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Voting Against?
Toward a Comprehensive Framework for The Assessment of Protest Voting in Europe

Phd Thesis of Stefano Camatarri

Supervisor Prof. Paolo Segatti

PhD Coordinator Prof. Francesco Zucchini

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THESIS ABSTRACT

English

Often the effectiveness of an electoral protest is inferred by specific dynamics at the macro level, such as the occurrence electoral earthquakes and/or shocks in the morphology of the existing party systems. This was true, for example, in the first 2000s, when a substantive growth of *radical right parties* in Europe was interpreted by some as the expression of increasing political alienation and unease within specific sectors of society. The same applies to the recent rise of *new* and/or *eurosceptic parties*, described by some as the outcome of citizens' reaction to the bad performances of their political systems and élites under the economic crisis. Yet sudden increases in the electoral outcomes of these parties are not necessarily related to an underlying intention to *protest*. Indeed, one could well contribute to their success because (s)he likes their policy platform or because feels ideologically and/or psychologically closed to them. However, this would scarcely fit to protest voting as it is usually intended in the literature, i.e. casting a vote with the main aim to frighten or punish the whole political system and/or an èlite. Several scholars have tried to deal with this topic in the past. Nevertheless, their analyses have been mainly aimed at assessing whether voting for a specific party - or type of party - was characterized by a protest motivation or not. Thus, a comprehensive and cross-country analysis of the role of protest motivations in electoral processes still lacks in empirical research. This is exactly what the present contribution is intended to deal with. Its aim, in fact, is to realize a EU-wide assessment of how protest considerations affect both the structure of individual choice, i.e. the individual calculus of voting, and the overall outcomes of an election.
The first element, in particular, is analyzed by a series of multi-level regressions on data from the 2014 European Election Voter Study (EES) reshaped in the so-called stacked form. The second, on the other hand, is assessed on the base of several counterfactual models, in which voters' expected preferences (PTVs) for each party are estimated under various scenarios in which everything is the same except for the relevance of protest motivations in individual decision-making.

Italian

Spesso l'esistenza di un cosiddetto 'voto di protesta' viene inferita dal verificarsi di particolari dinamiche a livello aggregato, quali inattesi mutamenti elettorali e/o shock nella morfologia dei sistemi dei partiti. Questo è avvenuto ad esempio all'alba del Ventunesimo secolo, quando un crescente successo di partiti di estrema destra in Europa è stato diffusamente interpretato come il segnale di una crescente alienazione politica e disagio all'interno di particolari settori della società. Sempre a livello europeo, un ulteriore caso è anche la recente affermazione elettorale di partiti nuovi e/o euroscettici, da alcuni interpretata come il segno di una reazione dei cittadini alla inefficienza dei loro sistemi politici e delle istituzioni sovra-nazionali nel reagire alle sfide della crisi economica. Eppure il fatto che uno di questi partiti veda accrescere il proprio consenso può non essere necessariamente dovuto a una sottostante motivazione di protesta da parte dei suoi elettori. Questi ultimi, infatti, potrebbero anche decidere di sostenerlo anche perché in accordo con le sue posizioni di policy o per via di un sentimento di vicinanza (ideologica e/o psicologica) nei suoi confronti. Tali situazioni sarebbero in ogni caso ben lontane da ciò che in letteratura viene normalmente definito come voto di protesta, ovvero una decisione elettorale realizzata sulla base di un mero intento punitivo nei confronti dell'élite di un paese o del suo sistema politico. Diversi studiosi si sono già occupati di questa presunta modalità di voto in passato. Ciò nonostante, un'analisi onnicomprensiva e a livello paneuropeo della questione non è ancora stata prodotta fino ad oggi. Tale è la direzione in cui intende porsi il presente elaborato. Quest'ultimo mira infatti ad indagare il ruolo che presunte motivazioni di protesta avrebbero tanto nello strutturare i processi di scelta individuali quanto nell'influenzare i risultati complessivi di una competizione elettorale.
Il primo aspetto, in particolare, viene qui analizzato attraverso una serie di regressioni multi-livello su dati dell'European Election Study del 2014 (EES), rielaborati in formato stacked. Il secondo, invece, pur rimanendo nell'alveo dell'analisi multivariata, si basa sull'elaborazione di una serie di scenari controfattuali, nell'ambito dei quali le preferenze degli elettori per ciascun partito (PTVs) vengono stimate e poi aggregate entro diversi scenari ipotetici, definiti da diversi livelli di importanza assunti da considerazioni di protesta nel motivare il voto.

Doctoral Committee

Prof. Paolo Segatti

University of Milano

Prof. Cees van der Eijk

University of Nottingham

Prof. Hermann Schmitt

University of Manchester, University of Mannheim (MZES)

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INTRODUCTION

After more than two decades since its appearance, the notion of 'protest voting' is still theoretically undeveloped in electoral research (see van der Brug and Fennema 2007). If one gets a look at the existing works in this field, in fact, he would immediately notice that they are not that many and that they frame the issue from different theoretical and analytical approaches. Even more importantly, they do not converge on a common definition of their research object. On the one hand, such state of affairs could reasonably sound as a paradox, given the vast popularity that 'protest voting' enjoys in public debate. On the other hand, it should not be surprising, given that this expression has always been, first and foremost, a general commonplace of political commentary. As a proof of this, its existence is usually deduced - both by the élites and by the media - by specific dynamics at the macro-level, such as 'shocking', or at least unexpected, electoral results, favoring a party (or a candidate) generally recognized as a vehicle for 'protest' in public debate. Notwithstanding the clearly unscientific character of this interpretation, its understanding would be completely compromised if not surrounded by a minimal definition of what protest actually is. Of course, it would be inappropriate to enter already into the merits of this issue. Nevertheless, it could be useful at least to anticipate that, even in the shallowest debates, the term generally refers to an expression of disappointment toward something. It has therefore in itself a sort of 'reactive' valence, which implies a response to behaviors or situations created by others. In the electoral domain, in particular, it usually takes the form of casting a vote 'against' something, rather than in favor of it. Not only that, but its presence is also assumed to entail changes in previous voters' behaviors. Putting it in terms of the Hirschman's famous distinction between *Exit*, *Voice* and *Loyalty* (1970), we should probably say that protest in elections is, after all, a matter of 'voice'. In fact, the presumed vote switching resulting from it would not simply mean 'exiting' from one's previous preference(s), but also to signal dissatisfaction towards it/them (see also Barry 1974; Kang 2004).[1]

Against a similar background, the limited commitment of the scientific community on this topic has been so far mainly aimed to investigate whether voting for

[1] The same Hirschman (1970, 104) envisaged the possibility of similar *exit-with-voice* options.

a specific party - or type of party - is characterized by a protest motivation or not (e.g. van der Brug *et al.* 2000; Erlingsson and Persson 2011; Passarelli and Tuorto 2016). However, this approach cannot be enough deep for a comprehensive exploration of the issue. In fact, what it simply does is testing whether the interpretations that political commentators or the élites make about their electoral consequences are fair or not. Yet it neglects a distinct focus on protest motivations as pure psychological entities, on the one side, and on how they shape electoral results, on the other one. Actually, these two elements should be assessed outside such possibly biased interpretations, by taking a neutral standpoint on the substance of electoral dynamics. Converse's (1975) discussion of the function of elections is still extremely relevant in this respect. It clarifies, in fact, that '*they do not simply constitute mechanisms for communication, influence and control from the grass roots upwards'*, but also something on which *'parties and leaders can exercise their influence, by manipulating the course of public discussion and/or shaping visions of plausible alternatives'* (1975, 77). In this sense, as long as something like protest voting is concerned, elements of élite and public discourse should not influence the direction of the analysis, but rather should be subject to it. More precisely, voters and élites should be considered as part of the same *coordination game*, in which, as in any coordination problem, the mutual and reflexive expectations between the involved actors assume a central importance. In addition, two analytical dimensions should be distinguished here: the psychology of the voter, with his affective feeling states and decisional logics, and the macro-political dimension, including party competition dynamics and election results, from which the élites draw inferences and propose interpretations about the reasons why voters to do what they do.

As I am going to show in this work, both these insights can be important for exploring the issue of protest in elections in an alternative and more comprehensive way than traditional approaches. In particular, the analytical distinction between the psychological sphere of the voter and its object of affection (e.g. leaders and parties) has the merit of highlighting that protest considerations can be not simply a factor influencing the vote for a party, but also an element having an impact on political choice itself, by driving the evaluation of all existing competitors. In this sense, they could be supposed not only - or primarily - as 'party-specific', as others in truth have done, but rather as 'domain-specific', i.e. as 'sensible' to the overall configuration of contexts of

electoral choice (I will come back to this point more in depth at Chapter 1). On the other hand, understanding voting behavior as the outcome of a coordination game between élites and voters suggests that protest motivations could be intended as a potential, in need of a trigger or catalyst on the supply side in order to be activated.

In the light of all these insights, aim of this work will not be to demonstrate that something like *protest voting* actually exists, but rather to explore this issue appropriately, by decomposing it into two distinct sub-issues: the role of protest considerations in voters' decision-making and their electoral consequences at the macro-level. To some extent, such exercise will retrace the scheme of an already well-known metaphor in the field of social and political sciences: the so-called *Coleman boat* (1990). Similarly to this latter, in fact, I will start from discussing a usual macro-level ascription, i.e. that election results are somehow (or sometimes) affected by protest votes. Then, I will turn to a focus on whether protest considerations actually influence the individual calculus of voting and, finally, I will come back again to the macro-level dimension, by observing how these same considerations affect the overall outcomes of an election.

But what about the empirical context in which all these steps are going to take place? Differently from any previous contributions in this field, alternatively focusing on single or Western countries, this work is going to be explicitly EU-wide. In particular, it is going to rely on one of the more recent surveys providing information on the electoral behavior of European voters: the 2014 European Election Voter Study (EES).[2] Actually, this choice is due to several reasons. Some of them will be explained later in the text. Others, however, can be already anticipated here. The first is that the most technically qualified contributions on this topic, whose general approach is going to be replicated here, have already made use of the same type of data.[3] Precisely, the reference is here to the 1994, 1999 and 2004 EES waves respectively. Using the same data source will hopefully put this work in the wake of a precise (although 'niche')

[2] Schmitt, Hermann; Hobolt, Sara B.; Popa, Sebastian A.; Teperoglou, Eftichia; European Parliament, Directorate-General for Communication, Public Monitoring Unit (2015): European Parliament Election Study 2014, Voter Study, First Post-Election Survey. GESIS Data Archive, Cologne. ZA5160 Data file Version 3.0.0, doi:10.4232/1.12384.

[3] The reference is here to the three only studies on the topic basing their explanations on predictors of party preferences in the so-called stacked form (see van der Brug, Fennema and Tillie 2000; van der Brug and Fennema 2003; van der Brug and Fennema 2009). Later in the text I will focus in detail on characteristics and implications of this empirical strategy *vìs-a-vis* other possible approaches.

empirical tradition. The second, however, is that the timeframe of the survey has been consistently associated to the possibility of protest voting dynamics, at least at the level of political commentary. After all, when protest voting if not in 2014's Europe, when the electoral effects of the economic crisis apparently turned out to be visible (e.g. De Sio et. al 2014)? It will be interesting, in this respect, to compare widespread beliefs about the morphology of electoral protests and their actual shape, if any, according to the data.

Basing on all the considerations above, the contents of this work will take place over the course of overall five Chapters, in which the reader will be gradually accompanied through the different pieces of the same broad issue: is something like protest voting actually there? In this respect, I already anticipated at the very beginning of this text how fragmented the existing literature is. In order to orient within such 'mosaic' of definitions, approaches and findings, the first Chapter of this work provides a wide theoretical review in that regard. Such general background, as one will see, will be also helpful to put the bases for the more comprehensive framework of analysis which is proposed at Chapter 2. Here, in fact, I will 'unpack' and specify the issue of protest voting according to the over-mentioned components of any electoral phenomenon: the attitudinal and psychological one and its macro-political dimension. At that point, the general research question will leave room to two broad issues underlying it: irrespective of possible macro-level suggestions, is there something actually resembling protest motivations underlying vote choice at the individual level? And if so, how do they affect macro-level results? Each of these issues will be faced at Chapter 4 and 5 respectively, while the technical tools and procedures used to explore them will be specified at the previous Chapter 3. On the basis of the obtained findings, a final assessment of the empirical consistency of protest voting as a category of public debate will be made. Moreover, some suggestions for future research will close the overall sequence.

CHAPTER 1: PROTEST VOTING TO DATE

As I already stated in the Introduction of this work, *protest voting* has been addressed by different theoretical perspectives and through several analytical approaches over time. None of them, however, has actually framed the issue by assuming a neutral standpoint on the communication processes between voters and élites. And yet, a similar perspective would make immediately clear that protest motivations could be not simply conceived as party-specific, i.e. as a matter of 'ownership' by those parties that are usually interpreted as protest options in public debate, but rather as domain-specific, i.e. as components of voting reasoning which take place within precise contexts. Actually, domains of electoral choices could be thought as nested in at least two levels: a *meso-level*, having to do with the nature of the voted party, and a *macro-level*, regarding relationships among parties and/or country level characteristics.

In the light of this distinction, aim of this study will be to focus on this second element, by looking at protest motivations as elements possibly driving the assessment of all available alternatives in an election contest. Before going concretely into the merits of this issue, however, what is first required is taking stock of the various pieces of the puzzle and mapping them accurately, in order to orientate oneself within such a fragmented and multi-faceted context. For this purpose, this first Chapter is substantially a critical review of the current literature on protest voting, focusing on its basic definitions, analytical approaches and current empirical findings.

Before getting started with it, let me just anticipate, for the sake of clarity, the salient points of the following argument. Firstly, I will focus on conceptual definitions, by making a distinction between two different groups: *party-based* definitions, deriving the protest nature of specific groups of voters from some characteristics of the parties they voted, and *voter-based* definitions, focusing more explicitly on the motivations underlying voters' electoral choices. Afterwards, I will also deal with the analytical approaches, that I will categorize in turn into different clusters according to the type of inference on which they rely in order to assess protest voting. Here the contrast will be basically between inferences based either on the presumed character of a party or on aggregate information relating to it, and inferences relying on individual-level

procedures, alternatively based on voters' self-reported motivations for their vote choice or on multivariate modeling. With all these points sorted, then I will move to a presentation of the existing empirical findings in matter of protest voting, and bring their historical development under two main chronological phases. As a final step, in paragraph 1.4. I will present a critical assessment of all the main points raised above. Such a discussion, as anticipated, will be at the base of the more comprehensive framework of analysis that I will present at Chapter 2.

1.1. Conceptualizations: an overview

1.1.1. Party-based definitions

Although successively labeled as unsatisfactory for an actual understanding of protest voting as an individual 'act' (see Bergh 2004), this type of definitions has actually been the first attempt through which researchers tried to make their mind up with a new era of electoral instability in Western Europe. Faced in fact with an apparent pattern of de-freezing of party systems since the 70s (cf. Mair 1997a), the idea that the fortunes of newcomers of political competition could be due to their ability to mobilize a diffused sense of political malaise within the electorate found significant success both in the scientific community and in public debate. On that base, some of these parties have been named as 'protest' parties and their voters, consequently, as *de facto* protest voters. In the light of an in-depth review of existing research on this point, we could argue that such a labeling procedure has generally taken place on the base of at least on two alternative criteria: looking at the ideological appeal of the voted party or looking at its distance from government influence, or better, to its *anti-establishment-ness* (see also Schedler 1996). Let us start from the first of these alternatives. A clear exemplification of it can be found in the works by Hans-Georg Betz. Within the general framework of his *politics of resentment*, in fact, he argued that the success of new political entrepreneurs entering the stage of political competition between the late 80s and the beginning of the 90s has to be attributed to their ability to mobilize an increasingly widespread climate of cynicism and alienation from politics in the European electorates (see also Immerfal 1998; Betz 2002). Even more importantly, basing on that interpretation he comes to the conclusion that the so-called new-populist parties in Western Europe are essentially 'protest' parties and that their voters, accordingly, are protest voters. These latter, in particular, are supposed to fit to the description of the so-

called *'losers of modernity'*, i.e. people with weak socio-economic position who feel threatened by social changes implied by globalization dynamics. For the record, such a socio-structural explanation of voting for new populist parties has never found significant support within the scientific community (see also Kitschelt 1995; Knigge 1998; Scheepers and Billiet 2000; Lubbers and Scheepers 2000). This does not change, however, that Betz conceptualized protest voting as reflecting some rhetorical or ideological characteristics of specific parties. Furthermore, his approach does not represent an isolated case in the literature (e.g. Arter 1999; Morrow 2000; Muller 2002).

