H1c
Coalition_Dyad	41.68***	35.42***	
	(26.24)	(17.58)	
Popularity	0.0182	-1.080	3.978***
	(0.02)	(-1.78)	(10.02)
Coalition_Dyad × Popularity	-8.673***		
	(-6.03)		
Experience	2.396	6.252*	1.519
	(1.91)	(2.51)	(1.51)
Coalition_Dyad × Experience		-20.30***	
		(-6.74)	
Not_a_Coalition_Dyad_(*ref._H1c*)			
No_Conflict Coalition	-32.46***	-30.63***	9.550***
	(-19.83)	(-18.74)	(4.06)
Conflict_Coalition(*ref_H1a,_H1b*)			52.88***
			(6.26)
GDP	1.450***	1.530***	-0.469*
	(4.78)	(4.56)	(-2.00)
Misery_Index	0.352***	0.222	0.467***
	(3.78)	(1.70)	(3.33)
ENPS	0.177***	0.156***	0.389***
	(5.69)	(3.54)	(9.40)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	2.051***	2.108***	-2.636**
	(5.72)	(4.49)	(-3.03)
Ideological Position_(*ref._=_same_side*)	1.477***	1.078	-1.999***
	(3.35)	(1.57)	(-3.96)
Constant	-26.93***	-23.64***	-36.67***
	(-9.04)	(-7.47)	(-8.72)
Observations	307	307	322

t statistics in parentheses

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

SI Q   Regression results with FE model

Table Q28 demonstrates that our results are not dependent on the specific model specification we choose.

Table Q28: Regression table

Δ Issue Distance	H1a	H1b	h1c
Coalition_Dyad	34.24	28.71*	
	(1.63)	(2.34)	
Popularity	-0.645	-1.007	8.116
	(-0.11)	(-0.17)	(1.47)
Coalition_Dyad × Popularity	-6.939		
	(-0.52)		
Experience	3.118	6.893	11.77
	(0.29)	(0.55)	(1.13)
Coalition_Dyad × Experience		-15.77	
		(-1.01)	
Not_a_Coalition_Dyad(*ref._ H1a, H1b*)			
No_Conflict Coalition	-26.60*	-25.36*	5.290
	(-2.00)	(-2.00)	(0.55)
Conflict_Coalition(*ref._ H1a, H1b*)			62.79***
			(3.90)
GDP	2.756***	2.758***	-0.130
	(3.47)	(3.48)	(-0.19)
Misery_Index	0.301	0.313	0.861*
	(0.71)	(0.72)	(2.09)
ENPS	0.156	0.120	0.161
	(0.66)	(0.52)	(0.61)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	7.000***	6.893***	2.003
	(3.57)	(3.61)	(0.63)
Ideological_Position_(*ref._ =_ same_side*)	8.580*	8.453*	6.958
	(2.16)	(2.08)	(1.98)
Constant	-44.81**	-42.26**	-48.06*
	(-3.02)	(-2.83)	(-2.01)
Observations	355	355	349

t statistics in parentheses

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

SI R   Regression results of Error Correction Model

Table R29 demonstrates that our results are not dependent on the specific model specification we choose.

Table R29: Regression table

Δ Issue Distance	H1a	H1b	h1c
Δ_Issue_Distance_Lag	-0.558***	-0.559***	-0.607***
	(-8.88)	(-8.96)	(-13.92)
Coalition_Dyad	22.80	17.95*	
	(1.70)	(1.98)	
Popularity	-2.357	-2.844	1.700
	(-0.82)	(-1.03)	(0.57)
Coalition_Dyad × Popularity	-6.053		
	(-0.75)		
Experience	-5.782	-2.645	-9.810**
	(-1.47)	(-0.71)	(-2.95)
Coalition_Dyad × Experience		-15.90	
		(-1.70)	
Not_a_Coalition_Dyad(*ref._ H1a, H1b*)			
No_Conflict Coalition	-20.09*	-17.43	-6.797
	(-2.08)	(-1.90)	(-1.33)
Conflict_Coalition(*ref._ H1a, H1b*)			17.52*
			(2.03)
GDP	-0.292	-0.170	-1.136**
	(-0.69)	(-0.39)	(-2.73)
Misery_Index	-0.387	-0.388	-0.193
	(-1.46)	(-1.46)	(-0.72)
ENPS	0.219	0.208	0.258
	(1.62)	(1.59)	(1.60)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	1.830	1.678	1.044
	(1.79)	(1.66)	(0.57)
Ideological_Position_(*ref._ =_ same_ side*)	11.17***	11.13***	11.31***
	(4.38)	(4.33)	(4.53)
Constant	20.77	21.85	16.62
	(1.65)	(1.77)	(1.09)
Observations	355	355	349

