

The Second-Order Election Model in an Enlarged Europe

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The Second-Order Election Model in an Enlarged Europe

On 1 May 2004, the European Union (EU) welcomed its new member states from Central and Eastern Europe. This paper considers to what extent one of the most widely tested and supported theories of voting behavior in Western Europe, the second-order election model, applies in the enlarged EU. We test the model using election data from the new member states and find that voters do not cast protest votes against their incumbent national governments in second-order elections, that is, elections where voters believe little to be at stake. This finding contradicts one of the model's basic propositions and runs counter to the empirical reality in the old member states, with potentially significant implications for inter- and intra-institutional politics in the EU.

Key words: Elections, enlargement, European Parliament, institutional relations, voting behavior.

On 1 May 2004, the European Union (EU) welcomed its new member states from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE).¹ Due in part to the short period of time that has elapsed, our understanding of the impact of the most recent enlargement remains limited. Another reason for this shortcoming lies in an implicit tendency to assume that while its size has changed, the EU's fundamental dynamics have remained constant. Following this premise, some research forces theory to travel prematurely, without actually testing its applicability in the new member states.

Departing explicitly from this practice, this paper considers to what extent one of the most widely tested and supported theories of voting behavior in Western Europe, the second-order election (SOE) model, applies in the enlarged EU. We test the model using election data from the new member states and find that voters do not cast protest votes against their incumbent national governments in second-order elections, that is, elections where voters believe little to be at stake (such as local or European Parliament elections). This finding, however, contradicts one of the model's basic propositions and runs counter to the empirical reality in the old member states, and thus challenges the practice of assuming that the enlarged EU is the same as before, just bigger.

On the contrary, it suggests significant potential repercussions for EU governance. One important implication of the SOE model is that national opposition parties tend to be successful in elections to the European Parliament (EP) (Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Reif, 1984, 1985; Marsh and Franklin, 1996; Marsh 1998). If voters in the new member states

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diverge from the practice of casting protest votes against national-level government parties, however, inter-institutional dynamics between the Council of Ministers and the EP are likely to be affected. After all, the notion of systematically opposing “centers of gravity” in Council and Parliament has been a widespread assumption in the study of institutional politics in the EU (on the center-of-gravity approach, see Gross and Sigelman, 1984 and Manow, Schäfer, and Zorn, 2005). This logic implies a systematic “divided government” system featuring a distinct inter-institutional government-opposition dynamic (Ringe, 2005: 23).

As Manow et al. (2005) demonstrate, the centers of gravity of the Council and EP have indeed diverged significantly ever since the first direct EP elections in 1979, with the EP’s center of gravity lying consistently to the left of the Council’s during the 1980s and 1990s. Figure 1 displays this trend using the Laver and Hunt data on the “increase service vs. cut taxes” index, which ranges from 1 (increase services) to 20 (cut taxes).

[FIGURE 1, “The Center of Gravity of the Council, the Parliament and the EPP- and PES-party group (EPP: European People’s Party; PES: Party of the European Socialists),” ABOUT HERE]

Our finding that government parties do not lose systematically in second-order elections in CEE could have potentially important consequences for EU decision-making in this regard. After all, the two institutions are equal partners in the legislative process of the EU under the co-decision procedure, which effectively constitutes the main legislative procedure of the EU today. If we assumed that citizens of the new member states lodge protest votes, then conflicting centers of gravity would likely persist. This is what the SOE model and the existing literature suggests (Hix and Marsh, 2004 and 2005). A lack

of protest voting in the new member states, however, would entail a rapprochement between the centers of gravity of the Council and EP and, consequently, a greater likelihood of inter-institutional cooperation.

Identifying how the new member states differ from the old member states is imperative for understanding EU politics. It is essential to test theory before applying it to the new member states, especially with regard to the questions of how enlargement affects inter-institutional dynamics in the EU. The research presented here proceeds with this task in mind. In the following section, the SOE model is laid out in detail, along with a series of testable hypotheses. The model is specified and hypotheses operationalized in the third section. In the fourth section, the model is tested using data drawn from the June 2004 EP election, the first (and only) one involving the new member states. Finding these results inconclusive, we test the model in section five using local election data, which the model considers to be comparable to EP election data. Finding the results to differ systematically from the SOE model's expectations, we conclude by identifying what these differences mean for EP elections and the EU in general.

Theory: The Second-Order Election Model

The SOE model, proposed and developed by Karlheinz Reif and Hermann Schmitt (1980), suggests that there is a qualitative difference between different types of elections depending on the perception of what is at stake. First-order elections are perceived by citizens to have the highest stakes. These usually determine the distribution of power at the most salient level of political decision making. In Western Europe, where the model has been primarily developed and successfully tested, first-order elections are

general elections at the country level that establish, either directly or indirectly, executive governments. In contrast, second-order elections are elections where citizens believe little, or less, to be at stake, primarily because they do not determine the composition of government at the first-order election level. Because citizens interpret the importance of elections with a common yardstick—the election’s relationship to the center of power, which is considered to be the country’s executive—a unifying theory of electoral outcomes such as the SOE model is possible. This theoretical link between the two levels of elections has been successfully tested in contests for local office in Western Europe, elections of the non-executive head of state, and elections to the EP in Western Europe (Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Marsh, 1998; for a recent theoretical and empirical reassessment of the original model see Norris and Reif, 1997; also see Reif, 1984 and 1985 and Marsh, 1998).

Despite the fact that their differences should make first-order and second-order elections two separate contests, the outcome of second-order elections is significantly determined by the situation in the first-order election arena and cannot be separated from it; this is why second-order elections are also referred to as second-order national elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Reif 1984 and 1985). EP elections, for example, do not revolve around questions relating to the process and outcome of EU integration or membership, but reflect the traditional platforms of countrywide political parties while downplaying differences on integration (Hix, 1999).

The literature on second-order elections differentiates between three motivations for voting. The first is *strategic* or *instrumental* voting, where voters choose parties or candidates other than their preferred ones, motivated by the intention to affect the

outcome of the election (Blais et al., 2001). The literature on strategic voting typically requires two conditions for a vote to be considered strategic. First, the voter must choose a party or candidate other than her most preferred one. And second, her decision must be a result of her beliefs about the election's likely outcome (Blais et al., 2001). This type of voting has also been referred to as "voting with the head." In first-order elections, voters may be afraid to "waste their votes" by choosing a minor party that has no impact on government formation. Therefore, voters strategically choose a less-preferred party with a better chance of winning (McKelvey and Ordeshook, 1972; Alvarez and Nagler, 2000).

The second type of voting is *sincere* voting, which is a voter's genuine choice for the party of her preference. When voting sincerely, individuals choose parties that they feel closest to ideologically. These parties best represent the voter's interests, although they may not be able to best realize them because of the unlikelihood of their party being part of the new government. Reif and Schmitt describe this as voters choosing to vote "with their hearts" rather than "with their heads" (Reif, 1984: 8; Reif and Schmitt, 1980).

Finally, individuals can vote "expressively" to make a statement or convey a message. In the context of the SOE model, this type of voting takes the form of protest votes or "votes with the boot" (Oppenhuis et al., 1996). These votes express temporary dissatisfaction with government party behavior in the first-order arena. Second-order elections resemble US mid-term elections in this regard, where voters send a message to their first-order executives without immediate repercussions to its composition (Born, 1990; Campbell 1960, 1991, and 1993; Erikson, 1988; Kernell, 1977; Tufte, 1975).

Because voters consider little to be at stake in second-order elections, they tend to behave differently than in first-order elections. First, they may not turn up to vote at all,

as they do not consider the second-order election to be relevant (enough) to warrant their active participation. Second, they may vote sincerely, rather than strategically; voters in second-order elections are more likely to vote for the party they feel closest to. This favors smaller parties that usually suffer in first-order election because of the wasted-vote mentality. Finally, due to the perceived lack of direct policy consequences, citizens feel free to cast expressive votes to send a message to the first-order executive, without actually changing its partisan configuration.