As anticipated, the second group of *party-based* conceptualizations looks not so much at the ideological profile of the parties presumably attracting protest voters, but rather to its relation with established parties, i.e. its *anti-establishment-ness*. Just as a way of example, Verney and Bosco (2014), in their recent analysis of 'protest elections' in Italy and Greece, assimilated protest voting to voting for challenger parties, i.e. parties which have never joined a governing coalition before (see also Hobolt and de Vries 2012). Given the nature of the analyzed case studies (among the others, the Five Star Movement and Syriza) it is however clear how not only their strangeness to government positions, but also their clear antagonism to traditional parties makes them viable collectors of protest votes in the eyes of the authors.[4]

1.1.2. Voter-based definitions

If compared to the first one, this second cluster of conceptualizations of protest voting is relatively more recent. Not by chance, it stems from a series of studies substantially banishing previous party-based definitions as too hasty and trivial depictions of what an electoral protest actually is, especially in public debate. To quote a representative statement on this point, the definition '*a protest voter is a voter who votes for a protest party [is] unacceptable, because it begs the question*' (van der Brug, Fennema and Tillie 2000, 82). In reply, voter-based definitions firmly share the assumption that protest voting is something pertaining to the internal motivations of the voters and that, for this same reason, any way of defining it should logically avoid any reference to the characteristics of the voted party. Yet, although being only two, they do

[4] Among other things, 'challenger parties' are here almost all new parties. However, it should be pointed out that *'challenger-ness'* and the *'newness'* of a party are not necessarily overlapping concepts, as different cases of long-lasting challengers in the Western Europe clearly prove (see e.g. the National Front in France).

not share a common perspective on their object of focus. But let us now get into this issue in more detail.

A first voter-based conceptualization defines protest voting as '*choosing a party other than one's most-preferred to send that most preferred party a signal of dissatisfaction'* (Kselman and Niou 2011).[5] In a way, this makes protest voting definable in terms of a sort of 'tactical' behavior, although the term 'tactical' here should not be understood in its Duvergerian form, i.e. as instrumental in order to determine the winner of the race in a constituency (see Duverger 1954).[6] Alternatively, Franklin *et al.* (1994) suggest to call it *'expressive'*. In their view, in fact, the domain of *expressivity* covers all instances in which individuals might vote not so much to alter the winner in their constituency but rather to send some message or signal, to their own party or to some other. Actually, such behavior could be due to different reasons. For example, voters might be motivated *'to show support for the policies espoused by that party in the hopes that the voter's preferred party might be induced to adopt them'* (Franklin *et al.* 1994, 552; see also Rosenstone et al. 1996). Alternatively, they might not want their preferred party to have an overwhelming majority, which could be an important consideration when major constitutional changes are in the offing. Clearly, there can be no certainty about which of two possibilities will actually occur without an empirical test. From a theoretical point of view, however, it should be noted that this way of conceptualizing protest voting implies a spatial approach in which voters choose candidates based on considerations of ideological or policy proximity to their individual preferences (see Downs 1957). In practical terms, this means that supporters of a hypothetical social-democratic party could theoretically vote for an equally hypothetical smaller party to signal a desire that the party changes its current ideological location. However, this party should be located on their same side of the ideological spectrum.

The second *voter-based* conceptualization of protest voting bases on completely different assumptions. Indeed, it defines the protest voter as *'a voter who wants to express disenchantment with the political system or with the political elite'*. In

[5] This definition stems in particular from the tradition of the so-called *Rejection Voting Model*, which supposes that voters irritated at some actions or personalities within their own party will move to vote for another party (e.g. Fiorina 1981; Kernell 1977; Key 1966). On a quite different note, it has also some traits in common with the protest behavior in consumer markets described by Albert Hirschman in his study of *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* (1970).

[6] For empirical findings in this field see for example the works by Black (1978), Cain (1978), Abramson et al. (1992), Blais and Nadeau (1996), Ordeshook and Zeng (1997), Alvarez and Nagler (2000).

particular, since it assumes that his only aim is to use his ballots to frighten or scare the élites by voting for a party which is an 'outsider' of the political arena, his vote cannot be conceived as neither ideologically nor strategically driven (see also van der Eijk *et al.* 1996). For the sake of clarity, the authors present such statement within the boundaries of a broader typology of motives for party choice, based on two of the main determinants of party preference: ideology and party size (see also Tillie 1995a: 118). In particular, the combination of these two variables according to their *preponderance* in the determination of party preference defines four different types of voters: *idealist*, *pragmatic*, *clientelist* and, of course, *protest voters* (see Tab 1.1 below). Within that framework, these latter, if compared to *idealist* and *pragmatic* voters, are indeed those who do not maximize their party utility neither in terms of policy/ideological proximity nor in terms party size (cf. van der Eijk et al. 1996).

		Power (party size)	
		Weak influence	Strong positive influence
Policy agreement (left/right and/or issues)	Weak influence	(Potential) protest votes	Pragmatic/clientelist votes
	Strong influence	Idealist votes	Pragmatic/idealist votes

***Tab.1.1 Typology of Voters According to the Main Determinants of Party Preferences*. Source: van der Brug, Fennema and Tillie (2000, 84).**

To some extent, their distance from a strategic (in the sense of Duvergerian) mindset suggests here too a possible fallback to the more general category of expressive behaviors, as proposed by Franklin *et al.* (1992) in relation to the more 'tactical' version of the concept. Nevertheless, the mere fact that so different definitions, such as the two presented here, could potentially fall under the common, broader category of 'expressive voting', already indicates how this latter would be too general to highlight any distinctive features of a protest vote. Rather, they should be categorized according to what really makes them distinguishable, i.e. their amenability to spatial explanations of voting behavior. More precisely, I will refer to them as 'spatial' and 'aspatial' interpretations of protest voting respectively.[7]

[7] It should be noted that the label 'aspatial' is not intended as a synonym of 'irrational'. Rather, as van der Brug *et al.* (2000) themselves point out, protest voting is here understood as a rational and goal oriented activity. It lies, therefore, in the same, broader rational choice framework of its 'spatial' counterpart.

In conclusion of the present conceptual examination, it seems overall reasonable to point out how that the full picture of existing definitions in this field looks overall little univocal. The conceptual diagram reported at following Figure 1.1 offers a synthetic representation of what explained on this point so far.

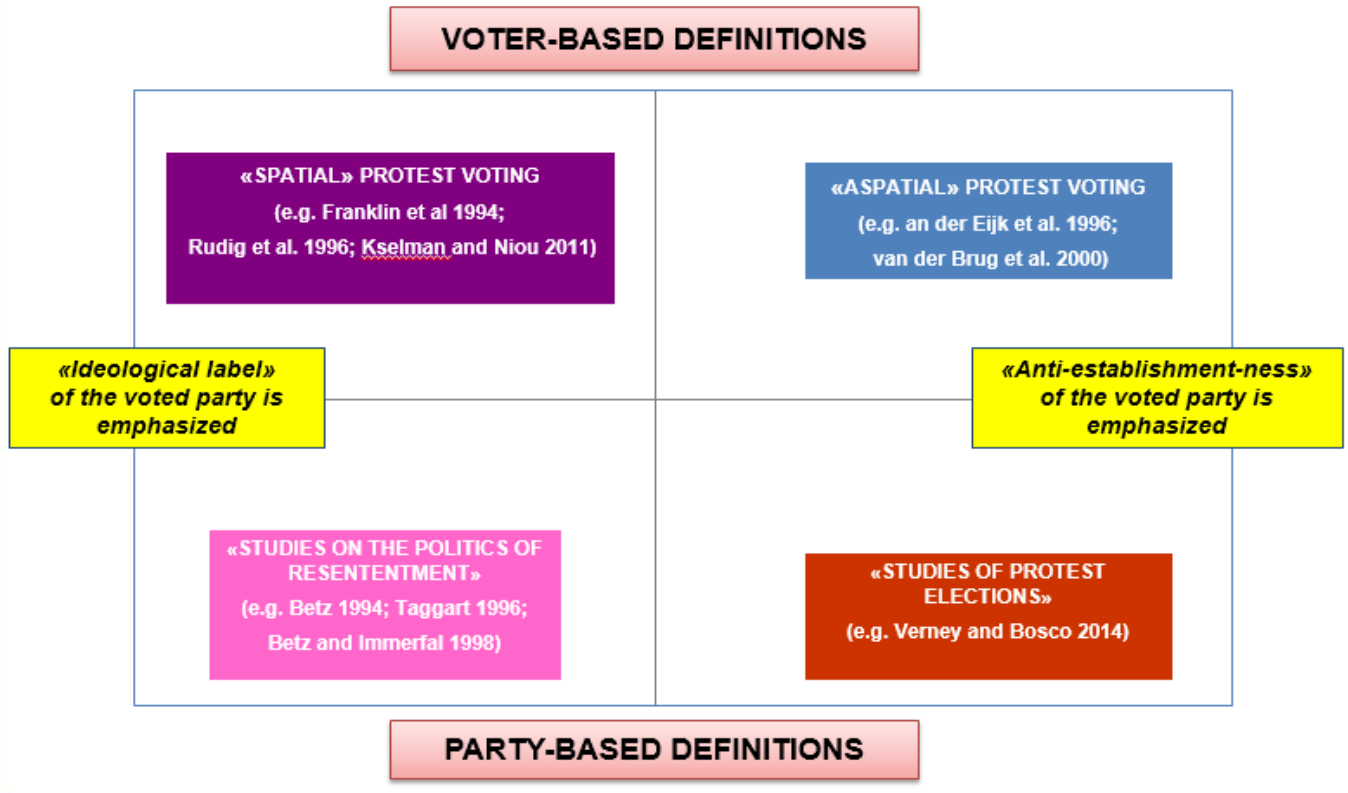

Fig.1.1 Definitions of Protest Voting and Their Internal Facets: Summary Scheme. Source: own elaboration.

1.2. Analytical approaches

1.2.1. Strategies based on inferences from the character of the voted party

This is basically the process underlying all the types of *party-based* definitions presented above. In particular, the strategy employed by Betz to derive the motives of new-populist party voters from the contents of their programmatic platforms or from their rhetorical style offers a clear example of that. However, there are also other cases. One of these is Palle Svensson's analysis of Danish politics in the 1970s (1996). Indeed,

once labeled all relevant parties as loyal, semi-loyal, or disloyal in relation to the political system, he deliberately defined all those voters supporting one of the latter two as protest voters. Alternatively, van der Brug and Fennema (2003) also signal a study by Derks and Deschouwer (1998), who basically combined abstainers and voters for a number of parties they consider to be protest parties and label them 'protest votes'.[8]

1.2.2. Strategies based on aggregate data at the party level

A first way to infer protest votes by aggregation of individual level data relates to the analysis of aspects of voting and/or preference instability by means of turnover tables. The underlying assumption, in this case, is that protest voters do not follow expected and/or usual lines of vote switching. Therefore, if, at the aggregate level, non-mainstream parties turn out to attract considerable portions of voters from established parties, then the conclusion could be that their voters were probably protest voters (e.g. Mayer and Moreau 1995; Holsteyn and Mudde 1998). This form of deduction, even applied to socio-demographic and professional characteristics, has also been recently used to stress the *catch-all* nature - and implicitly also the protest valence - of several *new* and/or *challenger* parties in Western Europe (e.g. Verney and Bosco 2016).

An alternative way to infer protest behaviors by aggregation of individual data has been also to observe if specific party voters appear significantly endowed with political cynicism, distrust, inefficacy, alienation, etc. If so, according to some we could be looking at 'protest votes' (e.g. Holsteyn and Mudde 2000). However, as van der Brug *et al.* (2000) correctly pointed out, this procedure is based on the assumption that individual level motivations can be inferred by aggregate data. However, there is no real guarantee that such conclusion about the motivations of the voters will be right, due to well-known risks of ecological fallacy (see also Freedman 1999).

1.2.3. Strategies based on voters' self-reported motivations

Since drawing inferences about individual-level motivations by aggregate-level data sounds at least problematic for the reasons explained above, this second group of measurement strategies has been actually developed as an alternative to the previous

[8] For the record, their choice to assimilate non-voting to protest behavior has been later criticized by van der Brug and Fennema. In the words of the two authors, in fact, '*they may have good theoretical reasons for* [doing that] *since voting in Belgium is obligatory and abstention thus can be considered to be a form of civic disobedience. However, they provide no empirical evidence for calling non-voters 'protest voters', while leaving the contradiction in terms unexplained. Furthermore, on the basis of assigned party characteristics, they draw inferences about the motives of voters that support these parties*' (2003, 56).

ones and currently represents one the most 'qualitative' solutions in this field. In fact, it proposes to infer the protest quality of a voter from his self-reported motivation to vote for a party in an election. The main theoretical standpoint in this case are Campbell *et al.* (1960). His theory states that the voter, however badly (s)he might be informed about politics, has a concrete evaluative scheme regarding the various political actors (i.e. parties, candidates, media, pressure groups, etc.), the so-called *cognitive and affective map of politics* (Campbell *et al.* 1960, 15). With the aim of accessing this map, surveys have been over time increasingly provided with open-ended questions, in the attempt to detect voters' self-reported motives for their voting behavior. As regards protest voting, in particular, answers reported complaints against the élites and/or specific parties have sometimes been used by some as indicators of protest voting (e.g. Billiet, Carton and Swygedow 1993; Billiet and Witte 1995; Rose 2000; Swyngedow 2001; Public Issue 2012b).

Of course, also this open method of putting questions has its drawbacks. As Campbell *et al.* (1964: 16) puts it, in fact, only the dependent variable of a causal process is described by that approach. This is to say that the way subjective motivations and perceptions, i. e. the cognitive and affective map of the voters comes into existence, resulting in these same motives and perceptions, is not answered by these questions. I will return in more detail on this point later on in this Chapter.

1.2.4. Strategies based on determinants of vote choice or party preference

An alternative way to cope with the inferential problems implied by presumed aggregate indicators of protest voting has to do with multivariate modeling. As I will show in the following paragraphs, this strategy, mostly neglected in a first phase of more 'descriptive' research on this topic, has started to be employed quite extensively since the beginning of the 2000s. Nevertheless, there are some exceptions. Billiet and Witte (1995), for example, provided their analysis about voting for the Vlaams Blok in Belgium also with a multivariate context. Before them, only Bowler and Lanoue (1992) tried a similar solution in this field, by estimating the effect on voting for third minor parties in the Canadian context. Years later, measurement strategies based on determinants of vote choice were also adopted by another group of authors such as Bergh (2004) and Norris (2005), to name but a few.

Although falling into the same, broader framework of regression analysis, studies of protest voting basing on determinants of party preferences actually developed as a sort of autonomous line of research over the past two decades. Since the empirical section of this work relies on such analytical solution, I postpone the punctual description of its general characteristics and implications to the methodological section at Chapter 3. For now, suffice it to say that this approach allows to overcome some limits of traditional analyses based on dichotomous party choice as a dependent variable, not least the fact that these latter categorize parties on the base of a single feature, while more than one characteristic could instead be relevant to the explanation of party choice. Moreover, dichotomous dependent variables focus on the choice for one (type of) party in isolation, while previous research already suggests that choices for one party over other parties depend necessarily on a conjoint evaluation of all parties in a party system (e.g. van der Eijk, Franklin and Oppehuis 1996).[9]

For these reasons, analytical strategies based on the assessment of party preferences propose to replace them with the *electoral attractiveness* of each relevant party. This dependent variable does require the use of a rather specific research strategy, called stacked analysis (see also van der Eijk, van der Brug, Krooh and Franklin 2007), that will be extensively discussed in the methodological section of this work. At this point, however, what is more important to know is that it avoids the problems enumerated earlier. Drawing upon such framework, successive analyses of protest voting have been aimed to test whether voting for an alleged 'protest' party actually implied a party-specific set of considerations, not comparable with those preceding vote choice for any other parties (van der Brug, Fennema and Tillie 2000; van der Brug *et. al* 2003; and Van der Brug and Fennema 2009).

1.3 Current empirical findings

1.3.1. First phase of research (1990s)

Notwithstanding the multiplicity of existing perspectives on protest voting, a summary examination of available studies allows to create an accurate chronology of the findings relating to it. The general framework is the same described by Betz and many others before him: increasing representational crisis, low performance of political systems, sudden emergence of new parties and new issues of which to care about. Faced

[9] In particular, this exposes to potential risks of causal misattributions (see also van der Eijk and Franklin 1996).

with the dawning of that competitive context, during the late 70s some scholars had already argued that it was not possible for new parties to gain votes if voters were satisfied with how the main parties were performing (see Hauss and Rayside 1978).[10] Clearly, this insight occurred at least one decade ahead the flowering of definitions and conceptualizations reported at the previous paragraphs. Nevertheless, it was still a mere intuition not supported by any systematic empirical evidences. For these ones, it was not until the beginning of the 90s, when scholars started looking for empirical support to the hypothesis that the electoral success of specific parties was indeed a matter of pure protest against the political system. Some first interesting cases regard voters of several right-wing parties in Germany, France, Netherlands and Belgium. For example, electoral research on the German Die Republikaner at the 1989 European election claimed that support for this party was not exclusively due to a genuine consensus on the party's politics in their main issues. Rather, some of its voters wanted also to show dissatisfaction with the performance of established parties (e.g. Veen, Lepszy and Mnich 1993). This finding was also indirectly supported by other works reporting how these voters, although visibly endowed with authoritarian orientations, did not have a pronounced and consistent right-wing ideology (see Westle and Niedermayer 1992). In a similar vein, research on the French National Front at the beginning of the 90s put attention on several indicators possibly signaling that not everything of Le Pen's party support could be explained by programmatic or ideological affinity. For example, many Lepenist voters decided only during the last few weeks in the campaign. Moreover, the electoral stability of these voters turned out to be rather low (Mitra 1988; Mayer and Perrineau 1992).