t statistics in parentheses

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

SI S   Regression result with country-wise deletion

Tables **??** till **??** demonstrate that our results are not driven by processes related to a specific country. We replicated the models while deleting the observations of one country at the time.

Table S30: Regression table: No Austria

Δ Issue Distance	H1a	H1b	h1c
Coalition_Dyad	39.66***	38.85***	
	(23.14)	(21.09)	
Popularity	-0.347	-1.079	5.051***
	(-0.32)	(-1.67)	(18.81)
Coalition_Dyad × Popularity	-4.930***		
	(-3.30)		
Experience	3.843***	5.844**	3.067***
	(3.68)	(3.24)	(6.82)
Coalition_Dyad × Experience		-19.21***	
		(-7.33)	
Not_a_Coalition_Dyad(*ref._ H1a, H1b*)			
No_Conflict Coalition	-35.66***	-32.97***	10.49***
	(-22.99)	(-25.61)	(5.08)
Conflict_Coalition(*ref._ H1a, H1b*)			55.09***
			(6.12)
GDP	1.499***	1.621***	-0.475**
	(6.63)	(4.81)	(-2.85)
Misery_Index	0.346**	0.371**	0.641***
	(3.14)	(2.99)	(4.60)
ENPS	0.130***	0.136**	0.441***
	(4.08)	(2.72)	(11.02)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	2.219***	1.895***	-2.342**
	(5.91)	(4.08)	(-2.92)
Ideological_Position_(*ref._ =_ same_side*)	1.926**	1.967**	3.507***
	(3.09)	(2.58)	(3.71)
Constant	-23.19***	-23.38***	-47.24***
	(-4.81)	(-4.27)	(-10.84)
Observations	283	283	314

t statistics in parentheses

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

Table S31: Regression table: No Belgium

Δ Issue Distance	H1a	H1b	h1c
Coalition_Dyad	41.38***	34.02***	
	(25.52)	(20.01)	
Popularity	0.0252	-1.462**	3.577***
	(0.02)	(-2.97)	(21.84)
Coalition_Dyad × Popularity	-10.41***		
	(-6.87)		
Experience	4.169***	6.237***	2.703***
	(5.40)	(3.32)	(5.39)
Coalition_Dyad × Experience		-19.11***	
		(-8.20)	
addlinespace Not_a_Coalition_Dyad(*ref._ H1a, H1b*)			
No_Conflict Coalition	-30.73***	-28.87***	10.55***
	(-19.82)	(-25.37)	(5.09)
Conflict_Coalition(*ref._ H1a, H1b*)			54.05***
			(6.67)
GDP	1.632***	1.729***	-0.622***
	(6.21)	(6.44)	(-3.73)
Misery_Index	0.433***	0.388***	0.526***
	(5.33)	(3.44)	(4.00)
ENPS	0.176***	0.161***	0.419***
	(7.15)	(4.76)	(11.38)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	2.446***	2.079***	-2.494**
	(7.44)	(5.19)	(-3.09)
Ideological_Position_(*ref._ =_ same_ side*)	2.406***	2.425***	3.392***
	(4.73)	(3.81)	(3.84)
Constant	-29.44***	-25.99***	-42.17***
	(-8.06)	(-7.38)	(-9.99)
Observations	307	307	322