These three characteristics of second-order elections have been tested in a number of empirical studies, which focus on the applicability of the model itself and the sources of small party gains and government party losses. These analyses consistently demonstrate that turnout in second-order elections is lower than in first-order elections (Reif, 1984 and 1985; Curtice, 1989; Niedermayer, 1990), although large variations exist across countries and from one election to the next (Van Der Eijk et al., 1996). They have also found party size to constitute an important predictor of vote choice in second-order elections (Curtice, 1989; Marsh, 1998; Miller, 1988; Anderson and Ward, 1997; Norris and Reif, 1997), while the impact of government status has been both confirmed (Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Reif, 1984, 1985; Marsh and Franklin, 1996; Marsh, 1998) and dismissed (Curtice, 1989; Oppenhuis et al., 1996).

One recurrent theme has been the temporal location of the second-order election in the first-order election cycle and its impact on the election outcome. Reif suggested that the occurrence of protest votes depends on the first-order government's popularity, and that this could be tested via an election-cycle model that reflects a generalized pattern of government support between country-level elections (Reif, 1984 and 1985). He uses

several basic models to describe the government popularity cycle where first-order governments lose votes until the mid-term and then improve as the next first-order election approaches. This cyclical model has been tested more recently by Marsh and Franklin (1996), whose analysis of all EP elections up to 1994 partially supports Reif's suggestions.

Oppenhuis et al. (1996) also maintain that the temporal location of the second-order election influences its outcome, but for different reasons than what Reif proposes. They begin by distinguishing between *throw-away* and *marker-setting* elections, arguing that the degree to which politicians in the first-order arena consider an election to be an appropriate reflection of the relative popularity of the party in the first-order arena determines whether the electorate casts sincere or strategic votes. In throw-away elections, which take place concurrent with or shortly after a first-order election, voting is generally sincere, because the election is irrelevant as a source of information about the standing of parties in the first-order arena at that point in time. In this sense, the second-order election is insignificant, and voters feel free to vote sincerely (Oppenhuis et al., 1996; Van Der Eijk et al., 1996).

In contrast, voters have a strong reason to engage in expressive or protest voting in elections with significant temporal distance from the previous first-order election, because these elections provide important clues about the relative popularity of parties in the first-order arena at a time when the marker set by the preceding first-order election has faded. These marker-setting elections allow voters to indicate their relative support of the political situation in the first-order arena at a time when the attention paid by politicians and the media is high, without actually changing the configuration of

executive power (Anderson and Ward, 1996). This pattern differs from the one suggested by Reif, since the mid-term does not constitute the most hostile point in time for government parties. Yet, it also stresses the differentiation between sincere and protest voting as motivations for electoral choice in second-order elections.

The existing literature, however, has tended to muddle the two concepts. On a theoretical level, this may be partially due to the fact that Reif and Schmitt indicate the possibility of both sincere and protest voting in second-order elections in their original article, without making a clear conceptual distinction in their empirical investigations. Similarly, Heath et al., while acknowledging the differences between sincere and protest voting, maintain that “qualitative research may well be the best way of deciding between these alternative interpretations of the meaning of votes in second-order elections” (Heath et al., 1999: 407).

Two of the three original propositions of the SOE model, however, namely that smaller parties will do better and first-order government parties will suffer losses, make a clear differentiation between sincere and protest voting. According to this conceptualization, protest votes are directed at first-order government parties, while sincere votes harm large parties, which do not benefit from the wasted vote mentality in second-order elections, as they do in first-order elections. Therefore, it is possible to separate the two motivations behind vote choice in second-order elections in a quantitative framework.²

² The literature on second-order elections tends to associate expressive or protest voting with incumbent government parties. Only a few studies have conceptually differentiated between protest votes against government parties and protest votes against “whatever party [voters] might have voted for if national political power had been directly at stake” (Van Der Eijk et al., 1996). Two studies recently sought to disentangle the relationship. Ferrara and Weishaupt (2004) investigate the relationship between government status and party size by including the appropriate interaction terms in their statistical analysis of party performance in the EP elections held in 1989, 1994, and 1999. While the relevant coefficients are

Following the three central propositions of the SOE model, we hypothesize the following. As a result of protest votes:

Hypothesis 1: Parties with executive power in the first-order arena will suffer a decline in support in second-order elections relative to the previous first-order election.

As a consequence of an increase in sincere voting:

Hypothesis 2: Second-order elections will be characterized by a redistribution of support away from parties that received a large share of support in the preceding first-order election toward parties that received a small share of support in the first-order election.

We also test the third proposition of the SOE model and hypothesize that, because voters believe less is at stake in second-order elections:

Hypothesis 3: Second-order elections will be characterized by lower turnout.

A series of additional hypotheses specifies possible interactive relationships between the primary explanatory variables, which will fine-tune our results. With regard to government status and party size, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 4: Large government parties will suffer a greater decline in support than small government parties.

We also test how the temporal location of the second-order election affects government parties. Here, the literature provides two alternative hypotheses. According to Reif (1984 and 1985):

Hypothesis 5a: Government parties will suffer their greatest losses at the midpoint of the election cycle.

statistically significant, they are substantively miniscule. Kousser (2004) provides a more useful analysis. He differentiates between small and large opposition parties and shows that it is not necessarily small parties that gain from protest votes, but that government's major competitors do.

In contrast, Oppenhuis et al. (1996) suggest that marker-setting elections, where government parties tend to suffer from an increasing number of protest votes, occur at the end of the election cycle:

Hypothesis 5b: Government parties will suffer their greatest losses toward the end of the election cycle.

Oppenhuis et al. (1996) propose, moreover, that the timing of the election affects the occurrence of sincere voting, meaning that the temporal location of the election interacts with party size. Specifically, they maintain that throw-away elections take place in the early stages of the election cycle. This leads to:

Hypothesis 6: Large parties will suffer a greater decline of support in the early stages of the election cycle.

Our explicit distinction between protest and sincere voting and the inclusion of the relevant interaction terms in our model provide the potential for a more refined empirical analysis of the SOE model. The model can be confirmed in its entirety only if all three primary SOE hypotheses (Hypotheses 1-3) are supported. The most serious challenge to the model would be a negation of Hypothesis 3, indicating that voters do care about the elections and consider much to be at stake, even if Hypotheses 1 and/or 2 were confirmed.

Similarly, if Hypotheses 1 or 2 are not confirmed, even if Hypotheses 3 held, then the SOE model does not fit CEE. The finding that voters cast neither protest nor sincere votes would imply that these voters consider something to be at stake, even if they do not

consider the elections to be as significant as first-order elections (hence the lower turnout). As a result, their voting behavior in second-order elections would be strategic, which is different than what is found in Western Europe and hardly in line with the SOE model.

If Hypotheses 1 and 3 hold, while Hypothesis 2 is negated, then CEE voters do not vote sincerely in second-order elections, but use them to “vote with the boot” (Oppenhuis et al., 1996). That is, they use second-order elections to cast protest votes against the first-order government, while neglecting their own most-preferred party.

Finally, if Hypotheses 2 and 3 were confirmed, while Hypothesis 1 was not, then CEE voters do not engage in protest voting. Instead, they vote sincerely in second-order elections. This finding would suggest that voters do not believe first-order politicians are attentive to SOE results. The combination of not considering much to be at stake in the election and feeling that their message of protest is ignored at the first-order level indicates that CEE second-order elections are what Oppenhuis et al. (1996) label “throw-away” elections; that is, voters feel free to support their preferred party without strategic or purely expressive motivations.