Additional studies from the Netherlands, Germany and France show not only that voters of alleged protest parties are more congruent with the ideologies of their parties (Meloen et al. 1988; Meloen, van der Linden and De Witte 1994; Rosseel 1993), but also that they feel politically less efficacious, more alienated, and more dissatisfied with established parties, political institutions, and the democratic system in general (Van Holsteyn 1990a; Voerman and Lucardie 1992; Westle and Niedermayer 1992; Mayer and Perrineau 1992; Rose 2000; Swyngedouw 2001). At a first sight, these

[10] Some of the most visible cases of that time were the Radicals and the NF in the UK, the Radical Party in Italy and the Greens in Germany (see Lawson and Merkl 1988).

feelings of distrust and pessimism seem to fit to the expectation of a vote 'against' things, as suggested by most of existing perspectives on protest voting. Nevertheless, we have also to deal with the fact that these voters are also driven by substantive policy concerns.

Further acknowledgements on this point came also from research in the Flemish part of Belgium, where special attention has been devoted to the relative importance of issues, attitudes and aspects of dissatisfaction and protest in determining vote choice for right-wing parties, such as the Vlaams Blok. In particular, an exploratory study (De Witte 1992) on data collected after the European election of 1989 (Billiet, Carton and Huys 1990) used discriminant analysis in order to analyse the attitudinal differences between Vlaams Blok voters and voters for all other parties.[11] In few words, its results show that voting for the Vlaams Blok was primarily motivated by negative attitudes towards immigrants. The hypothesis stating that right-wing voting in Flanders was solely or mainly an expression of political apathy or protest had thus to be rejected. However, feelings of political powerlessness had an additional impact on right-wing voting in 1989. Some years later Eatwell (1998) came to similar results. Ultimately, *'although the anti-party and anti-elitist characteristic is a strong characteristic of extreme right voting, it is not the full picture: to some extent, an extremist right vote is also an option "for" – for nation, for identity, for leadership and for a policy or perspective – as much as "against" '* (Heinsworth 2000, 12).

All this leads to conclude that the first phase of research on protest voting in Europe has generally led to equivocal results. Indeed, they point in the direction of both hypotheses. According to some, this could be partially due to the exploratory character of these studies (e.g. Billiet and de Witte 1995). As I already anticipated, in fact, only a few works in this phase used multivariate analyses to find out which orientation predominates in the voters' motivation. And yet an estimation of the effects of protest-related considerations on party choice net of several policy and ideological variables, and *vice versa*, by means of such kind of techniques would have probably contributed to

[11] As well synthetized by Billiet and de Witte (1995), three scales were used in particular to test if voters of the Vlaams Blok were motivated by extreme right-wing attitudes: a positive attitude towards one's own ethnic group; a negative attitude towards immigrants and biological racism in which the genetic superiority of white people is stressed. On the other hand, to test the 'protest' hypothesis indicators of feelings of isolation, meaninglessness, and fear of the future were used (see also Srole 1956).

a clearer understanding of how the two attitudinal clusters were actually behaving (see also Billiet 1995).

Evidently aware of this issue, Bowler and Lanogue (1992) already investigated on the Canadian New Democratic Party (NPD) through some probit models. From a general point of view, they could not find any evidence in support of their hypothesis about the protest nature of voting for this party. Nevertheless, the simple fact of relying on a multivariate technique allowed them to produce clearer and more univocal results than those of the more descriptive approaches developed in Western Europe at that time.

On a quite different note, but again by means of multivariate analysis, Franklin *et al.* (1994) tried to empirically validate the notion of what I called as 'spatial' protest voting in previous paragraph 1.2.2., i.e. '*choosing a party other than one's most-preferred to send that most preferred party a signal of dissatisfaction'*. Focusing on data about the British General Election of 1987 they came to the conclusion that such behavioral pattern actually occurred. More specifically, this turned out to be most frequent among weak party identifiers with negative feelings about the likely winner and who did not care much about which party wins the election. Within a similar framework, Rudig, Bennie and the same Franklin (1996) analyzed the 1989-1992 electoral cycle in Britain with the help of time-series and cross-sectional data in order to understand the causes of the sudden up and down-swing of the Green Party over that period.[12] What they discovered was that the nature of environmentalist support at the end of the 80s really, to some extent, a spatial basis (i.e. it was ideologically, or better, policy-driven). In fact, Green voters in 1989 really turned out to switch to this party because of a rising environmental concern, more than for their actual preference for that party over the other ones. It remains to be seen, nevertheless, whether this form of vote switching can be actually intended as a 'protest vote'. I refer to next paragraph 1.4.1 for a deeper discussion of this point.

1.3.2 Second phase of research (2000s - now)

If the first period of empirical work on protest voting resulted in unclear (if not equivocal) results, a more intensive use of multivariate analysis tools has allowed to

[12] As the authors explain more in detail, before the 1989-1992 electoral cycle, the British Green Party had never attracted more than the 1-2% of the total votes in its electoral history. But at the European Elections of 1989 it received a 'shocking' 14.9%. By 1992, however, it returned to the political wilderness that it had occupied before 1989.

achieve internally more consistent outcomes. Nevertheless, also in this case the big picture is not homogeneous.

Drawing upon the firsts theoretical and analytical insights on this topic (see Tillie 1995a; van der Eijk *et al.* 1996), Van der Brug *et al.* (2000) proposed the first study of protest voting based on determinants of party preferences as described in previous paragraph 2.3, with a particular focus on anti-immigrant parties. The main motivation underlying that study was to test the too 'ungenerous' depictions of their voters widely diffused at that time. In fact, in the same way as anti-immigrant parties were to a large extent stigmatized by the political elites of their respective countries, also their voters were perceived to be out of the ordinary, i.e. using their vote not as an expression of active support to specific ideologies or policies but only as a means of political protest.[13] By assuming that, elites (but also some scholars) were somehow dismissing the support that these parties received as something less than that of other parties (see also Bergh 2004). Nevertheless, on the threshold of the 2000s, such hypothesis was still lacking of a solid empirical test, based on analytical instrument fit to an actual comparison of anti-immigrant voters' motivations underlying vote choice *vìs-a-vìs* all other voters. As already mentioned at paragraph 1.2.3. , a reshaping of the original data matrix in the so-called stacked form enables to do this.

Within this framework, and analyzing the 1994 elections for the European Parliament for seven political systems the authors showed that voters of anti-immigrant party in that election were not characterized by significantly different motivations than voters of any other party. Rather, they appeared to be not less influenced by ideological location, no less concerned about parties' electoral prospects, and no more hostile to the EU than supporters of conventional mainstream parties. Their only element of differentiation was a stronger impact of opposition to immigration. Therefore, the common sense hypothesis that the electoral consensus of these parties was based 'out-of-the-ordinary' protest votes had to be rejected.

[13] Although their paper in focused on the case of anti-immigrant parties, the authors correctly stress how stigmatization processes by the élites also regarded other political actors before them, such as several communist parties across Europe (see also Fennema 1997: 478). In general, however, one should be aware that every new radically party tends to be labeled as a "protest" party once it enters the political arena. In fact, to say it in the words of Fennema, *'the political establishment tends to judge the political weight of a new electoral formation according to traditional criteria'* (2004, 17).

A replicating study of 1999 data in eight political systems gave nevertheless a sensibly different picture (van der Brug and Fennema 2003). Indeed, for the large and successful radical right parties, such as the FPÖ, Vlaams Blok and Alleanza Nazionale, these conclusions were still valid. However, as regards support for small and unsuccessful radical right parties, such as the Wallonian Front National, the German Republikaner and the Dutch Centrumdemocraten, this was not the case. Rather, these latter parties turned out to be significantly less evaluated on the basis of ideological and pragmatic considerations than the first ones.

In any case, in an additional replicating study on the 2004 European elections the authors generally confirmed the substantially 'non-protest' nature of anti-immigrant party voters, except for a weakened effect of left-right distance on party preferences in that occasion (van der Brug and Fennema 2009).[14] Therefore, because of the overall similarity noticed between anti-immigrant and mainstream party voters' decision-making, we should be careful not to think of supporters of radical right parties as Betz's (1994) *'losers of modernity'*, who are supposed to vote for these parties just to express their resentment towards the élites and the political system.

In compliance with these conclusions, also Norris discarded resentment as a causal factor in the rise and the uneven electoral fortunes of anti-immigrant parties (2005). Indeed, although basing her analysis on direct measures of protest voting that were missing in previous research (such as institutional distrust and satisfaction with government performance) she could only find a weak negative relationship between these variables and voting for a radical right party (see also van der Brug and Fennema 2007, 481). Rather, as argued also by Ivarsflaten in her analysis of seven Western European countries from data by the European Social Survey (1st wave, 2002-3) *'as immigration policy preferences become more restrictive, the probability of voting for the populist right increases dramatically'* (2008, 17).

[14] In the same paper, the authors raise several hypotheses on this point. A first one is that many of these parties strongly evaluated in left–right terms in 1994 (e.g. the FPÖ, the Republikaner, and Front National), have lost much of their credibility due to their poor performance as new government parties, or because of internal party conflicts. An alternative explanation that they put forward is that mainstream right parties in many countries have co-opted the anti-immigration positions of the radical right to some extent. As a consequence of having lost their 'unique selling proposition' in terms of policy issues, their electoral support could have been reduced to the sole protest voters.

Less univocal results, on the other hand, come from an additional group of studies (e.g. Denemark and Bowler 2002; Bergh 2004; Pop-Eleches 2010; Cutts, Ford, and Goodwin 2011, 2012; Hosch-Doyican 2011). Although referring to different political contexts, in fact, these latter come to the general conclusion that, alongside the clear effect of ideology and issue positions, resentment towards politics and its main actors has a significant effect on voting a series of not established parties as well. Passarelli and Tuorto (2016), in their analysis on the Italian Five Star Movement, go beyond this simple recognition and argue more precisely the existence of a reinforcing effect between the two factors.

Relating to what I called 'spatial' protest voting, analyses on survey data from the 1988 national election in Canada find scant evidence of it (see Kselman and Niou 2011), primarily because few voters were both ideologically disposed and tactically situated in a riding to even consider casting a protest vote for the small, leftist party on which the authors focused. On the other hand, a different study, that of Blais (2004), detects remarkably high presence of 'tactical' votes for minor parties in the 2002 French presidential election, as well as evidence that such tactics did not succeed. In any case, it should be said that still little empirical work to date is available in this latter branch of studies.[15]

1.4 Protest voting at now: an assessment

1.4.1 Conceptualizations

As explained in the review above, conceptualizations of protest voting are multiple, both in their very contents, as also noticeable from previous Fig. 1.1, and in their relation with different inferential strategies. Such heterogeneity, in particular, clearly signals how research on this topic is still underdeveloped and in a way 'under-institutionalized' in electoral research (cf. van der Brug and Fennema 2007). Indeed, protest voting has been usually many framed from different perspectives, but scarcely in

[15] For the sake of completeness, there is also a more recent contribution by Myatt (2016), explaining how a small and single-issue party would difficultly maximize its support in the electorate, since potential protest voters still want their main preferred party to win the election. Nevertheless, since his work actually consists of a formal model, the problem of scarce empirical findings in this field still remains.

dialogue with one another and not even agreeing on a common definition of the concept.

In this regard, there are a couple of considerations to do. The first one applies to the two types of *voter-based* definitions of protest voting presented above: the one I defined as 'spatial' protest voting *vìs-a-vìs* 'aspatial' protest voting as essentially defined by the 'Dutch' School. Actually, what they have in common is the underlying assumption that protest voting consists of choosing a party not because of the actual content of its electoral message but in order to 'punish' other parties (see also van der Eijk and Franklin 2009). Nevertheless, the 'spatial' component characterizing the first one implies that the individual act of switching to a party other than one's usual preference is mainly policy and/or ideologically-driven. This is actually a problematic aspect in relation to the definition itself of protest voting as a distinct object of study. As a matter of fact, to the extent that a protest behavior is after all reducible to policy or even ideological considerations, why not simply calling it 'policy' and/or 'ideological voting'? In this respect, I agree here with van der Brug and Fennema (2003) when they argue that protest voting, to have any consistency at the conceptual level, should be defined as qualitatively different to ideological, strategic or policy votes: *a vote primarily cast to scare the elite that is not policy driven* (2003, 58; cf. Lubbers and Scheepers 2000). Such a motivation, however, as I already anticipated, has been so far almost exclusively supposed to be intrinsically associated to voting for extremist parties, or better for parties publicly playing on those same anti-establishment chords. Such remark highlights an additional criticality of existing definitions of protest voting, i.e. the fact that they all tend to incorporate elites' interpretations of the reasons why voters would vote for a particular party. This is particularly evident in the case of *party-based* definitions, which tend to project the rhetorical weapons of new populist parties (presumably aimed to mobilize political resentment) on the real motives underlying the choice of their voters. However, this applies also to *voter-based* definitions when they link the expression of individual level discontent to voting for a not established party. This latter case, in fact, implies a counterfactual: without such a party, that discontent would have never been shown.

1.4.2 Analytical approaches

Even in this respect, the state of the art is rather heterogeneous. Moreover, each analytical approach has its strengths, but also its related criticalities. For example, relating to assessments at the aggregate level, I already stressed how their attempts to infer individual level behaviors are likely to result in ecological fallacies. More 'qualitative' approaches based on voters' self-reported accounts of their motives for vote choice, on the other hand, although offering a more valid solution in that respect, have their drawbacks too. In this regard, I already anticipated how they are not designed to provide information about what makes protest motivations actually prominent (see also Swyngedow 2001). However, even more seriously, responses to open 'why' questions could also imply the reproduction of standard responses (see also Billiet and de Witte 1995). In particular, since respondents in interview situations usually rely on accessible information (Schwarz and Strack 1990; Zaller 1992), if the media pay a great deal of attention to whether they voted their party because of its position on specific issues or as a form of protest and disillusion with politics, the reproduction of these standardized responses in that case would not be surprising. To say it with the words of Billiet and de Witte, *'this does not mean that the reported motives are false, but it does mean that 'real' motives which may not be so manifestly present in public discourse may not be reported at all'* (1995, 186). Therefore, even though these voters may themselves mention 'protest' as being their prime motive, this does not mean that these voters are 'protest voters' (cf. van der Brug and Fennema 2003).[16]

In the light of these aspects, measurement strategies relying on determinants of vote choice and/or party preferences should be preferable to the first two solutions. Nevertheless, some of the contributions relying on them, although analytical in pursuing their research questions, fail in providing direct evidence of protest voting. Others, although doing it, often provide inaccurate depictions of what such direct indicators should stand for. I will come back more deeply on this point during the next Chapter.

[16] Van der Brug and Fennema (2003) explain the same point by recalling the Kaplan's (1964) distinction between 'act meaning' (i.e. what an act means to an actor) and 'action meaning' (i.e. how the researcher interprets this act). In support of that distinction, Billiet and de Witte (1995) found significantly different results about the protest nature of the Vlaams Blok voters in Belgium by means of open questions and multivariate models respectively.

1.4.3 Findings

Except for a few cases, most of current empirical approaches to the *protest voting hypothesis* are 'country-specific', or even 'party-specific'. Consequently, as partially anticipated, they offer little room for cross-national comparisons. Moreover, they fail in providing a comprehensive standpoint for the observation of alleged protest effects on election outcomes in their entirety (cf. van der Eijk and Franklin 1996). The reason for these analytical limitations is possibly that such empirical tests have never taken place within a wide-range analytical framework. Rather, they have progressively established as a way of explaining 'shocking' electoral results in specific countries, cyclically implying an unexpected support for new and/or extreme parties.

Clearly, this is not to say that what written until now on protest voting is, to some extent, useless. On the contrary, it allows to understand, with a certain degree of approximation, to what extent the electoral support of specific parties can (or cannot) be explained as protest votes. Nevertheless, as partially anticipated in the Introduction of this work, a wider look at the 'big picture' is still lacking. I am not only referring here to an observation of overall trends at the cross-country level (however in short supply for now). Rather, what I mean is that the concept itself of 'protest voting' still lacks of an overall assessment at the empirical level.