t statistics in parentheses

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

Table S32: Regression table: No Denmark

Δ Issue Distance	H1a	H1b	h1c
Coalition_Dyad	40.02***	34.89***	
	(12.52)	(12.33)	
Popularity	3.989**	1.831***	6.825***
	(2.94)	(7.22)	(14.93)
Coalition_Dyad × Popularity	-6.985***		
	(-5.10)		
Experience	5.299***	10.34**	1.378
	(6.92)	(3.22)	(1.44)
Coalition_Dyad × Experience		-19.60***	
		(-6.07)	
Not_a_Coalition_Dyad(*ref._ H1a, H1b*)			
No_Conflict Coalition	-36.92***	-34.25***	11.37***
	(-17.12)	(-13.12)	(4.43)
Conflict_Coalition(*ref._ H1a, H1b*)			60.84***
			(8.42)
GDP	0.787*	1.051**	-0.0491
	(2.02)	(2.98)	(-0.22)
Misery_Index	0.377	0.352	1.004***
	(1.85)	(1.92)	(6.34)
ENPS	0.260***	0.244***	0.622***
	(4.69)	(4.78)	(11.43)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	0.602	0.649	-6.264***
	(1.13)	(1.40)	(-6.46)
Ideological_Position_(*ref._ =_ same_side*)	0.853	0.492	-0.401
	(0.84)	(0.58)	(-0.36)
Constant	-34.76***	-32.02***	-58.41***
	(-6.28)	(-6.64)	(-10.85)
Observations	219	219	213

t statistics in parentheses

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

Table S33: Regression table: No Germany

Δ Issue Distance	H1a	H1b	h1c
Coalition_Dyad	34.92***	28.98***	
	(18.38)	(19.63)	
Popularity	-5.664***	-2.221***	2.815***
	(-8.56)	(-12.60)	(10.49)
Coalition_Dyad × Popularity	-9.410***		
	(-6.55)		
Experience	3.643***	5.510***	3.019***
	(4.82)	(3.70)	(6.33)
Coalition_Dyad × Experience		-21.55***	
		(-13.06)	
Not_a_Coalition_Dyad(*ref._H1a, H1b*)			
No_Conflict Coalition	-25.61***	-22.85***	8.042**
	(-15.38)	(-23.20)	(2.98)
Conflict_Coalition(*ref._H1a, H1b*)			42.58***
			(4.88)
GDP	2.022***	1.702***	-0.577*
	(7.21)	(7.35)	(-2.05)
Misery_Index	-0.171**	0.346***	0.459***
	(-2.88)	(4.17)	(3.41)
ENPS	0.00335	0.158***	0.356***
	(0.20)	(6.52)	(12.03)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	0.919**	2.222***	-1.744
	(3.08)	(6.96)	(-1.84)
Ideological_Position_(*ref._=_same_side*)	0.553	2.385***	2.489***
	(1.07)	(4.62)	(3.65)
Constant	0	-24.81***	-36.24***
		(-10.57)	(-9.34)
Observations	268	268	310

t statistics in parentheses

* *p* < 0.05, ** *p* < 0.01, *** *p* < 0.001

Table S34: Regression table: No Ireland

Δ Issue Distance	H1a	H1b	h1c
Coalition_Dyad	41.38***	34.02***	
	(25.52)	(20.01)	
Popularity	0.0252	-1.462**	3.577***
	(0.02)	(-2.97)	(21.84)
Coalition_Dyad × Popularity	-10.41***		
	(-6.87)		
Experience	4.169***	6.237***	2.703***
	(5.40)	(3.32)	(5.39)
Coalition_Dyad × Experience		-19.11***	
		(-8.20)	
Not_a_Coalition_Dyad(*ref._ H1a, H1b*)			
No_Conflict Coalition	-30.73***	-28.87***	10.55***
	(-19.82)	(-25.37)	(5.09)
Conflict_Coalition(*ref._ H1a, H1b*)	0	0	54.05***
			(6.67)
GDP	1.632***	1.729***	-0.622***
	(6.21)	(6.44)	(-3.73)
Misery_Index	0.433***	0.388***	0.526***
	(5.33)	(3.44)	(4.00)
ENPS	0.176***	0.161***	0.419***
	(7.15)	(4.76)	(11.38)