Operationalization and Model Specification

In accordance with most other analyses using this model, we consider parliamentary or general elections to be first-order elections. Also consistent with the existing literature, we assume that local and EP elections are second-order elections. Our analysis is divided into two steps. First, in testing Hypothesis 3, we use voter turnout as the dependent variable to measure public interest. We carry out the analysis by

comparing average turnout in general and local elections on a country-by-country basis using data from the eight new Central and Eastern European EU member states.³

We test the other hypotheses in a multivariate regression framework using local election results in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, and Lithuania and EP election results in all new CEE member states. The unit of observation is an *election pair-party*, where *election pair* is defined as a general election and the subsequent local/EP election and *party* is a party that ran in a given election pair. In theory, the number of observations per election pair is limited only by the number of parties that ran in both elections. Similarly, only the number of available general and local/EP election combinations limits the total number of election pairs. In reality, however, the total number of observations is limited by the availability of general and local/EP election results broken down for individual parties. These limitations are not entirely negative, however. Many parties did not run at each level and are, therefore, not included in the data. This gives each party the possibility of winning or losing, regardless of what other parties in the same election do. This ensures a degree of independence in the data, which is complimented by the use of robust cluster-adjusted standard errors.

The dependent variable used to measure party support is the absolute change in the share of the vote a party receives in a local or EP election relative to the previous general election (DFFRNC). Executive power (GOVT) operationalizes Hypothesis 1; it

³ Like much of the research on this topic, the research presented here uses data aggregated at the country level. The issues associated with the use of aggregated data, as opposed to individual-survey data, are a recurring part of this literature. Because some of the data is not available at the individual level, the literature has generally used aggregated data, corroborated with survey results when possible. Some types of survey data would be problematic for this study, however. For example, asking respondents whether they plan on voting is a less accurate measure of an election's importance than measuring the actual voter turnout, as we do, because there is a chance the individual may not actually vote; in other words, actions speak louder, or are a better measure, than words. Heath et al., 1999 address some of the weaknesses of survey data (pp. 394-395).

has a value of 1 if the party is a member of the country's government coalition at the time of the local/EP election and 0 if it is not.⁴ We operationalize support in Hypothesis 2 with the percentage of votes received in the last general election of each party-election pair (SIZE).

As with earlier tests of the SOE model, we expect the degree to which citizens support their government to affect the electoral outcome. Rather than measuring support indirectly by capturing party performance (e.g., GDP growth and unemployment rates), the research presented here models a government's popularity with the electoral cycle model. This model makes use of past research that shows government support to fluctuate consistently between elections (Van Der Eijk et al., 1996). Capturing this fluctuation by modeling it as a function of time between elections permits government support to be included via a more direct and general manner than if one were to include a host of independent variables designed to control for party performance—each of which brings its own conceptual and methodological problems with it. Because the two approaches attempt to measure the same concept, government support, incorporating both in a single model would lead to serious overspecification of the SOE model. Therefore, we only use the electoral cycle model and not a set of party performance variables.

This is done through the CYCLE variable, which ranges from -.5 to .5, with the midpoint set at 0, depending on the date of the local/EP election relative to the previous

⁴ These parties were identified through 'Zarate's Political Collections - European Governments', URL (consulted April 25, 2004): <http://www.terra.es/personal2/monolith/00europa.htm>. Party name changes were identified and tracked using this site. Party churn within governments between elections, although present in some cases, isn't considered a significant issue by either us or the existing literature (Kousser, 2004: 11).

and upcoming general elections.⁵ For example, if the local or EP election occurs exactly one year after the preceding general election in a four-year election cycle, the variable's value is -.25.

The dynamics of the specific fluctuations in government support between elections is contested, however. Past research shows both quadratic and cubic functions to reasonably fit the results of EP elections between 1979 and 1994, while Oppenhuis et al.'s differentiation between throw-away and marker-setting elections suggests a linear relationship (Reif 1984 and 1985; Marsh and Franklin, 1996; Oppenhuis et al., 1996). We run a separate regression analysis for each of these three different models.

The first is a function where government support changes linearly from one general election to the next; this is simply the CYCLE variable from above. The second model expects support for the government to peak during the election followed by a drop in support with a trough at the mid-point of the election cycle. The second half of the cycle is characterized by an increase in support, peaking at the next general election.

Previous analyses of this conceptualization use a quadratic specification of the election cycle: $(\text{CYCLE})^2$ (Reif, 1984; Marsh, 1998). Although this certainly captures high levels of support at each general election and the trough of support in between, it also models the levels of support as decreasing and increasing rapidly. This is plotted as a dotted line in Figure 2. It seems more appropriate, however, to model government support as modestly increasing or decreasing around the time of an election for two reasons. First, immediately prior to an election, individual preferences have been largely determined, leading to little change of support for parties so close to an election. Second,

⁵ On the use of the election cycle as a measure of government support see Miller and Mackie, 1973 and Tufte, 1975. The popularity-cycle phenomenon has also been tested with regard to domestic politics in the UK (Stray and Silver, 1983), Germany (Dinkel, 1977), and France (Parodi 1983; Reif 1983).

parties enjoy a honeymoon period directly after an election, where support remains relatively high rather than dropping quickly. The solid line in Figure 2 represents such an improved model.

[FIGURE 2, “Support-cycle functions,” HERE]

Therefore, we use a cosine function, keeping in mind that beta coefficients will provide the slope and peak of the level of support, while the intercept specifies the lowest level of support. We test both of these models, as well as a CYCLE³ model.

We include a number of interaction terms and their constitutive parts to operationalize Hypotheses 4-6. SIZE*GOVT accounts for differences in expressive voting depending on government party size (Hypothesis 4). CYCLE*GOVT will determine if protest voting is a function of the timing of the local/EP election (Hypothesis 5a, Hypothesis 5b). SIZE*CYCLE allows us to establish if the temporal location of the local/EP election impacts the occurrence and extent of sincere voting (Hypothesis 6).

We test the following models, which vary in their conceptualization of the election-cycle variable:

$$(1) DFFRNC = a + \beta_1 SIZE + \beta_2 GOVT + \beta_3 CYCLE + \beta_4 SIZE*GOVT + \beta_5 SIZE*CYCLE + \beta_6 GOVT*CYCLE + \beta_7 SIZE*GOVT*CYCLE$$

$$(2) DFFRNC = a + \beta_1 SIZE + \beta_2 GOVT + \beta_3 CYCLE + \beta_4 CYCLE^2 + \beta_5 SIZE*GOVT + \beta_6 SIZE*CYCLE^2 + \beta_7 GOVT*CYCLE^2 + \beta_8 SIZE*GOVT*CYCLE^2$$

$$(3) DFFRNC = a + \beta_1 SIZE + \beta_2 GOVT + \beta_3 CYCLE + \beta_4 CYCLE^2 + \beta_5 CYCLE^3 + \beta_6 SIZE*GOVT + \beta_7 SIZE*CYCLE^3 + \beta_8 GOVT*CYCLE^3 + \beta_9 SIZE*GOVT*CYCLE^3$$

$$(4) DFFRNC = a + \beta_1 SIZE + \beta_2 GOVT + \beta_3 (\cos(\pi*CYCLE)) + \beta_4 (\cos(\pi*CYCLE))^2 +$$

$$\beta_5 \text{SIZE} * \text{GOVT} + \beta_6 \text{SIZE} * \cos(\pi * \text{CYCLE})^2 + \beta_7 \text{GOVT} * \cos(\pi * \text{CYCLE})^2 + \beta_8 \text{SIZE} * \text{GOVT} * \cos(\pi * \text{CYCLE})^2$$

We run these four models twice, the second time substituting GOVT with OPP (i.e. opposition status), which has a value of 1 if the party is in opposition at the time of the local/EP election and 0 if it is not. While the OPP dummy is simply the opposite of GOVT, the inclusion of interaction terms means that the value of those interaction terms differs depending on which government status variable is included. For example, the value of GOVT*CYCLE is not simply the opposite of OPP*CYCLE. To draw conclusions about the effect each has on the electoral outcome, therefore, separate analyses must be conducted.