To do that, I will rework existing perspectives on protest voting in such a way as to clearly distinguish between the sphere of public attitudes (i.e. protest motivations) and the party-related components with which they are usually connected. At the same time, higher attention will be devoted to the role of political contexts. In fact, as also van der Brug *et al.* correctly noticed before, what makes a party perceived as a credible conveyer of an electoral protest in public debate is still a rather unexplored issue. I will deal more in depth with these and other related aspects during the next Chapter of this work.

CHAPTER 2: 'UNPACKING' THE PROBLEM: TOWARDS A RENEWED FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

If we had to sum up in few words the outcome of the above overview, we would probably say that current studies on protest voting raise more questions than answers. As argued in Chapter 1, partly this is certainly due to the multiplicity of definitions, indicators and analytical approaches that have been used to assess it so far, which may in turn affect the nature and comparability of existing findings. However, even when trying to orient ourselves within such a fractured environment and trying to do the best choice within each set of existing options, some problems still persist. As partially anticipated, most of them are located at the conceptual level. In particular, existing conceptualizations of protest voting, even when they claim to exclusively focus on the motivational sphere of the protest voter, still appear to be significantly endowed with a party dimension, reflecting the interpretations that the élites have about the motives leading voters to support alleged protest parties. Yet, such interpretations should reasonably not enter the definition itself of protest voting, if one wants to access a comprehensive standpoint on the electoral processes possibly underlying it. I already stressed in the Introduction of this work how Converse's (1975) discussion of the nature of elections is still extremely relevant in this respect. In fact, by framing them as *'communication processes between voters and élites'*, it implicitly suggests that any electoral phenomenon should be conceived and studied in its indissoluble 'duality', consisting of the psychological processes of the voters, on the one side, and of a macro political dimension, which is the object of their cognition.

Drawing upon this general framework, in the next pages I will assume as well that protest voting (if any) should necessarily consist, on the one side, of a psychological dimension, with its internal components and attitudinal drivers, and of a political-electoral one, with its contextual triggers and electoral implications. In view of these considerations, I will begin my argument by disentangling the first of these elements and then I will switch to the second one. Once the puzzle will have been unraveled in all its parts, I will put all its pieces together in the form of research hypotheses. I refer, however, this last step of the procedure to the final part of the present Section.

2.1. The psychological side

2.1.1. Insulating the individual component of protest voting

Contrary to the general thrust of current definitions of protest voting, an actual distinction between the psychological dynamics of the voters and elements pertaining to the political-electoral dimension may be of use at least for two reasons. As one could guess from the prompt of this Chapter, the first one is mainly analytical. Following Converse's argument, in fact, it looks rather appropriate to distinguish between the sphere of public attitudes and their consequences for specific objects of affection, such as parties or leaders, at the electoral level. The second reason, however, is more empirically driven. Until now, in fact, no one could confirm that protest votes, if any, are under the monopoly of specific parties. As already discussed, we have only partial and fragmented evidences of this. This makes it 'convenient' as well to keep the analytical horizons of this work as wide as possible, at least in terms of the party labels that are possibly involved.

These two arguments should be put in interaction with the fact that *voter-based* definitions are, at least in principle, the most appropriate to describe protest voting in terms of an individual-level phenomenon. In particular, as I argued at previous paragraph 1.4.1., the definition proposed by Tillie, van der Brug and Fennema (2000) seems to be the most accurate in doing this, since it clearly stresses the specific character of a 'protest vote' vis-à-vis a policy, ideological vote or whatever. Nevertheless, we have to deal with the fact that, while such definition claims to strictly focus on the sphere of individual motivations preceding vote choice, in truth it is still intertwined with the nature of the voted party, which is in turn expected to be a not-established one (i.e. anti-immigrant, far-right, populist and so forth). On second thoughts, such a conceptual association risks to be substantially misleading with respect to an objective framing of protest voting itself. Indeed, if we were to insulate the psychological dimension of a hypothetical protest vote from its presumed behavioral outcome, as suggested by the Converse's argument above, it would actually result in nothing but a self-contained set of motivations contributing to the calculus of voting. Of course, there are different ways in which they may contribute to that. According to the original *protest voting hypothesis*, for example, protest considerations constitute a sort of 'outlying' voting reasoning, if compared to a general voting function (cf. van der Eijk

et al. 1996; van der Brug *et al.* 2000). As we have seen, this is because it describes the protest voter as a voter whose party preferences are essentially driven by his state of political displeasure towards the élite and the political system, while 'mainstream' factors of vote choice, such as ideological and issue attitudes, should be of minor importance in his case (see also Lubbers and Scheepers 2000). According to other studies, however, protest motivations may well coexist with alternative predictors of party preferences, such as policy and/or ideological considerations (e.g. Bergh 2004; Hosch-Doiycan 2011; Passarelli and Tuorto 2016). Although one should be aware of that debate, I do not think that stressing the differences between the two positions would be useful here. Rather, it would be much more constructive to stress that both accounts, although apparently at odds, actually have a point in common, i.e. the idea that the calculus of voting may be 'colored' by *resentment* toward the élites or the political system more in general. In the light of the discrepancy between the two main positions, this perspective may sound - at least at the beginning - as too agnostic. Nevertheless, keeping one's own hands free from potentially preconceived notions could result in even greater analytical and empirical benefits. In particular, as I will show in the second part of this Chapter, the fact of reducing the individual dimension of protest voting to a set of motivations preceding vote choice will allow to characterize the effects of political contexts in a more comprehensive way than by simply assessing the existence of a viable protest option on the supply side. Before dealing with that aspect, however, a more preliminary issue should be addressed: what are the attitudinal dimensions at the base of protest motivations?

2.2.2. A focus on the attitudinal bases

As I already explained more than once, studies relying on *voter-based* conceptualizations of protest voting generally agree on the fact that its protest dimension refers to the sphere of the internal motivations of the voters. However, when it comes to defining what exactly this sphere is about, answers do not appear as equally univocal. Since that argument was only mentioned in the last part of previous Chapter, now I will elaborate a more detailed - but still synthetic - discussion of that, in order to better contextualize the analytical solution which is proposed here.

According to van der Brug and Fennema (2007), the concept of a protest vote consists of two underlying components: *'first, discontent with ruling parties and*

politicians (reflected in political cynicism, or lack of political trust) should have a strong effect on support for a radical-right party. And second […] political attitudes are expected to be of minor importance' (Lubbers and Scheepers 2000). On second thoughts, these two elements could be seen as two sides of the same coin, as they both relate to a unique, underlying protest dimension. Bergh (2004) tried to disentangle the contents of such dimension by arguing that it consists of two distinct unities: *distrust* directed towards the *political system* and *distrust* directed towards the *élite*. However, once these two components are operationalized, some inconsistencies immediately stand out. First, the items used to measure system distrust have mostly to do with democratic support, i.e. the attitudinal cluster at the base of regime legitimacy. Yet it is very difficult to confine the concept of *trust*, whatever it means to the author, to sole normative considerations about the goodness of democratic institutions in general.[17] Similarly, the author puts together under the category *'elite distrust'* items relating to confidence in some political institutions and to short-term satisfaction towards the government, which clearly belong to two distinct clusters of attitudes towards the political system.[18] The more recent solution proposed by Passarelli and Tuorto (2016), although deliberately drawing upon the framework proposed by Bergh, definitely overcomes some of its internal inconsistencies. In particular, their *system discontent* dimension excludes any reference to attitudes towards regime legitimacy and focuses more generally on indicators of political trust, political efficacy and beliefs about the effectiveness of party democracy. Moreover, their *élite discontent* dimension relies on a more homogeneous set of items, mainly related to short-term evaluations of the state of the economy and of the performance of several political objects, such as national party leaders and the government. Yet, their analytical framework still has a problem. In fact, as previous studies have argued, when respondents are asked about political institutions, it is more likely that they think more about the people in those institutions than about

[17] To be exact, the variables making up Bergh's (2004) index of distrust towards the political system concern respectively: (i) respondents' propensity to a revolutionary change of his society; (ii) respondents' opinion about democracy as a good way of governing a country; (iii) respondents' agreement to the idea that democracy is better than any form of government.

[18] Quoting Montero and Gunther (2006) on this point, while the second cluster *'may be regarded as the result of a negative evaluation of the performance of incumbent authorities and political parties, […]* [the first one] *is a reflection of a fundamentally distrusting and suspicious vision of political life and the institutions and mechanisms of democratic representation'* (2006, 49).

the institutions themselves (e.g. Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 1995).[19] In this sense, the same distinction between *system* and *élite discontent* that they inherit from Bergh could possibly turn out to be empirically inconsistent. Such an inconsistency, amongst other things, seems already to be signaled by the fact that items belonging to the first component, such as the political efficacy ones, could well fall within the second one as well. After all, it is very hard to believe that *'the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process, i.e. that it is worthwhile to perform one's civic duties'* (Campbell et al. 1954, 187), has nothing to do with the opinion that one has about the political élite of his own country. In a specular manner, even some items of the second dimension could be in theory allocated to first one as well. I refer here in particular to systemic assessments such as those regarding the general state of the economy.

All this is to say that the reasonable objective to unravel the attitudinal basis of protest voting is likely to lead to ambiguous outcomes if its presumed components are not consistently measured, or worse, their criterion of distinction is not sufficiently specified or disambiguated. Bearing this argument in mind, here I propose to disentangle the attitudinal components of protest voting in an alternative way, i.e. not too much according to the object of the protest (i.e. political system *vs.* élite), but rather in relation to the nature of the attitudes possibly underlying it. In this sense, I argue that a first element of this object of study should consist in a long-lasting feeling of estrangement from politics, due to a perceived lack of transparency, fairness and efficiency of institutional processes and outputs (see also Dahlberg and Holmberg 2013). Generally, I will call it as perception of *political system failure*. Nevertheless, in the literature it is usually indicated as *political disaffection* (e.g. Montero and Torcal 2006), which could be essentially defined as '*the subjective feeling of powerlessness, cynicism, and lack of confidence in the political process, politicians, and democratic institutions*' (Di Palma 1970, 30). On the other hand, a second component should regard more short-term perceptions of governments' inability to deal effectively with problems regarded by citizens as important (see also Dahl 1971). The attitudinal cluster at the

[19] The underlying assumption here relates to the Zaller's (1992) *accessibility theorem*, according to which an *institution qua institution* is not immediately salient or accessible to a respondent. Rather, he/she 'simplifies' by thinking about people in those institutions, which in most cases means politicians or bureaucrats.

base of this assessment is usually called *political discontent* (cf. Anderson, Blais, Bowler, Donovan and Listhaug 2007; Curini, Jou and Memoli 2012), but I will also refer to it as perception of *policy performance failure*.

Such two components, although conceptually distinct, can be supposed to have a joint effect on the assessment of party preferences, and therefore on vote choice, in the form of protest motivations (cf. van der Brug, van der Eijk and Franklin 2007). Moreover, one could expect them not only to influence individual party preferences but also to characterize potential protest voters as a specific cluster in the general electorate. In another respect, given the already declared *agnosticism* of my approach with respect to the effects of ideological, issue and/or strategic considerations, I will not state here any clear expectation in that regard. Implicit in the proposed framework is however a counterfactual: in the absence of estrangement and/or discontent with political processes and outcomes, i.e. the two elements informing the potential of an alleged protest vote, the assessment of party preferences as well as the resulting behavior of the voter would be probably different.

That being said, how to measure, then, the two components outlined above? In relation to perception of *political system failure*, two major groups of indicators seem to be particularly suitable: first, institutional confidence measured by confidence in parliaments and other democratic institutions such as political parties; second, assessments of the responsiveness of democratic institutions (for instance, politicians and political representatives) through indicators of external political efficacy (cf. Montero and Torcal 2006). Actually, the list could be even longer. For example, perceived levels of fairness of leaders and/or parties, as well perceived effectiveness of bureaucratic processes and public institutions, if available, could be included as well. Perception of policy performance failure, on the other hand, as it is supposed to fluctuate over time, could be operationalized by means of an alternative set of *short-term* indicators, such as judgments about government's performance, opinion on the condition of the society and economy and/or on the performance of key political institutions or national democracy itself. As it can readily be imagined, not all the variables quoted here will be included in the successive analyses, since only some of them are available in the empirical Study on which this work is based. Irrespective of the compromises that empirical research often requires, however, it is always useful to

stress what possible indicators may fall within each of the two dimensions above, as this should help clarify even more their meaning.

2.2. The political-electoral side

As I already anticipated, applying a 'dual' approach to the analysis of protest voting has significant consequences not only on the way we can think about the attitudinal dimension(s) of a protest vote, but also on their relation with political macro-contexts. Since these latter can be conceived both in terms of contextual triggers of protest motivations and in terms of their electoral consequences, in the next pages I am going to deal with each of these two aspects separately. Once again, I will start from the first issue and then I will move to the second one.

2.2.1 Protest motivations and political contexts

Once protest motivations are framed as components of the calculus of voting, their impact on vote choice and/or party preferences can be thought as conditional to specific characteristics of the political macro-contexts. As has already been said, in fact, not in every electoral setting voters tend to rely on the same considerations in order to sort party preferences. To say it in Key's words, this is because *'they are not fools'* (1966, 7), i.e. because they have a sound judgment about which considerations to apply when making voting decisions in a particular context. In previous research, this has been proven to be the case for proximity and competence voting. Schmitt and Wessels (2008), in particular, showed that voters are more inclined to vote on the basis of ideological considerations where parties are actually more differentiated in ideological terms (see also Singh 2010), while competence and performance considerations generally turn out to be stronger where governments are perceived to be more accountable (cf. Ecker, Glinitzer and Meyer 2016). According to some, such amenability of the voters to different political-institutional contexts should be interpreted as a by-product of a societal process of modernization allowing the rationality of the voters to free itself from the influence of social determinants of vote choice (e.g. van der Eijk and Niemoller 1992; Thomassen 2005). Pushing the argument even further, we could even say that voters' rationality is indeed an *ecological* one, i.e.

that is influenced by the choice environment and the structure of the information available in it (e.g. Gigerenzer and Selten 2001).[20]

In case protest motivations turn out indeed to have an impact on the structuring of party preferences, i.e. to behave as more or less self-contained considerations affecting the calculus of voting, a similar framework should apply to them as well. As already mentioned, an immediate implication of this would be that these latter, rather (or before) than being *party-specific*, as most of the literature has done so far, should be reasonably intended as *domain-specific*, i.e. as driven by the environmental structure of specific choice contexts. I will say something more about this possibility in the next paragraph 2.2.4., dedicated to a presentation of the research hypotheses of this work. Meanwhile, I should nevertheless point out that a further implication of the assumptions above is that the relationship that protest considerations have with party preferences would be, at least potentially, multi-directional in terms of resulting behavioral outcomes. I will set out more in detail this last consideration in the immediately following paragraph.

2.2.2. On the relationship with the choice dimension

Strictly speaking, one of the most striking and recurring aspects of the current literature on protest voting is that protest motivations are depicted as not ordinary psychological drivers, occasionally mobilized by specific parties and/or party types (anti-immigrant, far-right, populist and so on and so forth). Nevertheless, as reflected by the overview at the first Chapter, this assumption has never found clear and un-contradictory evidences over time. On the other hand, dealing with this problem by separating the psychological sphere of the voter from its choice dimension seems to open up opportunities for an alternative interpretation. In particular, once protest motivations have been recognized as self-contained components of voters' reasoning, it seems reasonable to believe that their relationship with the choice dimension is similar to that of any other element of the calculus of voting, such as ideological and/or issue proximity, party and/ or leader sympathy or competence, etc. What I am arguing, it in other terms, is that all parties, at least in principle, could be preferred (or discarded) on

[20] In general terms, the reference is here to the Simon's concept of ecological rationality, according to which individuals achieve satisficing choices drawing on their cognitive capacities and the structure of information in the context in which the decision making takes place (see also Simon 1990). Empirical studies explicitly drawing upon this framework usually belong to the realm of cognitive politics (e.g. Baldassarri 2005).

the base of protest considerations exactly as they all can be preferred (or discarded), for example, on the base of ideological, strategic or issue considerations.[21] Ultimately, as soon as protest motivations are seen for what they are, i.e. objects relating to psychological sphere of the voter, their status of self-contained components of voting reasoning brings out their nature of non-exclusive considerations with respect to the assessment of party preferences, and therefore to their potential multi-directionality in electoral terms. At a first glance, such perspective may look rather counterintuitive. As already mentioned, in fact, we usually think about protest voting in terms of an implicitly party-based counterfactual: in the absence of a publicly credible vehicle for protest, people would simply choose differently, i.e. according to different considerations and/or relying on alternative criteria. In other terms, we are accustomed to think that protest voting is a potential that may come true only when in the presence of a specific party.[22] On second thoughts, however, nothing really prevents that voters develop counterintuitive, or even idiosyncratic ways to protest in elections, e.g. by choosing a party they feel suitable to convey their political malaise, although this is not generally recognized as a vehicle for protest. As I will show later, this last scenario could be assumed to partially depend on the extent to which political contexts fail or not in providing clearly discernible 'protest' options to their citizens. Without wanting here to pre-empt the hypotheses of this work, however, for now I will limit myself to emphasizing that protest voting, if any, should not necessarily follow the tracks intentionally set up for it by the supply side.