Table S35: Regression table: No Netherlands

Δ Issue Distance	H1a	H1b	h1c
Coalition_Dyad	57.70***	29.07**	
	(3.90)	(2.95)	
Popularity	-0.363	-1.397	4.377**
	(-0.26)	(-1.03)	(2.59)
Coalition_Dyad × Popularity	-19.37**		
	(-2.66)		
Experience	8.857*	7.485	4.585**
	(2.05)	(1.57)	(2.74)
Coalition_Dyad × Experience		8.523	
		(0.90)	
Not_a_Coalition_Dyad(*ref._ H1a, H1b*)			
No_Conflict Coalition	-37.19***	-39.06***	0.0576
	(-3.92)	(-3.82)	(0.02)
Conflict_Coalition(*ref._ H1a, H1b*)			59.94***
			(5.48)
GDP	2.512***	2.602***	-0.266
	(6.10)	(6.40)	(-0.93)
Misery_Index	0.289*	0.185	0.914***
	(2.05)	(1.43)	(5.52)
ENPS	-0.00142	0.159	-0.117
	(-0.01)	(1.01)	(-1.52)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	5.288***	6.472***	1.092
	(6.18)	(6.00)	(1.05)
Ideological_Position_(*ref._ =_ same_side*)	0.942	1.789	3.186**
	(0.71)	(1.40)	(2.70)
Constant	-21.03*	-32.28**	-12.12*
	(-2.06)	(-3.15)	(-2.26)
Observations	234	234	286

t statistics in parentheses

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

Table S36: Regression table: No Norway

Δ Issue Distance	H1a	H1b	h1c
Coalition_Dyad	40.17***	33.75***	
	(24.05)	(22.75)	
Popularity	-0.957	-2.498***	2.092***
	(-0.99)	(-9.86)	(13.32)
Coalition_Dyad × Popularity	-10.19***		
	(-6.75)		
Experience	4.934***	7.076***	-1.595***
	(6.23)	(4.19)	(-5.00)
Coalition_Dyad × Experience		-19.88***	
		(-9.70)	
Not_a_Coalition_Dyad(*ref._H1a, H1b*)			
No_Conflict Coalition	-30.05***	-28.45***	10.03***
	(-17.49)	(-31.58)	(4.66)
Conflict_Coalition(*ref._H1a, H1b*)			52.69***
			(6.81)
GDP	2.071***	1.996***	-0.641**
	(8.83)	(8.69)	(-2.63)
Misery_Index	0.452***	0.354***	0.337*
	(6.64)	(3.88)	(2.55)
ENPS	0.152***	0.147***	0.410***
	(5.36)	(5.51)	(9.84)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	2.322***	2.109***	-1.522
	(6.98)	(6.31)	(-1.81)
Ideological_Position_(*ref._ =_same_side*)	3.017***	3.180***	5.463***
	(7.28)	(6.66)	(5.91)
Constant	-28.07***	-24.87***	-39.74***
	(-7.73)	(-9.89)	(-9.00)
Observations	276	276	253

t statistics in parentheses

* *p* < 0.05, ** *p* < 0.01, *** *p* < 0.001

Table S37: Regression table: No Sweden

Δ Issue Distance	H1a	H1b	h1c
Coalition_Dyad	38.30***	34.95***	
	(18.84)	(19.69)	
Popularity	-2.358*	-2.755***	1.828**
	(-2.07)	(-4.63)	(2.74)
Coalition_Dyad × Popularity	-7.784***		
	(-4.13)		
Experience	3.851***	7.609***	5.596***
	(4.97)	(4.82)	(6.63)
Coalition_Dyad × Experience		-21.48***	
		(-9.12)	
Not_a_Coalition_Dyad(*ref._ H1a, H1b*)			
No_Conflict Coalition	-29.23***	-27.18***	10.70***
	(-16.54)	(-29.58)	(4.21)
Conflict_Coalition(*ref._ H1a, H1b*)			52.69***
			(6.13)
GDP	1.627***	1.888***	-1.076***
	(5.13)	(5.58)	(-4.52)
Misery_Index	0.416***	0.484***	0.485***
	(4.10)	(4.80)	(3.45)
ENPS	0.139***	0.143***	0.480***
	(4.76)	(4.12)	(10.22)
Number_of_Cabinet_Parties	2.737***	2.077***	-1.269
	(7.11)	(4.67)	(-1.32)
Ideological_Position_(*ref._ =_same_side*)	3.901***	3.573***	3.339*
	(7.27)	(5.56)	(2.37)
Constant	-25.52***	-25.74***	-46.64***
	(-6.28)	(-7.38)	(-8.54)
Observations	255	255	234

t statistics in parentheses

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

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