In collecting data, locating general and EP election results was straightforward, as there are several easily accessible election data archives, which benefit from the country's election commissions' repositories. Using these data sources, we collected the percentage of votes received for each party in each general election and the dates of those elections, as well as voter turnout information. Local election data proved more difficult to acquire as they are not collected by the above-mentioned archives and many country's electoral commission offices either do not collect or make available local results.⁶ When the data were accessible, it was usually through the country's electoral commission Web site and only on a district-by-district basis. For each party in each election, we aggregated its votes across all districts.

In districts where parties ran as part of a coalition, we divided the coalition's vote total by the number of parties in the coalition and added that value to the individual

⁶ When the data were not accessible, attempts were made to contact relevant government authorities and election specialists, but these attempts usually proved unsuccessful, either because we did not receive replies or the individuals could not suggest sources beyond the ones we had already tried.

parties' total. For example, if a coalition of two parties received 1000 votes, then each individual party was credited with 500 votes. General election coalitions, however, were not split; instead, the local election vote totals of the coalition members were summed together as if the coalition had also run at the local level.⁷ Ultimately, we use 12 election pairs from four countries and have a total of 156 observations (see Table 1 for details). Local election dates and voter turnout were also collected.

[TABLE 1, "Local election pairs and data sources," ABOUT HERE]

Results Using 2004 EP Data

Given our focus on the impact of enlargement on governance in the EU, the ideal data to test the second-order election model for CEE is the outcome of elections to the EP. This approach, however, yields a small number of cases, since the new member states participated in just one EP election. Our sample includes only 70 parties, meaning that all findings are preliminary and must be treated with care. For example, there are only seven cases available to test Hypothesis 3.

Comparing the average turnouts for general and local elections reveals that citizens cast ballots in much higher numbers for general elections. We can conclude, therefore, that general elections are first-order elections and local elections are of a

⁷ Parties that merged or split between elections were treated in the same way. This method of dividing the votes is not ideal for obvious reasons. Identifying the exact distribution of votes between the different coalition parties is impossible, however, and no alternative methods of vote allocation seem inherently preferable. Simply removing these cases from the analysis would also create problems, most importantly inefficiency and potential bias. Because of the sheer number of votes large parties received, however, we consider the total votes derived from coalition splitting to be relatively minor. The number of small parties that have vote totals largely derived from coalitions is relatively small, especially compared to the overall number of small parties, and should not bias the results.

second-order importance. This is consistent with both western European elections and the SOE model.

[TABLE 2, “Second-Order Election Effects on Voter Turnout in EP Elections,” ABOUT
HERE]

Testing the other hypotheses in a regression framework finds none of the variables to be statistically significant in any of the four models, as Table 3 shows.⁸

[TABLE 3, “Regression Results, Models 1-4 with EP election data,” ABOUT
HERE]

Given the small number of cases, however, it would seem inappropriate to accept the null hypothesis that the SOE model does not apply in the new EU member states. With a larger N, it might very well be confirmed. For the time being, however, we consider the results using EP election data to be inconclusive.

Yet, EP elections are not the only type of second-order election. Heath et al. (1999), for example, compare and empirically test the second-orderness of local elections in the United Kingdom and EP elections. They find differences between local and EP elections, most importantly that voters in EP elections are more expressive and less instrumental when casting a ballot than voters in local elections. Nonetheless, the authors conclude that their evidence lends “considerable support for Schmitt and Reif’s theory of

⁸ It is important to note that one cannot draw conclusions regarding the statistical significance of an interaction term based on the regression coefficient alone (Kam and Franzese, 2005). Therefore, we established the statistical significance of each variable’s marginal effect along all other predictors as well, which confirms their statistical insignificance. Due to the large number of figures this and the following analysis would produce, however, we only present those where marginal effects are statistically significant.

second-order elections” (Heath et al., 1999: 406), and that “a single general framework, therefore, can encompass both sorts of elections” (Heath et al., 1999: 406). Based on this premise of comparability, we use local-election data as a proxy for a suitable number of EP cases in what follows. This increases the n used for the analysis and replaces data that might be considered less representative (i.e., the first EP election in these new member states may be “too unique” to draw conclusions from) with more “normal” or representative election data (i.e., results from multiple local elections throughout the 1990s).

Results Using Local Election Data

Our analysis of voter turnout provides results that unambiguously support Hypothesis 3. As Table 4 illustrates, the average turnout in second-order elections in seven CEE states declines, ranging from 8 percent in Poland to 27 percent in the Czech Republic. This is consistent with the results using EP-election data.

[TABLE 4, “Second-Order Election Effects on Voter Turnout in Local Elections,”
ABOUT HERE]

The results of the regression analysis, however, suggest that the SOE model does not apply to the new EU member states. Most important, our analysis seriously questions the notion that CEE voters cast protest ballots in second-order elections, while indicating that party choice in CEE second-order elections is determined by the sincerity of voting.

[TABLES 5 and 6 ABOUT HERE]

Tables 5 and 6 present the results of the different regression models. They are not, however, sufficient presentations of the effects of interactive terms since they fail to establish what the varying effects of one constitutive term of a given interaction set are at particular values of the other constitutive term (Kam and Franzese, 2005). Accordingly, we present the marginal effects for the significant variables in graphical form, with 95 percent confidence intervals indicating the level of certainty regarding these effects. The figures are derived from Models 1 and 4, which better fit the data than Models 2 and 3, as the higher R²s indicate.

The marginal effects of GOVT and OPP fail to achieve statistical significance in any of the models, meaning there is no evidence for the occurrence of protest votes in CEE second-order elections; we can thus dismiss Hypothesis 1. The marginal effects of SIZE*GOVT and SIZE*OPP are also indistinguishable from zero, which contradicts Hypothesis 4. Finally, government or opposition status is not conditioned by the temporal location of the election, since the marginal effects of the interaction terms GOVT*CYCLE and OPP*CYCLE are statistically insignificant. Therefore, Hypothesis 5a and Hypothesis 5b are disconfirmed.

Instead, party size constitutes the most important predictor of vote choice in second-order elections, which confirms Hypothesis 2. Both the cosine and the linear models show a negative relationship between party size and the share of votes won in a second-order election.⁹ This applies to government as well as opposition parties, who lose

⁹ It has been raised that this negative relationship may be due to the fact that more parties exist only at the local level, meaning there are additional choices for voters. These alternative parties drain votes from parties that also run at the general-election level. Therefore, the argument goes, the number of local-level

almost identical shares of votes in second-order elections at different points in the election cycle.

As the regression coefficients in Tables 5 and 6 indicate, the marginal effect of SIZE is statistically significant when first- and second-order elections take place at the same time. In this case, each additional percentage point won in the first-order election corresponds with a .82 percentage point decrease in the second-order vote share for opposition parties in the cosine model and a .83 percentage point decrease for government parties. In the linear model, the coefficients are insignificant, meaning that a party's size has no impact on its electoral success in the second-order election when it coincides with a first-order election.

The impact of party size on the electoral success of government and opposition parties varies across the course of the election cycle, however, as Figures 3 through 6 illustrate.¹⁰

[FIGURES 3-6 ABOUT HERE]

Figures 3 and 4 present the effects of party size on opposition and government parties at different points of the election cycle based on the linear model (Model 1).

While size did not have any effect on the electoral success of either opposition or government parties when first- and second-order elections take place at the same time, it

parties should be included as a control variable. There are two reasons why this is not done. First, we do not agree that the number of parties (i.e., supply) affects the vote distribution (i.e., demand). Instead, we reverse the causal direction of the argument and assume that voters and their preferences (i.e., demand) affects the number of parties at each level (i.e., supply). Second, including a variable for the number of local parties implies that all local parties ran in all local districts, which is not the case.