For the sake of understanding, the relationship between protest motivations and the choice dimension described so far could be synthetically represented as reported at Fig 2.1. As one can see, protest motivations are here represented as affecting party preferences according to increasing degrees of intensity (see vertical axis), while electoral behavior unfolds along a *continuum* ranging from a situation where the voted party is not generally seen as a vehicle for protest to another one where it is clearly perceived as such (see horizontal axis). The intersection between these two dimensions

[21] As long as this argument applies to the sole party evaluations, therefore excluding actual party choice, the related behavioral outcome could also be abstention.

[22] A clear example of this way to look at the issue is provided by Passarelli and Tuorto in their recent analysis of the Italian Five Star Movement, in which they argue that protest voting, in addition to incorporating an expression of political resentment, should also include an element of attraction for 'different' parties, first and foremost anti-system parties (2016, 2).

gives rise to four different scenarios. In the upper-left quadrant, we have a case of overwhelming impact of protest motivations resulting in consensus to a party which is widely recognized as a protest option in public debate: *effective* protest voting. As one could easily realize, this is actually the ideal situation that supporters of the protest voting hypothesis generally have in mind. To put it in terms of existing findings, however, I already explained in the first Chapter that only several studies based on voters' self-reported motivations actually came to similar results. Just below, we have the case of a vote scarcely affected by protest but directed to a party which is generally considered as such, and therefore incorrectly interpreted as a protest one. This is actually the scenario described by most of existing studies based on the analysis of party choice or party preferences by means of multivariate models, such as the seminal study by van der Brug *et al.* (2000).

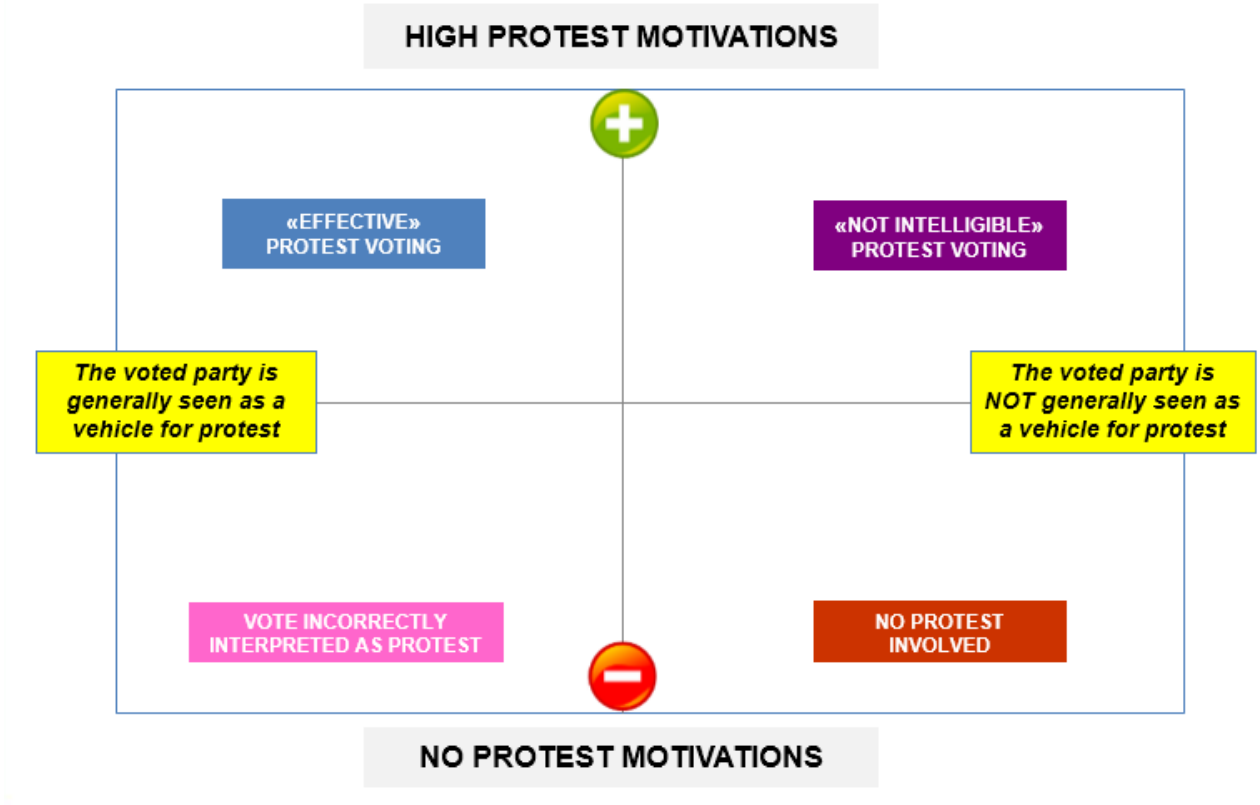

Fig.2.1 Map of the relationship between protest motivations and the choice dimension. Source: own elaboration.

Very less can said, however, about the lower right quadrant. Indeed, it simply describes the situation in which neither protest motivations nor a vote for a publicly perceived protest party are involved, which is substantially irrelevant to the end of this study. Finally, we have the scenario where high protest motivation match a vote for a party not generally recognized as a vehicle for protest. I called this case *not intelligible* protest voting as, under the Converse's perspective of elections as communication processes between voters and élites, it would be very difficult that such a protest message would be ever perceived as such at the élite level (cf. van der Eijk 2016).

2.3. The hypotheses of this work

Coherently with the underlying duality of the analytical framework described in the previous pages, the hypotheses of this work will be double-sided as well. As a matter of fact, they will regard, on the one hand, the psychological dimension of the voter, and its political-electoral side on the other one (i.e. contextual triggers and behavioral consequences). More specifically, as long as the sole psychological dimension of the voter will be involved, this research will focus on what I will generally define as a *protest reasoning*, investigating whether this latter actually exists and, if so, how it is structured. Afterwards, I will move to a discussion of the possible contextual conditions triggering it and, finally, to several hypotheses about the way protest motivations could affect election outcomes (i.e. the choice dimension described at paragraph 2.2.2) and how party competition dynamics could possibly intervene in shaping such relationship.

2.3.1. Existence and Structure of a Protest Reasoning

In the face of the scarce uniqueness of views and existing findings on the possibility that protest motivations and ideological/strategic predictors have mutually exclusive effects on party preferences, I already mentioned how my approach will be essentially *agnostic* on this point. Of course, I am totally aware that casting doubts, or better, not taking for granted that protest motivations are an ontologically distinct set of considerations is not in line with the assumption of a 'protest vote' as distinct object from a policy, ideological, strategic vote and so forth (see also previous Table 1.1). However, as I partially anticipated at the end of the previous Chapter, it would be reckless to harness protest motivations within such a preconceived notion before having tested it. In this sense, I believe that the best analytical strategy to figure out what is

really going on with protest motivations is to generally assess whether these latter actually matter and, if so, how. Since the results of this procedure could align or not to the expectations of the original protest voting hypothesis, I will test, more in general, that the calculus of voting can be 'colored' by the two over-mentioned components of protest motivations, i.e. perception of *political system failure* and perception of *policy performance failure* (**H1: *Protest Reasoning Hypothesis***). Against such a framework, several alternative scenarios may reasonably occur. The first is the one in which protest motivations do not significantly impact on party preferences. In that case, the assumption that all parties can be theoretically preferred (or discarded) on the base of protest considerations should be clearly rejected. Further investigation, in this sense, should focus on whether they are either party-specific considerations, as many have already speculated so far, or negligible factors of party preferences. A different scenario could be the one in which protest motivations really turn out to affect party preferences and unfold as an *outlying* voting reasoning, i.e. their effects tend to be mutually exclusive *vìs-a-vìs* alternative sets of considerations (e.g. ideological, issue, strategic ones and so forth) and *vice versa* as described in Table 1.1. Alternatively, protest motivations could even emerge as components of a mixed voting reasoning, in which the impact of its underlying components is not preclusive with respect to the occurrence of more mainstream considerations. In this latter case, however, it should be at least foreshadowed how all these elements could actually relate to each other.

2.3.2. Contextual Triggers of a Protest Reasoning

According to the analytical framework built at the previous paragraphs 2.1. and 2.2., protest motivations could be conceived not only as psychological entities coloring voters' reasoning, but also as a potential, in need of a contextual trigger or catalyst in order to be activated.[23] This recalls, once again, that they could be seen, rather (or before) than being *party-specific*, as a *domain-specific* characteristic, i.e. influenced by the political environment and the structure of the information available in it. As I already anticipated at the previous Chapter, such environment could be conceived as

[23]Arguing about 'activating' mechanisms specifically implies that political competition will not be investigated so much in relation to its 'power of persuasion', but rather in relation to its capability of 'enlightening' already existing predispositions according to the original framework by Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet (1968). For more recent contributions on activating mechanisms of the so-called 'electoral fundamentals', see for example Johnston and Partheymuller (2012).

nested in more than one level. Here, however, I will specifically focus on macro-level patterns of party competition. As a matter of fact, since parties are the objects which voters are called upon to evaluate while sorting their party preferences, it seems reasonable to suppose that the way they appear and relate to each other on the supply side significantly affects the set of considerations that people uses to assess them.[24]

Within this general framework, a first possible contextual trigger that I will consider has to do with the substance of political representation, i.e. the extent to which a political supply *'accurately reflects the ideological preferences of the citizenry as a whole'* (see Golder and Stramski, 2010, 91). In this regard, previous works by Laver and Sergenti (2012) and Laver (2011) have already showed how vote-seeking strategies of political parties tend to result in less differentiated ideological products, and therefore in less representative party systems. In addition to this, it has also been stressed that the unrepresentativeness of a party system resulting from a scarce differentiation of party platforms carries a cost in terms of citizen satisfaction with electoral democracy (e.g. Clarke *et al.* 2009; Brandenburg and Jones 2014). Similarly, it could therefore be supposed that the *representativeness* of the overall party systems influences the extent to which voters rely on protest motivations. These latter, in particular, should be expected to be more likely to affect voters' reasoning the more national party supplies do not present clear alternative policy proposals (**H2: *Representational Failure Hypothesis***).

A second possible triggering dimension, on the other hand, does not describe parties for what they fail to provide (i.e. representativeness), but rather for how they actively present themselves in public debate. Already mentioning the issue in their seminal study, van der Brug et al. (2000) supposed that perceptions of parties as credible vehicles for an electoral protest could well stem from dynamics of party propaganda itself. Nevertheless, they did not provide a test for this assumption. Here I will try to develop their hypothesis by arguing that the preponderance of protest motivations in voters' reasoning could reflect the extent to which they are intentionally 'elicited' on the supply side. More specifically, I will suppose that the more a party

[24] In particular, since people's voting reasoning unfolds along two stages, in which actual vote choice is preceded by a network of multiple evaluations of parties (see also van der Brug, van der Eijk and Franklin 2007), it seems generally reasonable to characterize the role of the context in terms of features of the parties themselves.

system provides anti-establishment cues to the general electorate, i.e. the more it is pervaded by anti-establishment speeches in general or, alternatively, significantly polarized on that dimension, the higher the probability that voters will characterize parties and sort their related preferences by means of protest motivations (**H3: *Anti-Establishment Rhetoric Hypothesis***). Of course, the underlying assumption here is that an anti-establishment or populist character is not necessarily the prerogative of sole established parties. Rather, it should be intended as a *competitive strategy* that any party can adopt, under specific circumstances (see Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011).[25] Drawing upon this assumption, a recent contribution by Poletti and Segatti (2016) shows that, once controlled for the general state of the economy, all parties are more likely to adopt a populist style of political competition (and to be electorally rewarded for that) in those contexts where mainstream actors do not provide clearly distinct ideological platforms. On second thoughts, a similar interaction could well exist on the side of the voters as well. In particular, party system representativeness on the one side and anti-establishment rhetorical strategies on the other could be supposed to be involved in an interplay affecting the insurgence of protest considerations as psychological drivers of party preference. In this regard, I will specifically assume that anti-establishment cues in the party systems increase their effects as activating factors of protest considerations the more one system's representativeness in ideological terms is lower (**H4: *Anti-Establishment Rhetoric Conditionality Hypothesis***). Moreover, and in a specular manner, I will suppose that party system (un)representativeness significantly increases the causal importance of protest motivations on voters' reasoning as long as the malfunction of representational processes actually enters public debate, i.e. parties begin to visibly compete on a pro/anti-establishment dimension (**H5: *Representational Failure Conditionality Hypothesis***). A synthetic representation of the overall causal machinery proposed here is reported at the underlying Figure 2.2.

[25] To say it in the words of Poletti and Segatti, '*[…]. The use of a populist rhetoric is […] instrumental to the competitive strategy of a party. The consequence of this is that, in theory, not only challengers of the 'establishment' can use a populist rhetoric, but also mainstream parties themselves […]*' (2016, 7).

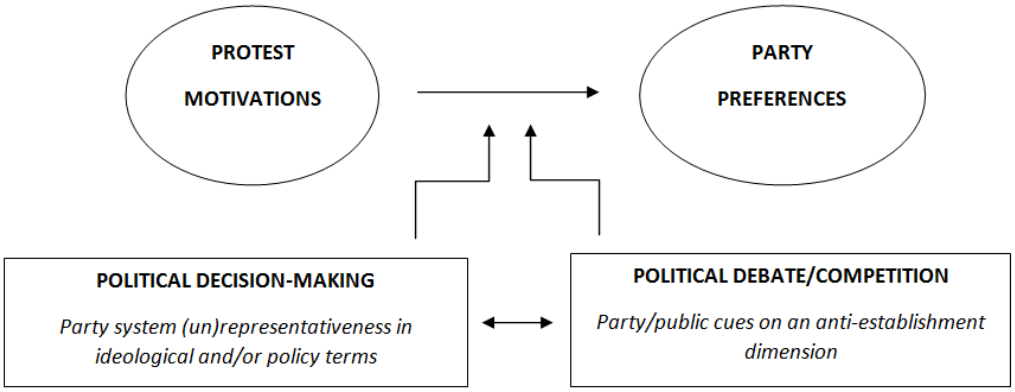

Fig.2.2 Contextual Triggers' Hypotheses: Explanatory Scheme. Source: own elaboration.

2.3.3. The Electoral Consequences of a Protest Reasoning

With regard to the behavioral dimension of the protest voting issue, I already argued how protest motivations may not necessarily align to those that we generally recognize as protest parties in public debate. Nothing prevents, in fact, that some voters rely on idiosyncratic and/or counterintuitive shortcuts, applying their protest motivations to a party that they subjectively perceive as a protest option but which is not generally recognized as such. As already mentioned, this scenario is problematic to the extent that acknowledges a not intelligible expression of protest, not understood as such either by the elites or by the scientific community. Moreover, it makes the answer to the question *'who gets rewarded from an electoral protest?'* potentially less trivial than it is usually believed. In particular, the analytical choice of focusing *a priori* only on specifically alleged protest parties would be likely to miss part of the whole picture, when it comes to explaining the electoral consequences of a *protest reasoning*.

Against this scenario, here I will just assume that increasing preponderance of protest motivations in one's decision-making significantly affects the outcomes of an election (***H6: Protest Motivations' Electoral Effectiveness Hypothesis***). Clearly, the aim of such a general expectation is to observe the electoral consequences of protest motivations for all parties of a political system simultaneously, so as to get the broadest possible scope on what is going on at the behavioral level. As one will see, this point will require the use of a specific analytical technique. I will refer a thorough discussion to it at the immediately following Chapter. On second thoughts, however, the extent to which a *protest reasoning* may result in a more or less intelligible protest message in the eyes of the élites could be thought as conditional, at least partially, to parties'

competitive strategies. In this respect, it is worthwhile recalling here once again that an anti-establishment rhetoric as a non-exclusive feature of the so-called anti-establishment parties. Within such framework, we could hypothesize that the extent to which protest motivations align to the success of those that we usually target as 'protest' parties, depends on how much these latter actually present themselves as unique 'protest' options in public debate. More precisely, I will assume that the higher the differentiation of an anti-establishment party in anti-establishment terms on the supply side *vìs-a-vìs* all its competitors, the higher the probability that this party will get significant electoral gains from the presence of protest motivations in the general electorate if compared to baseline conditions (***H7 – Anti-establishment Differentiation Strategy Hypothesis***). In case of scarce individual differentiation, such electoral advantages could be supposed either to be shared within a well recognizable block of parties adopting the same anti-establishment strategy or even to be scattered across the whole political arena. While in the first case a protest pattern would still be possibly recognizable at the aggregate level, in the second one it should be significantly less outstanding. Yet this would not mean that a protest is not actually there. Rather, the way it is expressed would signal a case of coordination failure between voters and élites within the Converse's (1975) framework of elections as communication processes. For the sake of clarity, this last hypothetical statement is schematically represented in the following Fig. 2.3.