¹⁰ The effects are statistically significant when the upper and lower bounds of the 95 percent confidence intervals are both above or below the zero line.

does have a negative effect on their second-order vote shares as the election cycle progresses. One quarter into the election cycle, for instance, each additional percentage point won in the previous first-order election corresponds with a .40 percentage point decrease in the share of votes won in the second-order election for opposition parties and a .43 percentage point decrease for government parties. At the mid-point of the election cycle, these losses amount to .57 percentage points for opposition and .64 percentage points for government parties. Finally, at the end of the election cycle, for example one-tenth before the next general election, opposition parties lose .82 percentage points and government parties .97 percentage points.

Figure 5 (opposition parties) and Figure 6 (government parties) show the effects of SIZE along different points of the election cycle based on the cosine model (Model 4). They depict an upward sloping trend, meaning that the losses due to party size decrease throughout the course of the election cycle. One quarter into the election cycle, for example, each additional one percentage point won in the previous first-order election entails a .68 percentage point decrease in the second-order vote share for both government and opposition parties, down from the initial levels of .83 percentage points, and a .82 percentage point decrease for government and opposition parties, respectively, when first- and second-order elections coincide. At the mid-point of the election cycle, opposition parties lose .54 percentage points and government parties lose .52 percentage points. This trend continues linearly toward the end of the election cycle for opposition parties, which lose .32 percentage points for each percentage point they won in the previous first-order elections when the election takes place nine-tenths into the election cycle. The results for government parties, however, are no longer statistically significant

at this point, as Figure 6 shows: about four-fifths into the election cycle, the upper and lower bounds of the confidence intervals are no longer both below the zero line, meaning that the marginal effects of size fail to achieve statistical significance.

The linear and cosine models provide contradictory evidence regarding the impact of the election cycle on SIZE's marginal effect: While the linear model suggests that the negative marginal effect of SIZE increases toward the end of the election cycle, the cosine model indicates that it decreases. This latter finding supports Hypothesis 6, which predicts that large parties suffer a greater decline of support in the early parts of the election cycle, when electoral contests are "throw-away" elections (Oppenhuis et al. 1996).

Conclusion

The mixed evidence from Models 1 and 4 and the consistently significant, negative impact of party size on electoral fortunes in second-order elections, as well as the absence of protest votes, challenges the applicability of the SOE model in CEE and suggests that the current literature is in need of revision, or at least further testing. The finding that voters in CEE do not cast protest votes against their incumbent national governments in second-order elections is especially noteworthy. While voters clearly believe less to be at stake in these elections, as the SOE model would suggest, they do not use them to vote "with the boot." Instead, they feel free to vote sincerely, perhaps because they do not believe that a protest message would actually be received at the first-order level. Oppenhuis et al. refer to these types of elections as "throw-away" elections, but this label carries a distinct negative connotation that does not appear justified when

voters support their genuinely preferred party, without strategic or purely expressive motivations. Moreover, these elections do have consequences within the arena in which they occur, whether it is policy decisions at the local level or legislative decisions at the EU-level. Instead, we prefer the term *pure-preference election*, which maintains the essence of Oppenhuis et al.'s concept, but without the implicit normative judgment.

Additional research is needed to confidently explain why pure-preference elections occur in CEE. A possible explanation may lie in the role of ethnic parties. CEE's significant and concentrated minority populations often vote for ethnic parties, regardless of the election level. Since ethnic identities travel across election levels, it makes sense that supporters of these types of parties would cast similar votes in all elections. Consequently, little, if any, protest voting would occur.

Alternatively, pure-preference votes may be a result of the overthrow of communism. Research has shown that party vote totals in parliamentary and presidential elections are significantly affected by a party's relationship to 1989 (Tucker, 2004). Simply put, parties that grew out of anti-communist movements tend to be successful when the economy is doing well, and parties that evolved from the ruling parties of the Soviet era generally do better when the economy suffers. Although this suggests a distinct strategic element and has only been tested at the countrywide level, it demonstrates that CEE voters are aware of and take into account a party's history when casting a ballot. It would not be surprising, therefore, if party history was also relevant in the second-order arena and if voters engaged in pure-preference voting based on a party's relationship with the past. This may also be colored by individual attitudes toward personal freedoms, how to teach about the communist era in public schools, and the issue

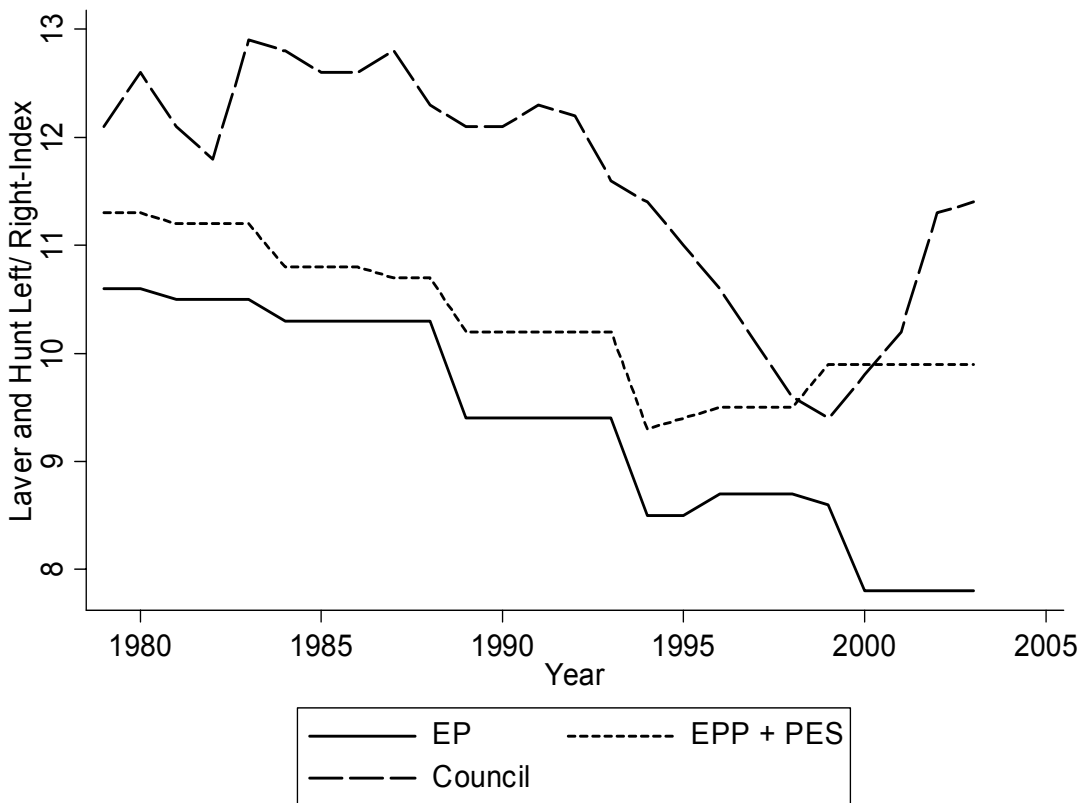
of religion--all relatively stable preferences--in light of 1989. In sum, voters cast ballots based on their general, and relatively stable, positions vis-à-vis 1989 and not on how changes since the last election relate to those positions. The insignificance of incumbency for post-communist election outcomes could explain or be related to the lack of protest voting found in our research. To confidently test and conclude that this is the case, however, more research is required that bridges the literatures and uses comprehensive data sets.

Although firm explanations must still be sought, the potential implications of the lack of protest votes in CEE regarding the inter- and intra-institutional effects of enlargement are significant. As mentioned earlier, and as proposed by the SOE model, Western European voters lodge protest votes in EP elections. Consequently, the dominant party family in the Council, as represented by the member states' governments, systematically differs from that in the EP, as represented by its party groups. This creates a divided government situation and increases the difficulty of establishing actionable agendas. Voters in the new member states do not lodge protest votes, however, meaning that their EP members are less likely to belong to the opposition party "at home." Despite the relatively small number of members from the new member states, this dynamic could alleviate the consequences of opposing centers of gravity in Council and Parliament.

Enlargement may also affect political dynamics within the EP. With the citizens in the new member states voting for their national government parties and voters of old member states supporting their national opposition, the EP might develop two conflicting, regional centers of gravity. This effect might be minimal, due to the small number of EP members from CEE, but is worth noting and investigating nonetheless.

Finally, this research underscores the need to test the applicability of existing theory before extending it to the new member states. In an effort to avoid serious theoretical and substantive misrepresentations, identifying how new and old members might differ is imperative for understanding politics in an enlarged EU.

Figure 1: The Center of Gravity of the Council, the Parliament and the EPP and PES party group (EPP: European People's Party; PES: Party of the European Socialists)



Source: Manow et al., 2005

Figure 2: Support-cycle Functions

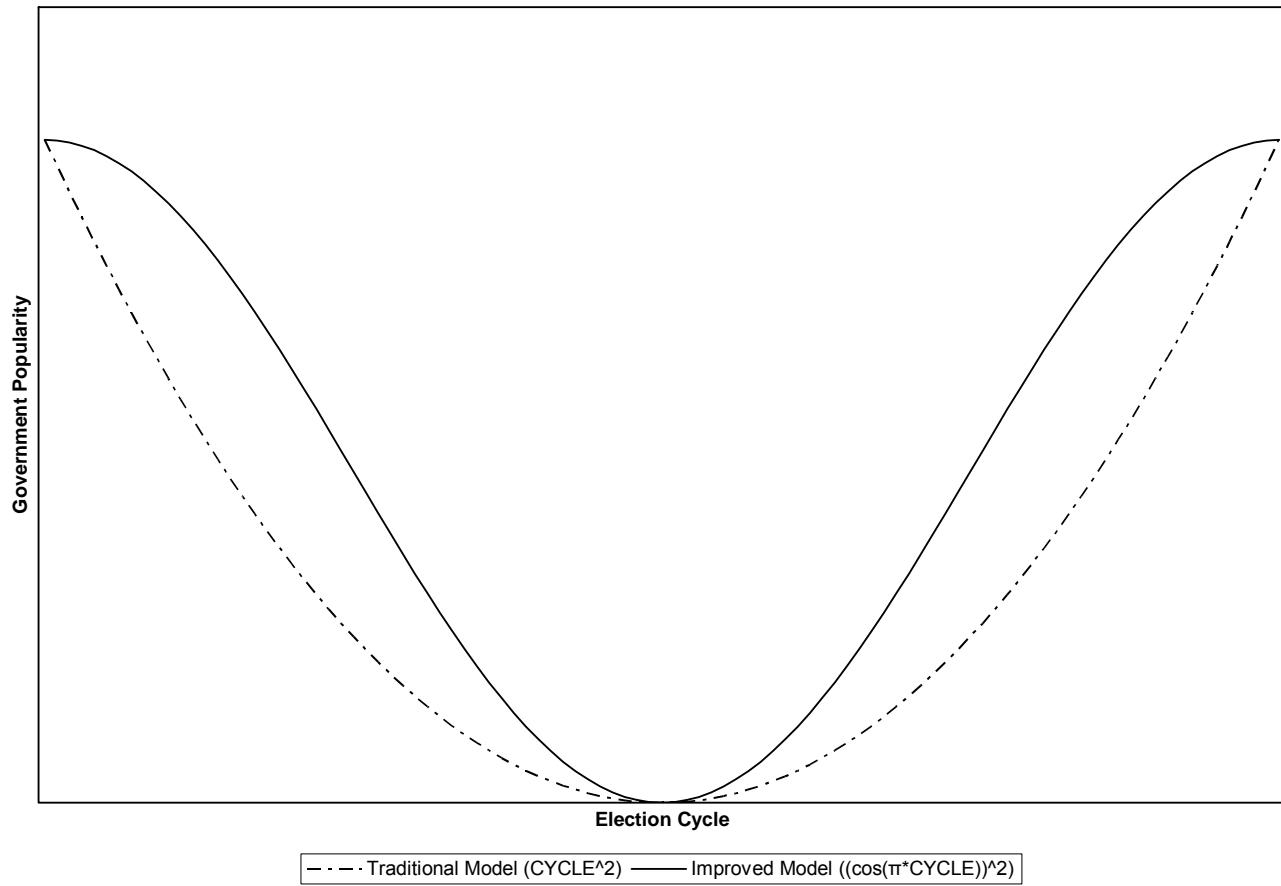


Table 1: Local Election Pairs and Data Sources

State	Election Pairs	Number of Observations
Czech Republic	1998 ^a -1998 ^b	13
Czech Republic	2002 ^a -2002 ^b	25
Estonia	1995 ^a -1996 ^c	8
Estonia	1999 ^a -1999 ^c	11
Estonia	1999 ^a -2002 ^c	7
Hungary	1994 ^a -1994 ^d	15
Hungary	1998 ^a -1998 ^d	14
Hungary	2002 ^a -2002 ^d	10
Lithuania	1992 ^a -1995 ^e	4
Lithuania	1996 ^a -1997 ^e	19
Lithuania	1996 ^a -2000 ^e	19
Lithuania	2000 ^a -2002 ^e	11
Total		156

Sources: ^a Project on Political Transformation and the Electoral Process in Post-Communist Europe, <http://www.essex.ac.uk/elections> (for general electoral results of respective states; accessed April 20, 2004).

^b Volby.cz, <http://www.volby.cz> (election subdivision of the Czech Statistical Office and used for local election results; accessed March 29, 2004).

^c Estonian National Electoral Committee, <http://www.vvk.ee> (for local election results; accessed April 12, 2004).

^d Hungarian Election Commission, <http://valtor.valasztas.hu/valtort/jsp/index.jsp> (for local level elections; accessed April 3, 2004).

^e Republic of Lithuania's Central Electoral Committee, <http://www.vrk.lt/index.eng.html> (for local election results; accessed March 15, 2004).

Table 2: Second-Order Election Effects on Voter Turnout in EP Elections

State	Average General Election (%)	2004 EP Election (%)	Difference
Czech Republic	70	28	-42
Estonia	63	27	-36
Hungary	61	39	-22
Latvia	77	41	-36
Lithuania	62	46	-16
Poland	47	21	-26
Slovakia	77	28	-49

Table 3: Regression Results, Models 1-4 with EP election data

DV	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
	DFFRNC	DFFRNC	DFFRNC	DFFRNC
Constant	.030 (.049)	.086* (.033)	.226 (.115)	.013 (.013)
SIZE	-.586 (.347)	-.242 (.183)	-.13 (.147)	-.020 (.149)
GOVT	-.029 (.126)	.003 (.081)	.018 (.070)	.027 (.055)
CYCLE	-.015 (.088)	-.218 (.097)	-1.071 (.665)	
(CYCLE) ²		.168 (.090)	1.754 (1.139)	
(CYCLE) ³			-.887 (.594)	
(cos(π *CYCLE))				-.002 (.006)
(cos(π *CYCLE)) ²				.063 (.035)
(SIZE)(GOVT)	.106 (.712)	-.322 (.447)	-.490 (.387)	-.572 (.311)
(SIZE)(CYCLE)	1.103 (.706)			
(SIZE)(CYCLE) ²		.751 (.563)		
(SIZE)(CYCLE) ³			.518 (.455)	
(SIZE)(cos(π *CYCLE)) ²				-.227 (.401)
(GOVT)(CYCLE)	.109 (.163)			
(GOVT)(CYCLE) ²		.067 (.119)		
(GOVT)(CYCLE) ³			.044 (.111)	
(GOVT)(cos(π *CYCLE)) ²				-.012 (.059)
(SIZE)(GOVT)(CYCLE)	-1.419 (1.073)			
(SIZE)(GOVT)(CYCLE) ²		-.986 (.882)		
(SIZE)(GOVT)(CYCLE) ³			-.715 (.808)	
(SIZE)(GOVT)(cos(π *CYCLE)) ²				-.045 (.406)
N	70	70	70	70
R ²	0.368	0.369	0.368	0.370