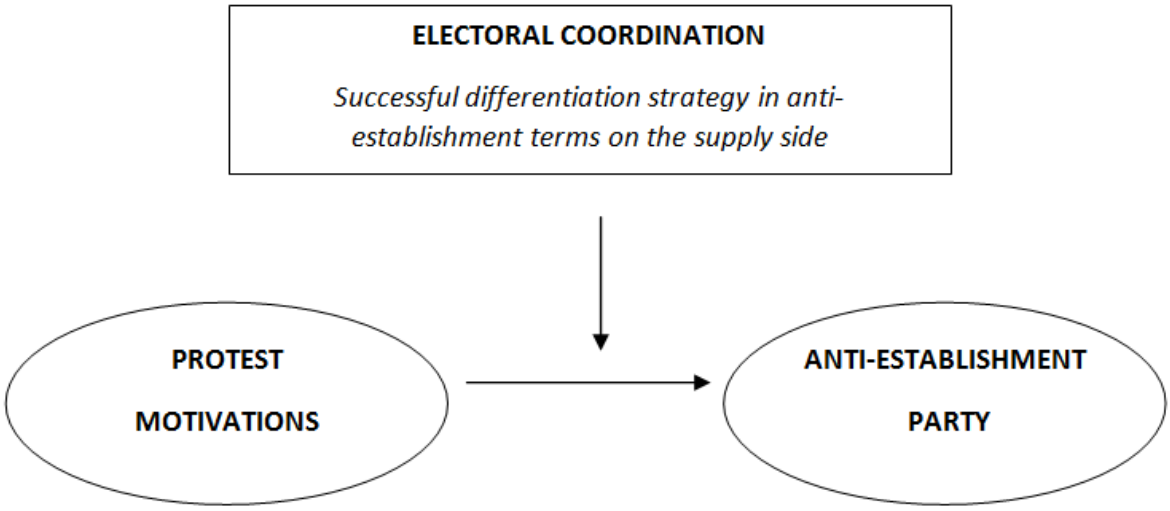

Fig.2.3. The Electoral Consequences of Protest Motivations: Explanatory Scheme. Source: own elaboration.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Now that the field of existing research on protest voting has been outlined, its conceptual elements reworked and translated into a new set of working hypotheses, time has come to specify how these latter are going to be actually tested in an empirical environment. To do it in the most exhaustive way as possible, the present Chapter puts in sequence and discusses two salient aspects concerning the design of this research: its data and the analytical strategy used to explore them. As regards the firsts, I will briefly present their general features and reasons for usage. Afterwards, a more detailed discussion of the way in which they will be reworked and explored in the following Chapters will follow.

3.1. Data

Since the hypotheses drawn above apply to a European level of analysis, the empirical data used in order to test them will be EU-wide as well. As anticipated in the Introduction, in particular, they will belong to the European Parliament Election Voter Study of 2014 (EES 2014), one of the most recent within a long-standing tradition of surveys carried jointly with the post-electoral survey commissioned by the European Parliament. Thanks to its transnational nature, it presents the clear advantage of gathering information about electoral behavior in all the EU countries in a single dataset. Nevertheless, since the objective of this research is not to focus on European elections, but rather on the calculus of voting in general, someone could object that a European Election Study might not be the right instrument for that, as it assesses party preferences for the main national parties at a time too close to that of the European election. In truth, this is not that big of a deal, especially in the present case. In fact, since at European elections there is clearly less at stake than at General elections (e.g. Reif and Schmitt 1980), a higher proximity to them should be likely to result in a stronger exposure of the survey to a protest reasoning by the voters. At the electoral level, in particular, this should entail higher advantages by small and marginal parties, consistently with the basic assumptions of the second-order elections framework (see also Hobolt and Wittrock 2011).

In addition to this, European Election Studies provide since 1989 a standardized series of non-exclusive (i.e. non-ipsative) measures of party preferences which is

particularly well suited to the analytical framework adopted here (please refer to the next paragraph for a more detailed discussion of this point). Moreover, they favor a comparative approach by over-sampling interesting national contexts (see also Marsh 2002).[26] All these elements, once taken together, make the selected data source the best option for the analysis which is proposed here.

3.1. The analytical strategy

3.1.1. The dependent variable

I already mentioned in Chapter 1 some of the possible criticalities related to the use of dichotomous dependent variables of party choice in electoral research. The first one was that they focus on the choice for one (type of) party in isolation, which implicitly suggests that the choice for these parties can be studied independently from the preference for other parties. In truth, as van der Eijk puts it, *'such operationalisations are inevitable where the electoral system allows voters only a single party or candidate to be checked on the ballot, and a similar conceptualisation may well be adequate when only two candidates or two parties compete, as is generally the case in the US. Yet such conceptualisations clearly do not fit non-exclusive (non-ipsative) preferences for multiple parties that are not only paramount in European multi-party systems, but perhaps even of relevance in the US context'* (2016, 8). Secondly, dichotomous dependent variables imply that parties are assessed according to underlying classifications, which tend to categorize parties on the base of a single feature (e.g. greens, social-democratic, left-libertarian, populist and extreme right, to name but a few), while in truth more than one characteristic could instead be relevant to the explanation of party choice.[27] As anticipated, in contrast to such an analytical

[26] With reference to 2014, in particular, the sample is not a simple random sample of European voters but a disproportionate stratified random sample, with about 1.100 respondents from each EU country, with the exceptions of Malta and Luxembourg, where the sample size is about 500. Given the huge variation in country size between United Kingdom at one extreme and Luxembourg at the other, this is very disproportionate. However, such strategy provides the necessary database for identifying national differences in voting behavior. As a matter of fact *'a sample of the same size designed simply to maximize inference to the European electorate would have far too few individuals to assess the extent to which voters in Ireland, or Denmark, or Sweden fitted the European model as well as those in France, The Netherlands or Finland'* (Marsh 2002, 12).

[27] This criticality could particularly result in causal misattributions (see also Tillie 1995a). To quote again van der Eijk on this point, '*if we are to understand how voters arrive at their choices, we cannot afford to look only at the result of that process (the party or candidate voted for), as it is almost always possible to construct different 'explanations' for that outcome which cannot be adequately tested vis-a-vis each other […] Stated differently, the ubiquitous question about party choice allows only restricted observation of*

context, I will follow here some previous contributions on protest voting in employing party preferences as a dependent variable. Operationally, they can be measured for all parties irrespective of any criterion of categorization as party families and regardless of the political system in which they are located. In the context of the 2014 EES Voter Study they are operationalized by the question '*Please tell me for each of the following how probable it is that you will ever vote for this party in general election?'*. Simultaneously, respondents were asked for their probability to vote for each of the most relevant parties in their political system in a score ranging from 0 (no likelihood of supporting the party) to 10 (strong likelihood). As clearly explained by van der Eijk and Franklin (1996), the open-ended reference to *'ever'* in the questions works as a projective device encouraging respondents to express their current preference for each party, apart from the actual restrictions of the ballot, which in most of the countries allows only an 'ipsative' preference for a single party.[28] The outcome of that strategy, however, consists in a set of items measuring on a scale from 0 to 10 the likelihood that the respondent would vote for the party concerned. As others have already stressed before, the properties of these survey items have been widely explored in the past. In particular, it has been concluded that valid inferences can be drawn about the determinants of party choice by analyzing the determinants of party preferences, since voters virtually always tend to choose the party to which they give highest propensity score (see Tillie 1995a; van der Eijk and Franklin 1996). This makes answers to such items also interpretable as answers to the more general question *'what determines which parties are voted for?'*.[29]

However, we should also point out that preferences for each party would not yet enable by themselves to compare between the factors preceding a simultaneous evaluation of all parties across political landscapes (see also Van der Eijk, van der Brug,

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the variation in preferences that is truly there. We see neither the variation (for each respondent) between all the parties that were not chosen, nor the variation (for each party) between all the respondents who did not vote for it' (2002, 199).

28 A specific form in which the logic of non-ipsative preferences can be exploited is with the concept of consideration sets. Studies using this concept distinguish the parties and candidates on offer into those being considered as options for choice, and those which are not. Models to explain party choice contain separate specifications for the 'decision' whether or not to include a party in the consideration set, and for making a final choice from that consideration set (cf. Pieters and Verplanken 1995; Wilson 2008).

29 With particular regard to the 2014 European Election Study, preliminary tests relating to the present research have ascertained that the percentage of respondents intending to vote for the party they preferred most is over the 90% of the total sample. This finding is rather in line with previous evidences in this field (cf. van der Eijk and Franklin 1996).

Kroh, and Franklin 2006). This is because the expressed probabilities to vote for each party would be still represented as different variables, one for each party, in a traditional data matrix, which would not readily lend themselves to being analyzed simultaneously. A valid way to get that result is to rearrange the data in the so-called 'stacked' form (e.g. Stimson 1985; Tillie 1995a; Oppenhuis 1995; Van der Eijk and Franklin 1996). An exemplificative output of this procedure is shown at next Figure 3.1. In such a 'stacked' environment each respondent can be represented by as many 'cases' as there are parties for which (s)he was asked to indicate the probability of a future vote (see Figure 3.1 below). Nevertheless, its data can be analyzed in the same way as any typical data matrix, by means of straightforward regression techniques. Even more important, the dependent variable is now represented by the preference score for each political party in turn, while appropriate identifiers allow characteristics of individual respondents and parties to be added as independent variables.

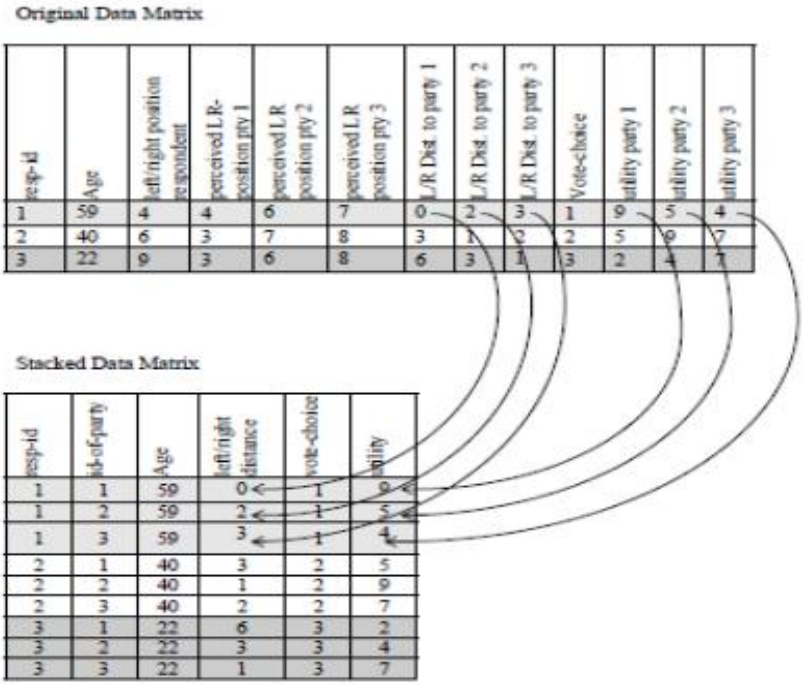


Figure 3.1 Structure of A Stacked Data Matrix. Source: van der Eijk, van der Brug, Kroh and Franklin (2006).

In addition to a more comprehensive understanding of the electoral choices in general, this way of re-arranging the data entails a further set of analytical advantages and opportunities. Here I will focus only on the most relevant for the purposes of this work.[30] Firstly, as outlined also by previous studies on protest voting (see van der Brug and Fennema 2009), a stacked matrix allows a research design which is truly comparative. In fact, as the new dependent variable, i.e. preferences for all national parties, transcends proper names of parties in the analysis of electoral processes (which are by definition country-specific), hypothetical stacked datasets from different countries can be easily combined into one single data matrix, easily allowing for cross-country analyses.

Secondly, a stacked environment provides an optimal condition for assessing the global effect of specific predictors exert on the joint evaluation of all national parties, i.e. on calculus of voting. Within that framework, if one wants to understand whether some motives underlying vote choice are peculiar to specific party voters, as suggested by van der Eijk et al. (1996) party choice - properly characterized by means of typological descriptors (such as green, populist, liberal, etc.) -may be included as an additional independent variable in the models. Just as a way of example, in previous analysis of protest voting party choice was characterized as anti-immigrant or not and then put in interaction with traditional predictors of party preferences such as ideological/issue proximity to a party and party size. To the extent that this strategy allows to ascertain whether specific party voters based their choice on a distinct set of considerations if compared to the general electorate, we get access to a more complete knowledge about the factors actually affecting party preferences than traditional approaches enable to do. Nevertheless, since the aim of the present work is to investigate the *domain-specific* character of protest motivations, groups of voters will be mainly characterized on the base of country-level variables describing features of the electoral environments in which their decision-making takes place. Clearly, this analytical choice will imply the use of specific technical tools during the estimation processes. Before turning to that issue, however, let me also stress here that measures of party preferences, once reshaped in a stacked context, constitute a very suitable data environment for the construction of counterfactual scenarios concerning the effects that

[30] For a more detailed synthesis of the advantages due to reconsidering the dependent variable in electoral research please refer to van der Eijk (2002) and van der Eijk, van der Brug, Kroh and Franklin (2007).

particular components of a voting calculus may have on election outcomes in general. Even this aspect, that it is going to assume a central importance in the second part of the following analyses, will be explained more in detail later in this Chapter.

3.1.2. Independent variables

In order to understand whether and how protest motivations affect voting reasoning, it seems reasonable to assess their effects on party preferences *vìs-à-vìs* possibly alternative explanations of voting behavior. Partially drawing upon the typology of electoral choices already presented at Chapter 1 (Tab 1.1) and other previous works (see also van der Eijk, Franklin and Oppenhuis 1996), I will take into consideration overall five alternatives: ideological voting, issue voting, voting based on socio-structural characteristics, party identification and party size/strength. Against this framework, protest motivations, differently from previous stacked analyses on this issue, will be here operationalized by means of direct indicators referring to the two attitudinal components set out in the previous Chapter.

But let us put first things first. In relation to ideological voting, the predictor that I will use is ideological proximity to a party, i.e. the subjectively perceived distance between a voter and the respective party in the data matrix on a left-right *continuum*. The 2014 EES questionnaire contains a battery of items in which respondents were asked to indicate their own position as well as that of each political party on a 10-point scale of which the extremes were labeled left and right. From these responses perceived left-right distances have been computed as the difference between one's own self-placement and the position attributed to each party. This means that the stronger the effect of perceived left-right proximity on party preferences, the stronger the extent of ideological voting.[31]

To follow, we have voting based on concrete policy considerations. In this case, I will rely on seven of the issues provided by the 2014 EES Voter Study: EU

[31] Implicit in this measure of ideological voting is the downsian assumption of voters' preference as a function of proximity: the smaller the distance, the larger the preference for a party. Alternatively, one could have also opted for the so-called directional approach (e.g. Rabinowitz and MacDonald 1989), which suggests to interpret the positions of parties on a continuum, such as the left-right one, as intensities of political beliefs which can be characterized by either pole. Notwithstanding this possibility, I decided to rely exclusively on the first solution, as it has already been shown to yield more explanatory power in the European context if compared to directional measures (see van der Eijk and Franklin 1996, 347).

integration, state of the economy, redistribution of economic resources, services *vs.* taxes, same-sex marriages, immigration and environment. All these are measured with batteries of statements to which respondents were asked how much they agreed on a scale from 0 to 10. Due to the lack of information about perceived party positions, here I will estimate the contribution of these attitudes to party preferences according to an alternative procedure. In particular, since the practical aim here is to create an overall measure of issue voting, for all these attitude scales simultaneously, and for each of the national parties in turn, series of multiple regressions will be performed. The resulting predicted values of these regressions, the so-called *y-hats*, will be then saved and inserted in the stacked data matrix as a new variable. This new variable will basically consist in a synthetic issue factor, i.e. an overall proxy-measure of closeness to a party based on linear transformations of the original issue variables.[32]

The same procedure will be used in order to operationalize the effect of socio-economic and demographic factors on vote choice. In this case, a single socio-structural factor will synthetize the impact of the following set of variables: sex, age, education, religiosity, church attendance, a rural-urban dichotomous variable, subjective social status, objective occupation and belonging to a union membership. To be precise, subjective social status will refer here to a variable asking for the respondents' perception of their own position in society on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means 'the lowest level' and 10 means ' the highest level'. Objective occupation, on the other hand, will consist in a variable asking for respondents' actual occupation, subsequently re-arranged into several socio-economic clusters (self-employed, managers, other white collars, manual workers, house person, unemployed, retired, student). In addition to this, religiosity will correspond to a dummy contrasting respondents with a clear religious denomination to self-declared non-believers, while church attendance will measure individual frequency to religious services on a scale running from 1 'Never' to 7 'More than once a week'.