Note: Estimates are OLS regression coefficients with robust and cluster-adjusted standard errors in parentheses. Statistical significance is indicated as follows: *** < 0.001 level; ** < 0.01; * < 0.05

Table 4: Second-Order Election Effects on Voter Turnout in Local Elections

State	Average General Election (%)	Average Local Election (%)	Difference
Czech Republic	70	43	-27
Estonia	63	52	-11
Hungary	61	45	-16
Latvia	77	60	-17
Lithuania	62	44	-18
Poland	47	39	-8
Slovakia	77	52	-25

Note: Calculations done by authors using turnout from all general and local elections in each state. See Table 1 for sources.

Table 5: Regression Results, Models 1-4 (GOVT) with local election data

DV	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
	DFFRNC	DFFRNC	DFFRNC	DFFRNC
Constant	.003 (.002)	.023 (.015)	.071 (.038)	.031* (.009)
SIZE	-.243 (.118)	-.314 (.104)	-.325* (.103)	-.818** (.109)
GOVT	-.010 (.027)	.001 (.018)	.008 (.018)	-.016 (.043)
CYCLE	.027*** (.000)	-.145 (.143)	-.707 (.422)	
(CYCLE) ²		.175 (.151)	1.622 (1.018)	
(CYCLE) ³			-1.002 (.678)	
(cos(π *CYCLE))				.001 (.003)
(cos(π *CYCLE)) ²				-.028 (.011)
(SIZE)(GOVT)	.014 (.243)	-.036 (.21)	-.077 (.224)	-.012 (.153)
(SIZE)(CYCLE)	-.648* (.168)			
(SIZE)(CYCLE) ²		-.60* (.176)		
(SIZE)(CYCLE) ³			-.542* (.168)	
(SIZE)(cos(π *CYCLE)) ²				.551* (.167)
(GOVT)(CYCLE)	.089 (.074)			
(GOVT)(CYCLE) ²		.083 (.038)		
(GOVT)(CYCLE) ³			.094 (.038)	
(GOVT)(cos(π *CYCLE)) ²				.023 (.07)
(SIZE)(GOVT)(CYCLE)	-.174 (.361)			
(SIZE)(GOVT)(CYCLE) ²		-.10 (.518)		
(SIZE)(GOVT)(CYCLE) ³			-.121 (.635)	
(SIZE)(GOVT)(cos(π *CYCLE)) ²				.067 (.413)
N	156	156	156	156
R ²	0.504	0.496	0.494	0.565

Note: Estimates are OLS regression coefficients with robust and cluster-adjusted standard errors in parentheses. Statistical significance is indicated as follows: *** < 0.001 level; ** < 0.01; * < 0.05

Table 6: Regression Results, Models 1-4 (OPP) with local election data

DV	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
	DFFRNC	DFFRNC	DFFRNC	DFFRNC
Constant	-.007 (.028)	.025 (.013)	.079 (.04)	.014 (.034)
SIZE	-.229 (.147)	-.35 (.14)	-.402 (.165)	-.83** (.228)
OPP	.010 (.027)	-.001 (.018)	-.008 (.018)	.016 (.043)
CYCLE	.116 (.074)	-.145 (.143)	-.707 (.422)	
(CYCLE) ²		.258* (.177)	1.622 (1.018)	
(CYCLE) ³			-.909 (.695)	
(cos(π *CYCLE))				.001 (.003)
(cos(π *CYCLE)) ²				-.005 (.06)
(SIZE)(OPP)	-.014 (.243)	.036 (.21)	.077 (.224)	.012 (.153)
(SIZE)(CYCLE)	-.823* (.213)			
(SIZE)(CYCLE) ²		-.70 (.377)		
(SIZE)(CYCLE) ³			-.663 (.577)	
(SIZE)(cos(π *CYCLE)) ²				.618 (.362)
(OPP)(CYCLE)	-.089 (.074)			
(OPP)(CYCLE) ²		-.083 (.038)		
(OPP)(CYCLE) ³			-.094 (.038)	
(OPP)(cos(π *CYCLE)) ²				-.023 (.07)
(SIZE)(OPP)(CYCLE)	.174 (.361)			
(SIZE)(OPP)(CYCLE) ²		.10 (.518)		
(SIZE)(OPP)(CYCLE) ³			.121 (.635)	
(SIZE)(OPP)(cos(π *CYCLE)) ²				-.067 (.413)
N	156	156	156	156
R ²	0.504	0.496	0.494	0.565

Note: Estimates are OLS regression coefficients with robust and cluster-adjusted standard errors in parentheses. Statistical significance is indicated as follows: *** < 0.001 level; ** < 0.01; * < 0.05

Figure 3: The marginal effect of SIZE on opposition parties across the election cycle, linear model (Model 1).

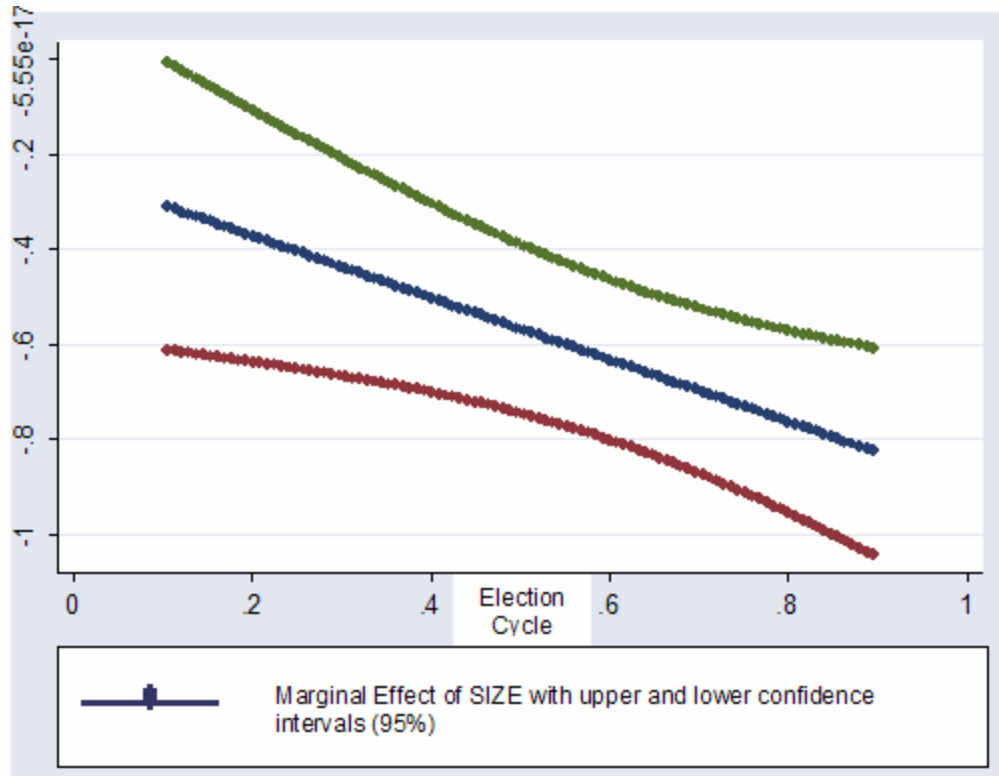


Figure 4: The marginal effect of SIZE on government parties across the election cycle, linear model (Model 1)

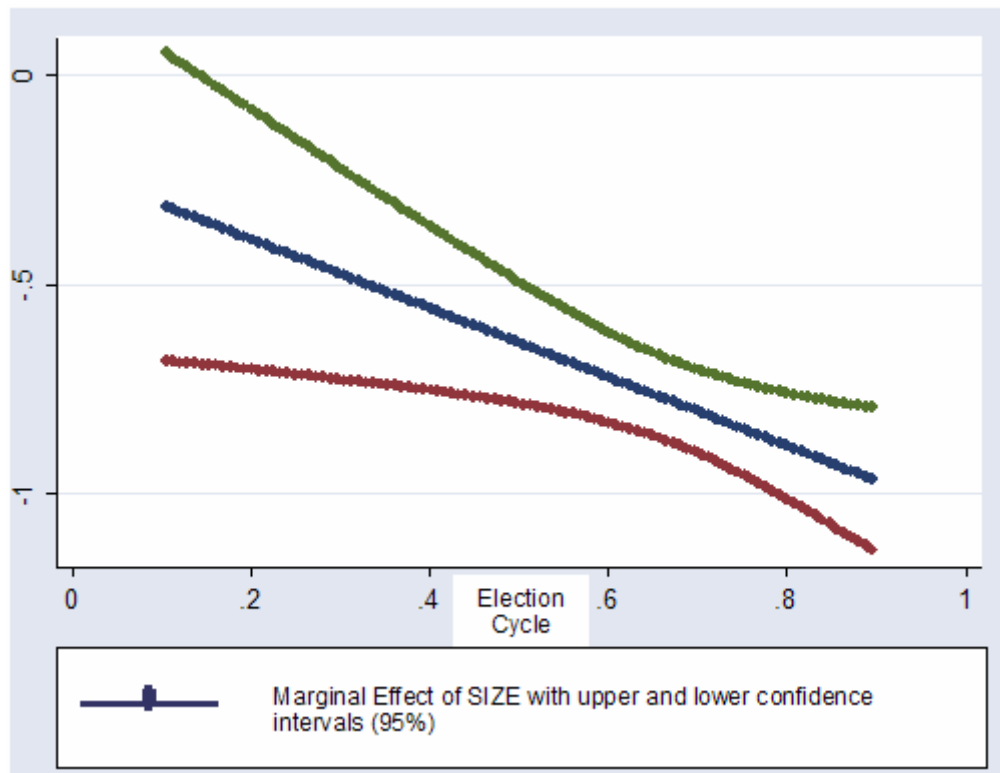


Figure 5: The marginal effect of SIZE on opposition parties across the election cycle, cosine model (Model 4).

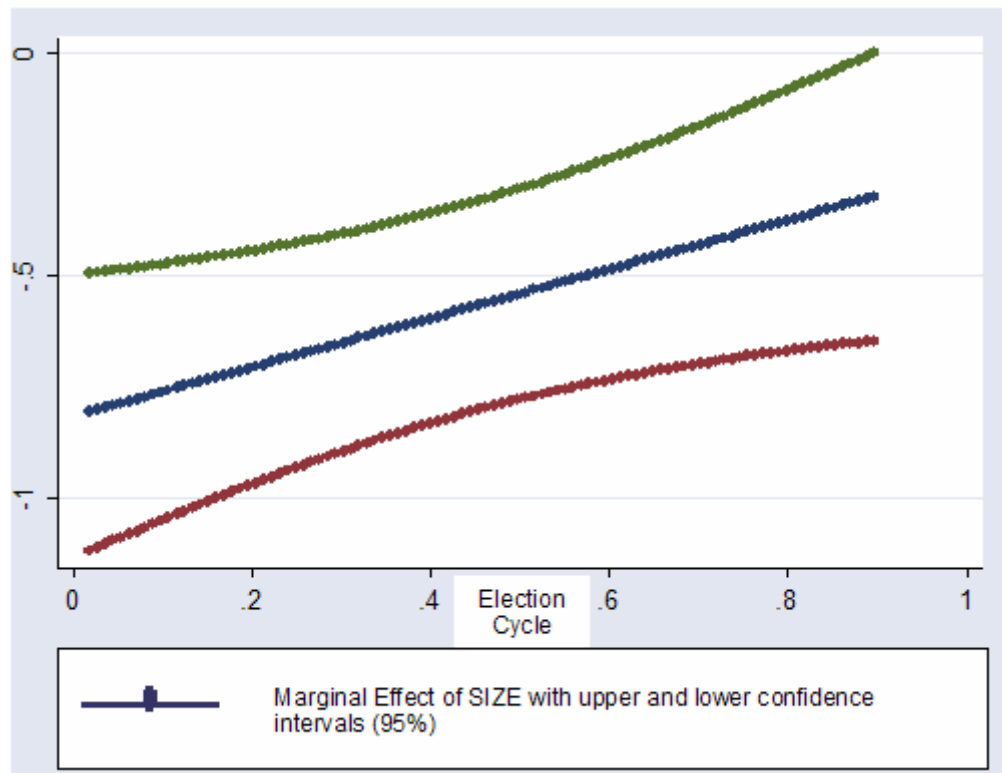
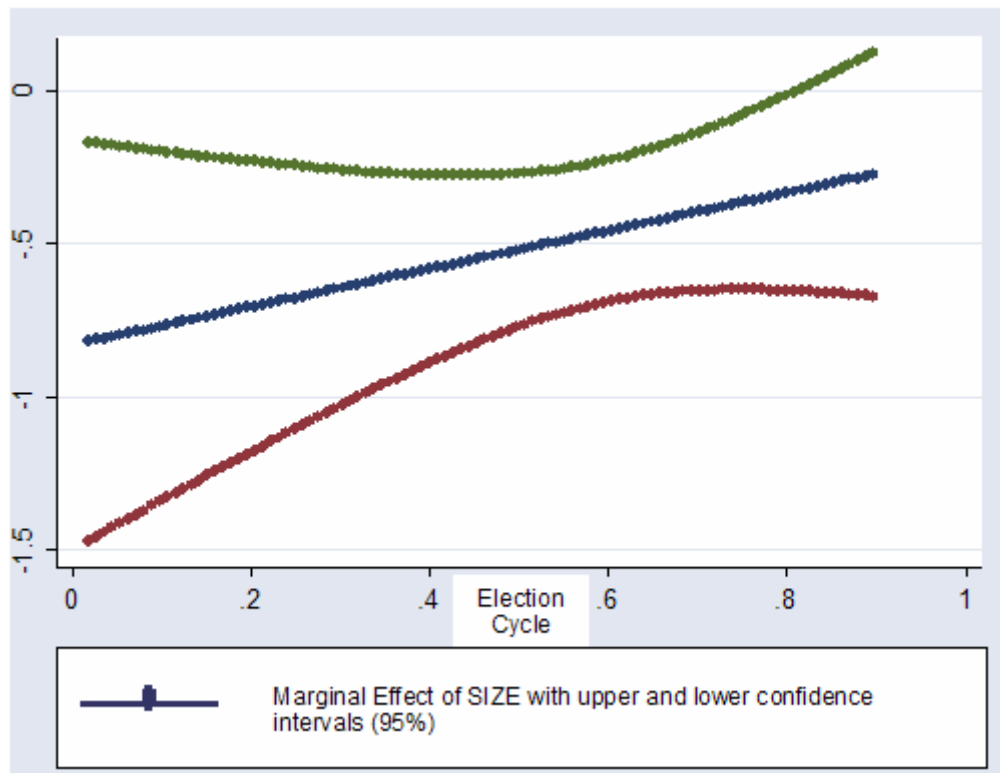


Figure 6: The marginal effect of SIZE on government parties across the election cycle, cosine model (Model 4).



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