As I already anticipated, the following models will also account for the role of party identification, i.e. a feeling of psychological closeness to a party, in explaining

[32] To be precise, the variable which is actually added here to the stacked matrix is not the pure 'y-hat', but the deviation of the y-hats from their mean for each party. For an elaborate discussion of this procedure, please refer to Van der Eijk and Franklin (1996, Chapter 20).

party preferences.[33] Two variables of the original dataset will be specifically required for the construction of this predictor: a first one indicating whether the respondent has a party identification or not, and the second one measuring the strength of this feeling. The final variable here employed will be a combination of the two, assuming value 0 when the respondent is not identified with the stacked party and going up until the value of 3 for increasing levels of identification.

In addition to this, the individual calculus of voting will be also characterized by a party level predictor: *party size*. As already mentioned in Chapter 1, this could represent an additional element that voters may take into account while assessing their preferences. In fact, when two parties are about equally attractive on all relevant accounts, voters with a Duvergerian mindset (in the typology at Tab. 1.1. they were called 'pragmatic') could lean towards the largest one because of its presumed effectiveness in achieving its policy goals. Since this makes size particularly associated to parliamentary strength, I will operationalize it as each party's proportion of seats in the national parliament.

Alongside all the over-mentioned predictors, protest motivations will be explored in the form of their two underlying components assumed at the previous Chapter: perception of *political system failure* and perception of *policy performance failure*. The first one, as basically coinciding with the attitudinal cluster of *political disaffection* (see Chapter 2, 34), will be measured by means of two variables of external political (in)efficacy and one item concerning confidence in the national parliament.[34] The second one, on the other hand, will be assessed through a set of items regarding short-term evaluations of the ruling parties and the political system, such as judgments

[33] This variable has never been included in previous studies on protest voting based on the analysis of party preferences. One of the reasons plausibly resides in the scarce applicability of the concept of party identification in European multi-party contexts (see also Thomassen and Rosema 2008). Yet, to the extent that perceived closeness to a party could also be intended as a cue enabling voters to make sensible political choices in complex environments (see also Clarke, Sanders, Stewart and Witheley 2010), I will take it into account as well. Notwithstanding this, the next analyses will lack of additional explanations concerning the realm of valence politics, such as leader evaluations. This is surely a limit due to data availability and it should be recognized as such. Nevertheless, as long as leader are 'prisms' of their political organizations (see also Curtice and Holmberg 2005), part of their contribution to the explanation of party preferences should be incorporated by considerations regarding their parties themselves (cf. Fiorina 1981).

[34] More specifically, these three 'political system failure' items will consist of 4-point Likert scales measuring respondents' level of trust in their national Parliament and their level of agreement to two different sentences respectively: '*my voice counts in my country*' and '*the national Parliament takes the concerns of the citizens into consideration*'.

on government performance, perception of government's responsibility for the economic crisis and perception of the state of national economy.[35] As in the case of policy and socio-structural variables, the predicted values (*yhats*) of each set of items will be computed simultaneously by means of different regressions, one for each of the national parties in turn. In this way, it will be possible to explore the extent to which each of the two components of protest motivations actually affects party preferences within the countries under analysis. Not only that, but this procedure will also allow to cope with the relationship between protest motivations and the choice dimension by the estimation of counterfactual electoral results.

Before getting into that matter more in detail, however, it should be also remembered that some hypotheses of this work aim to test the role of several country-level characteristics as triggers or catalysts of protest motivations. I am referring here to party system (un)representativeness and the presence of an anti-establishment 'cues' by political parties in public debate. The first of these factors, in particular, will be here operationalized by means of a synthetic index consisting in the average value of the overall distinctiveness of national party platforms over the post-crisis period preceding the elections (2008-2013), drawn from the Varieties of Democracy dataset (version 6).[36] On the other hand, the extent to which a party system offers anti-establishment 'cues' will be explored under two alternative perspectives. The first one will interpret them in terms of a generalized salience of an anti-establishment dimension in public debate, measured as the grand mean of the scores, ranging from 0 to 10, on the importance of an anti-élite dimension in each national party's rhetoric during 2014, according to Chapel Hill's survey experts.[37] The second one, on the other hand, understands these cues in

[35] For the record, while the first of these will be a dummy variable, assuming the value of 1 when the respondent disapproves the current government's record, the second one will consist in a 5-point scale ranging from very good to very bad evaluation of the state of the economy. Finally, a 10-point scale will signal increasing attribution of responsibility to the government for the economic crisis by the respondents.

[36] To be exact, the measure of distinctiveness at issue is derived from experts' judgments concerning *'how many political parties with representation in the national legislature or presidency have publicly available party platforms (manifestos) that are publicized and relatively distinct from one another'* in a particular country. In order to be counted in the affirmative, parties must have platforms that are both distinct (either in terms of content or generalized ideology) and publicly disseminated. For further details on the variable's construction, please refer to the codebook downloadable at the following link: https://www.v-dem.net/en/data/data-version-6/

[37] Ryan Bakker, Erica Edwards, Liesbet Hooghe, Seth Jolly, Gary Marks, Jonathan Polk, Jan Rovny, Marco Steenbergen, and Milada Vachudova. 2015. *"2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey"*. Version 2015.1. Available on chesdata.eu. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

terms of a rhetorical feature on which parties tend (or not) to polarize. In this latter case, in particular, the operationalization will consist in the standard deviation of the same party level scores of the 2014 Chapel Hill expert survey. As one will see, both solutions will prove to be useful, at different stages of the next empirical sequence.

The same underlying variable, amongst other things, will be also used in Chapter 5 in order to both distinguish those who are generally seen as 'protest' parties in public debate and to measure their level of anti-establishment differentiation on the supply side *vìs-a-vìs* the totality of their competitors. As regards the first purpose, I will label as protest parties only those parties with a score at the top end of the scale (i.e. higher than 7). Coming however to parties' differentiation in the use of an anti-establishment rhetoric, I will measure it as the distance between their actual score and the mean score of all other parties on that dimension (cf. Wagner 2012).

For the sake of clarity, please find here below a synthetic table presenting the list of all the independent variables and some summary statistics performed on the final stacked dataset.

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Standard deviation	N
Individual level					
Left-right proximity to stacked party	6.88	0	10	2.68	148,837
Issue proximity to stacked party*	0.00	-7.30	6.73	0.99	151,515
Party identification with stacked party	0.17	0	3	0.59	170,698
Socio-structural characteristics*	0.00	-5,56	8,60	0.89	180,373
Perception of political system failure*	0.00	-5,65	5,43	0.72	180, 368
Perception of policy performance failure*	0.00	-9,05	7,78	0.83	185,546
Party level					
Party size	13.09	0.00	58.79	14.45	213,597
Political system level					
Party system (un)representativeness in ideological terms	2.50	1.42	3.42	0.48	201,170
Spread of anti-establishment speeches in the party system	4.92	3.43	6.81	0.86	214,622
Polarization on a pro/anti-establishment dimension in the party system	2.61	0.71	3.72	0.61	214,622

Tab 3.1 Descriptive statistics of independent variables. Source: own elaboration on data from the 2014 EES Voter Study.

3.1.3. Brief overview of the employed techniques

Previously I mentioned that a 'stacked' data structure is particularly well suited to cross-country analyses, since the new dependent variable in that context transcends country-specific characteristics of political parties, such as their actual names, replacing them with standardized and homogeneous information concerning individual preferences for them. To exploit this option, the EU-wide analyses shown in the next Chapters represent the *de facto* final outcome of a process in which all twenty-eight national subsamples belonging to the EES Study of 2014 have been individually stacked and subsequently reorganized into a single, wider data matrix.

Analytically, the composition of such a cross-national mosaic has specific implications. In particular, it notoriously entails that individual observations are not completely independent from each other, as they are nested into a superior level, the country, to which each respondent belongs. Since such *embedded-ness* into higher-level units could well result in residuals that are not independent within the same country, the use of ordinary regression models would be substantially misleading, as it would make the standard errors and the significance of coefficients respectively under and overestimated (see Steenbergen and Jones 2002). To prevent this, all the following analyses will substantially rely on multilevel regression models (see also Snijders and Bosker 1999).

Once clarified that, however, it should also be said that the information extracted from these models will vary according to which side of the analytical framework at Chapter 2 they serve. More specifically, in the first part of the empirical sequence, dedicated to '*the psychology of an electoral protest*', the focus will be mainly on the effects that the two alleged components of a *protest reasoning* have (or do not have) on how voters make their minds up about their own preferences towards the main national parties. In the second empirical section, however, the attention will shift to the conversion of the predicted values of these preferences into aggregate electoral results, varying according to differential impacts of protest motivations on party preferences. In essence, this second passage will consist in manipulating the size of 'protest' regression coefficients within a precise sequence of models so as to obtain correspondent counterfactual scenarios, describing what would happen at the electoral level if protest motivations really had that particular effect within specific sets of voters. As already

suggested by previous applications in this field (e.g. van der Eijk *et al.* 2007), some passages will be required in order to get that information. First, I will estimate a series of baseline multiple regressions explaining voters' party preferences in different countries. The focus will be in particular on Western European countries. Secondly, I will use the estimated regression coefficients derived from step 1 to calculate voters' expected preferences under different scenarios, in which the effects of protest motivations on the assessment of party preferences are progressively strengthened so to increasingly resemble a protest-affected decision-making. Third, these predicted preferences will be transformed into counterfactual individual votes, by selecting as party choice the highest individual party preference.[38] In conclusion, such individual votes will be aggregated into counterfactual vote shares.

As partially anticipated, the main advantage of this procedure is that it allows a comprehensive observation of the effects of specific individual level variables on election outcomes in general. In fact, it transcends any necessity to classify or label parties on the base of specific characteristics, which could always result in potential loss information, when not in causal misattributions, as explained above (see previous paragraph 3.1.1). In response to this, some might argue that it is difficult to imagine how any objective understanding of the consequences of a *protest reasoning* could be derived from the construction of 'counterfactual worlds'. Of course, this doubt is totally legitimate. Nevertheless, as other works have clearly shown before (see also van der Eijk and Walter 2016), getting objective knowledge of electoral phenomena by the construction of counterfactual scenarios is definitely possible, as long as the mixture of considerations which is assumed to drive party preferences is kept within a general horizon of plausibility. To put it in the perspective of the present research, this basically implies that the input levels of *protest-ness* characterizing individual voting reasoning will be never manipulated over and beyond a precise threshold, fixed to baseline conditions expressed by reference models. Further details on this point as well as on additional elements regarding the procedure for the creation of counterfactual electoral

[38] As well explained by van der Eijk (2007), this passage can be justified only if voters tend to choose the party that they prefer most. As claimed some pages earlier, this has actually been the case since the 1990s (see van der Eijk and Franklin 1996), but even in 2014, according to the additional tests of this research.

scenarios will be discussed at Chapter 5, in connection with the presentation of their related results.

CHAPTER 4: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF AN ELECTORAL PROTEST

How do voters choose parties in contemporary Europe? Do protest motivations have a more or less remarkable role in that respect? If so, how do they behave *vìs-a-vìs* alternative sets of predictors notoriously affecting voting decision, such as ideological, issue and/or strategic considerations? Now that all the pieces of the theoretical and methodological framework have been finally put together, these questions are going to be addressed step-by-step during the present Chapter.

With regard to the first point, in particular, the empirical sequence will start with a couple of voting functions describing European citizens' voting reasoning. That will give a first general portrait of the factors driving individual party preferences in 2014 and their relative strength. Against that background, the role of protest motivations will be analyzed by exploring the residuals of those original functions. Without going into detail for now, this strategy will be extremely useful to test the 'outlying' nature of protest motivations, i.e. to assess the extent to which their effects on party preferences outweigh those of mainstream predictors among specific groups of voters. Afterwards, some multilevel models will test the amenability of protest motivations to particular contexts, i.e. their nature of *domain-specific* considerations preceding vote choice.

As mentioned earlier, once this sequence has been completed, at Chapter 5 counterfactual analyses will be employed to estimate the relationship between the preponderance of protest motivations in voters' reasoning and counterfactual electoral results. This latter point, however, is already a different part of the story. For now, let us concentrate on the 'psychological' side of the issue, i.e. whether it makes sense to talk about 'protest motivations' underlying vote choice and/or electoral preferences to vote and in what terms.

4.1. Defining the context: determinants of party preference in 2014's Europe

In the Introduction of this work I justified the limited time frame of this analysis by arguing that a narrow focus on specific moments or junctures is potentially useful, especially when it calls into question particular interpretations of the motives underlying

their electoral outcomes. In the perspective of the present analysis, this basically equates to wondering: when protest voting in Europe if not in 2014? At first glance, this question seems overall reasonable. As a matter of fact, if in 2009 the economic crisis had not yielded yet its electoral effects (e.g. De Sio and Legnante 2010), later on it apparently did it. During the years following the Great Recession of 2008, in particular, incumbent parties, especially in Western Europe, have been heavily punished, while new parties, as well as parties of the radical populist right and the radical left widely benefited from the economic hardship.[39] A synthetic picture of this general trend is probably represented by the European Elections of 2014, in which more voters than ever cast their votes for political parties that advocated radical reforms of the EU, campaigned for an exit of their countries from the EU, or even pushed for scrapping the whole project of European integration altogether (see Treib 2014). Taken together, all these results suggest that the performance of national political systems and political parties may have assumed a significant importance in voters' reasoning at that time. Yet it would be reckless to support this hypothesis without empirically testing it. In this regard, it should be especially stressed that the following analyses, although focused on 2014, do not expressively regard electoral behavior at that the EP Election of that year, but rather voting reasoning in general. This point is also suggested by the nature of the dependent variable which is used here, 'electoral attractiveness', whose question format entails a projective mechanism releasing voters from expressing their party preferences with reference to any specific election. Notwithstanding this, it should be acknowledged that the EP Elections of 2014, both in their outcomes and their competitive dynamics, have been surely part of the informational environment in which respondents of the EES Voter Study oriented themselves and assessed parties at the time of the survey.

But, in the end, how does the calculus of voting of European citizens look like in 2014? To give a substantive answer to this question, two pooled multivariate models on the 28 countries included in the 2014 EES Study have been performed. As anticipated, given the clustered nature of the data, they are basically multilevel linear mixed models. Tab 4.1 shows the outcome of this analysis. It provides the effects on party preferences

[39] To quote Hernandez and Kriesi on this point, *'radical parties benefited especially in the hardest hit countries, while the vote share of new parties has been rising independently of economic hardship in post-crisis elections across WE'* (2015, 24).

of the overall set of factors already listed at Chapter 3. A single issue factor, in particular, synthetizes the effects of all issues by a single '*y-hat*' variable, so to allow a better assessment of the alternative explanations of party choice here considered: ideology, party size, issue, party identification, socio-structural and protest. A second model, on the other hand, eliminates party identification from the independent variables. Given its well-known closeness to party choice (e.g. Thomassen 1976; Rosema and Thomassen 2008), in fact, a comparison between the effects of its inclusion/exclusion could be much more useful than simply claiming that identification with a party consistently adds to the explanation of party preferences.[40]

Coming straight to the discussion of the results, a first thing which clearly stands out is that all the four estimated factors have an impact in the expected direction and are statistically significant, which is however not really surprising, given the high number of cases included by any cross-national stacked analysis. Secondly, it is clearly noticeable that the exclusion of party identification leads to a considerable drop in the amount of explained variance in the second model.[41] Notwithstanding this, proximity to the voted party in left-right terms and issue considerations have significant effects in both models.

VARIABLES	Model 1	Model 2
PARTY IDENTIFICATION	2.060***	-
	(0.0131)	
LEFT-RIGHT PROXIMITY	0.342***	0.418***
	(0.00323)	(0.00330)
ISSUE PROXIMITY	0.402***	0.517***
	(0.00832)	(0.00866)
PARTY SIZE	0.0107**	0.0116***

[40] With specific regard to the relationship between party identification and vote choice, Thomassen (1976) revealed that more than 90 per cent of party identifiers voted for the same party in pairs of elections. Those people who identified more strongly with a political party, moreover, were even more loyal than this. More recently, Thomassen and Rosema (2008) showed that among voters who strongly identified with a party those who considered themselves an adherent, about 95 per cent voted for 'their' party. Among those who said they were not an adherent but felt attracted to a party the corresponding figures are only slightly less; approximately 90 per cent.

[41] The reference is here in particular to 'level 1' variance. Such specification derives from the fact that any definition of an *R*2 statistic for the linear mixed model must account for the distinction between the proportion of variation in the response explained by the fixed effects and the proportion explained by the random effects. For the record, this work relies on the estimation method of these two parameters proposed by Snijders and Bosker (1994): https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2587505/#R2.

	(0.000594)	(0.000602)
POLITICAL SYSTEM FAILURE	0.275***	0.429***
	(0.0124)	(0.0126)
POLICY PERFORMANCE FAILURE	0.264***	0.421***
	(0.0106)	(0.0109)
SOCIAL STRUCTURE	0.463***	0.586***
	(0.00925)	(0.00953)
Constant	0.312***	0.205**
	(0.0825)	(0.0902)
Log Likelihood	-231996.4	-279781.17
AIC	464012.8	559580.3
BIC	464107.8	559667.2
R2 – level 1	0.4378	0.2907
R2 – level 2	0.3805	0.2790
Observations	99,042	114,329
Number of groups	28	28

Unstandardized coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.001, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Tab.4.1 Factors Explaining Individual Party Preferences In The European Union (2014). Source: 2014 EES Voter Study.

An additional point to be added is that, all things considered, attitudes towards the performance of parties and political systems generally matter in voters' calculus. Bear in mind, however, that this finding does not automatically entail an empirical relevance of protest motivations as predictors of party preference. In a stacked context, in fact, this is simply telling us that representational and systemic performance of parties and political systems enter voters' reasoning. The reason for this is that such predictors, as linear transformations of original sets of variables, have necessarily positive parameters, so that no conclusions can be drawn about the direction of the resulting effects (see also van der Brug and Fennema 2009). Against a similar background, to be sure that they actually correspond to protest motivations, respondents' belonging to a potential group of protest voters should be explicitly distinguished, either focusing on them as a specific sub-group, or by adding such information as an interactive term within overall models. Both these solutions will be employed, one after another, in the two following paragraphs of the analysis.

4.2. Focusing on protest motivations: 'how' do they matter?

4.2.1. Exploring the internal structure of a Protest Reasoning

Given the big picture of individual decision-making in Europe described above, it is now time to focus more specifically on the first issue raised by this work, i.e. if and how do protest motivations behave within a voting function. In this regard, I repeatedly mentioned that the original protest voting hypothesis frames protest voters as 'outliers' in reasoning terms, i.e. as people whose party preferences are affected by a substantively alternative reasoning algorithm if compared to the 'average' citizen (e.g. van der Eijk *et al.* 1996; van der Brug *et al.* 2000, van der Eijk and Franklin 2009). Similarly to any outlier in social and political research, in fact, also protest voters as theorized by van der Brug *et al.* should be intended as cases deviating so much from the other observations as to arouse suspicions that they was generated by a different mechanism, i.e. an alternative decision-making process (see also Hawkins 1980). Operationally, such *outlier-ness* should be inferred by the magnitude of the regression residuals derived from a mainstream voting function, accounting for ideological, issue, socio-structural and party identification - based explanations of vote choice. Nevertheless, identifying protest voters on the base of mere residuals would be somehow problematic. The reason is that it is often a subjective judgment, especially in the presence of so many cases such as in a EES Study, as to what constitutes a 'sufficient' deviation from a regression line to be considered an outlier, and in this case a protest voter. In fact, the data may be embedded in a significant amount of noise, and such noise may not be of any interest to the analyst.[42] For this reason, I will assess the presumed outlier-ness of protest motivation through an alternative procedure, composed of the three following steps:

1) Estimation of a standard voting function, in all similar to the one reported above;

2) Derivation of regression residuals relating to that function;[43]

[42] As argumented by the same Aggarwal, '*[…] noise represents the semantic boundary between normal data and true anomalies – noise is often modeled as a weak form of outliers, which does not always meet the strong criteria necessary for a data point to be considered interesting or anomalous enough*' (2013, 4).

[43] To be precise, the estimated residuals will be here in their standardized version.

3) Estimation of the same model at point 1 but with residuals as new dependent variable for the only target of 'potential' protest voters, i.e. respondents with explicitly negative attitudes towards politics and party performance.[44]

To be precise, the residuals estimated at point 2 will be the part of the variation not explained by the general voting function at point 1. Therefore, if positive and significant effects of policy and political system performance are observed within the group of potential protest voters defined at point 3, this would mean that such considerations are actually prominent within that set of voters (cf. van der Brug *et al.* 2000).

In truth, results from a further pooled multi-level model on the 28 EU countries of the EES Study of 2014 (see Tab 4.2 below) show that potential protest voters do not significantly differ from the general electorate in the extent to which they rely on protest motivations. In fact, their coefficients (B=-0.0558; $p<0.05$ and B=-0.0404; $p<0.1$ respectively) signal an approximately negative contribution of these variables in explaining the unexplained variance of a mainstream causal model. This means, in other words, that protest motivations do not have a significant role in explaining party preferences apart from a standard voting function, i.e. that they do not define (at least in 2014) a 'stand-alone' reasoning algorithm preceding party preferences, as theorized by van der Brug and others (2000). More realistically, they are part of a broader set of considerations surrounding the reasoning of potential protest voters, together with other ideological and/or strategic factors.

VARIABLES	Model 3
PARTY IDENTIFICATION	0.197***
	(0.0198)
LEFT-RIGHT PROXIMITY	-0.0131***
	(0.00429)
ISSUE PROXIMITY	-0.0170
	(0.0130)

[44] Specifically, such group is going to be composed by all respondents providing negative answers to the six survey questions used to create the two components of protest motivations at the core of the next analysis. For further details on the actual contents of the questions and on their response categories please refer to footnotes 10 and 11 of the previous Chapter 3.

PARTY SIZE	-0.000813
	(0.000751)
POLITICAL SYSTEM FAILURE	-0.0558**
	(0.0224)
POLICY PERFORMANCE FAILURE	-0.0404*
	(0.0208)
SOCIAL STRUCTURE	-0.0460***
	(0.0142)
Constant	0.0113
	(0.0401)
Log Likekihood	-11250.929
AIC	22521.86
BIC	22591.84
Observations	8,090
Number of groups	27

Unstandardized coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.001, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Tab.4.2 Explaining The Residuals of a General Voting Function Among 'Potential' Protest Voters. Source: 2014 EES Voter Study.

Ultimately, it has to be admitted that potential protest voters in Europe tend to behave inconsistently with respect to the theoretical expectations of a purely protest vote hypothesis. In fact, the only factor on which they appear to over-rely, if compared to the general electorate, is party identification (B=0.197; p<0.001). This is probably the most surprising aspect of the present analysis. It means in fact that these people, rather than manifesting a purely goal-oriented commitment to protest, tends somehow to be characterized by relatively simple shortcuts to political decision-making. After all, there is wide evidence in the literature that voters can use their party identification for helpful cues. More specifically, it has been said that partisan attachments may serve as '*fast and frugal heuristics*' (e.g. Gigerenzer 2008; Clarke, Sanders, Stewart and Whiteley 2011). This does not mean, however, that there is no room for protest motivations in discontented voters' reasoning. Indeed, as already mentioned, their very low and similar coefficients in Tab 4.2 are simply signaling that they do not behave differently than in the general electorate. Rather, they both point in the same direction as other mainstream predictors such as left-right and issue proximity.

In view of that outcome, one could well ask how all these different clusters of factors might actually relate to each other. If not alternative, how do they coexist within a single reasoning process? A possible interpretation is that protest motivations, when present, imply the psychological involvement of disaffected voters in their own

decision-making process. In particular, the desire to protest could act as an initial trigger for the operation of further cognitive processes, relating to the expression of substantive political stances belonging to the realm of ideological, issue and strategic considerations.[45] On the other hand, when this desire is absent, '*fast and frugal heuristics*' such as partisan attachments could work as surrogates of more demanding reasoning processes.

In truth, an empirical test of this insight is not immediate and will not be pursued here. In fact, our two protest factors have been estimated with a procedure that involves a linear transformation of the original 'protest' variables. This procedure provides a valid way to estimate the strength of each of the independent variables, but at the same time rules out the possibility to estimate interaction effects at the individual level (see van der Brug and Fennema 2009, 605).[46] In the future, more appropriate technical tools, such as structural equation modeling, could be used in order to specifically address this point. For the moment, however, we settle for coming to the conclusion that the internal structure of a *protest reasoning* is overall heterogeneous in terms of the kinds of considerations that are generally included in it. After all, this latter was the central issue I originally intended to deal with in the current analysis.

4.2.2. Protest motivations in context

To sum up what shown so far, protest motivations on the one side and mainstream predictors of party preferences on the other are not mutually exclusive drivers of party preferences, at least in 2014. Such finding, however inconsistent with the expectations of the original protest voting framework, is enough to corroborate our initial *Protest Reasoning Hypothesis*. In fact, although they do not constitute a separate, alternative criterion for vote choice, they still represent a significant component of the individual calculus of voting, directly affecting preferences towards parties in general. Actually, this is not a foregone conclusion. To complete the picture at the psychological level, however, we should now move to the political macro-context, looking for the

[45] Such dynamic could be also defined in terms of 'spreading activation', i.e. a mechanism that causes additional information to become available to conscious thought in the face of a decision-making process (e.g. Anderson 1983; Collins and Loftus 1975)

[46] The main reason is that linear transformations of the original variables make their content no more easily readable when testing conditional hypotheses. It should be specified, however, that this criticality does not apply anymore to interactions involving macro-level units (see van der Eijk and Franklin 1996, Chapter 20).

triggering factors giving relevance to these considerations as predictors of party preference.

In this regard, I already stressed at Chapter 2 that voters usually have a good judgment about which considerations to apply when voting in a particular electoral setting (see Schmitt and Wessels 2008). Drawing upon that framework, in particular, I argued that an increasing importance of protest motivations could be due to both to the overall representativeness of existing party systems (**H2: *Representational Failure Hypothesis***) and to party propaganda, i.e. to the relative spread of an anti-elite rhetoric in public debate (**H3: *Anti-Establishment Rhetoric Hypothesis***). In addition, I also speculated a possible interaction between these two aspects. In fact I assumed that an anti-establishment political competition is more effective in cueing protest motivations where party system representativeness is low (**H4: *Anti-Establishment Rhetoric Conditionality Hypothesis***) and, secondly, I supposed that ideological indistinctiveness of existing parties increasingly affects voting reasoning the more parties tend to polarize on an anti-establishment dimension in public debate (**H5: *Representational Failure Conditionality Hypothesis***).

Since all these hypotheses imply a specific interest for conditional effects, i.e. for the impact of protest motivations under different conditions of political macro-contexts, a multi-level interactive strategy will be employed in the next analyses. Within that framework, an initial series of models will be aimed to test the first two hypotheses above (H2 and H3), while an additional sequence will discuss the alleged interplay between different contextual variables in cueing protest motivations (H4 and H5). Let us start from a discussion of the first ones.

Alongside the fixed-effects of the usual predictors of party preference, each of these models will include a three-way interaction combining, in turn, one component of protest motivations, one of the two contextual variables and a dummy variable for disaffected and discontented voters (basically, the same used in the previous paragraph). This latter, in particular, will be called 'SELECTION VARIABLE'. In fact, it will be extremely useful in order to identify, insulate and plot the only marginal effects belonging to respondents plausibly relying on protest motivations (i.e. those with bad attitudes towards politics and party performance), otherwise not distinguishable in a stacked context, as already explained at the previous paragraph. The results of the

estimation process are showed at Tab 4.3 just below.[47] Given the wide number of coefficients implied by the three way-interactions, only those of higher theoretical relevance for the present research have been reported in the present output. I refer in particular to higher order interactions involving each of the three interested predictors simultaneously. Their coefficients, in fact, are the only ones that give us substantive information about positive or negative changes in the effects of protest motivations for increasing levels of the contextual variable at issue. A complete list of the estimated coefficients will be however available in the final Appendix. The same applies to following Tables 4.4 and 4.5.

As one can easily notice, although the models are rather similar in terms of their R squared statistics at the individual level, when it comes to their amount of explained variance at the country level, the latter two clearly appear to perform better than the first ones. Nevertheless, all their key interaction terms are statistically significant, which generally means that their inclusion serves to a better specification of the models (see also Jaccard and Turrisi 2003). This conclusion, amongst other things, seems also supported by the fact that both the Akaike's and Bayesian information criteria are here basically lower than in the first general model at Tab. 4.1.

VARIABLES	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
PARTY IDENTIFICATION	2.054***	2.054***	2.057***	2.057***
	(0.0134)	(0.0134)	(0.0131)	(0.0131)
LEFT-RIGHT PROXIMITY	0.337***	0.337***	0.342***	0.342***
	(0.00334)	(0.00334)	(0.00323)	(0.00323)
ISSUE PROXIMITY	0.404***	0.403***	0.401***	0.401***
	(0.00871)	(0.00872)	(0.00833)	(0.00834)
PARTY SIZE	0.0117***	0.0118***	0.0107***	0.0108***
	(0.000626)	(0.000627)	(0.000594)	(0.000595)
POLITICAL SYSTEM FAILURE	0.192***	0.281***	0.523***	0.285***
	(0.0680)	(0.0131)	(0.0690)	(0.0127)
POLICY PERFORMANCE FAILURE	0.294***	0.193***	0.270***	0.313***
	(0.0112)	(0.0593)	(0.0107)	(0.0560)

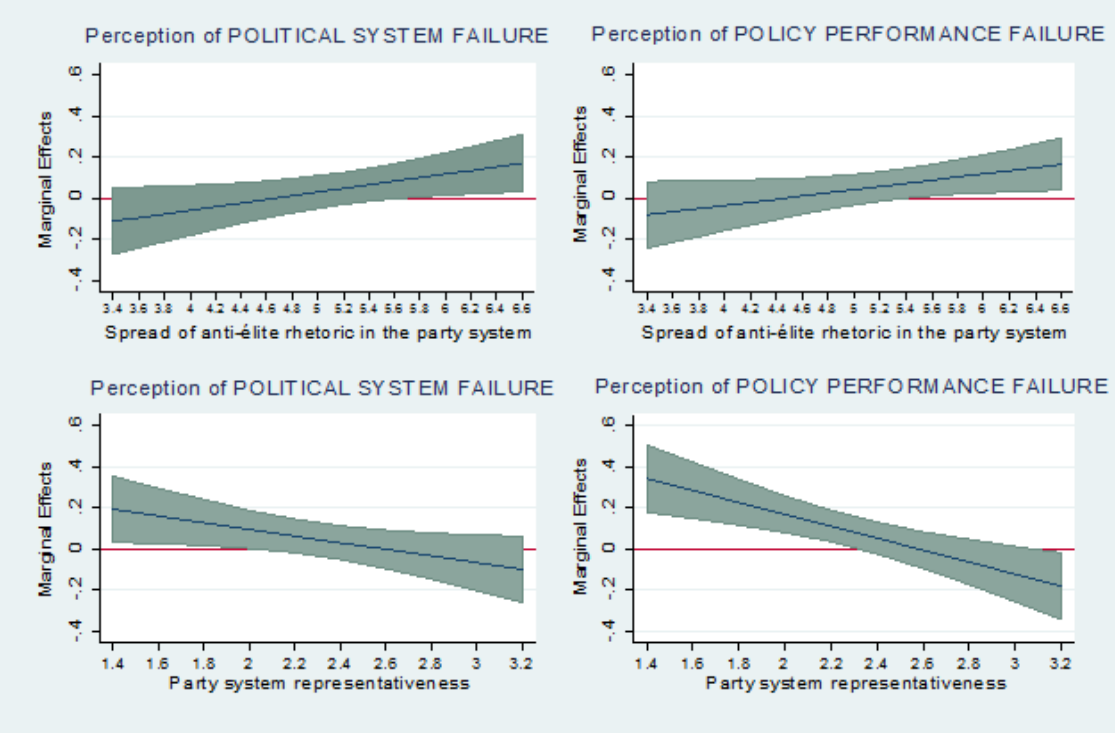
[47] In a way, one might wonder why not to limit these estimations to the only group of disaffected and discontented respondents. After all, this would have significantly increased the readability of the final results, by eliminating one of the three interactive terms. Yet the obtained sub-sample would be much smaller than the rest of the electorate, to the point that the variability of the employed predictors would be significantly affected, as well as the reliability of the final estimates. This is why I finally opted for the strategy which is shown here. Once again, the same consideration also applies to following Tables 4.4 and 4.5. I am thankful to Prof. Cees van der Eijk for his precious advices in this respect.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE	0.463***	0.463***	0.463***	0.463***
	(0.00955)	(0.00955)	(0.00925)	(0.00925)
SELECTION VARIABLE	-0.191	-0.173	-0.341*	-0.173
(1=disaffected and discontented voters)	(0.164)	(0.158)	(0.195)	(0.186)
(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS	0.332*	0.332*		
	(0.175)	(0.175)		
ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT RHETORIC			-0.196**	-0.199**
			(0.0832)	(0.0830)
SELECTION VARIABLE*POLITICAL SYSTEM FAILURE*UNREPRESENTATIVENESS	-0.202**			
	(0.0832)			
SELECTION VARIABLE*POLICY PERFORMANCE FAILURE*(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS		-0.334***		
		(0.0855)		
SELECTION VARIABLE*POLITICAL SYSTEM FAILURE* ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT RHETORIC			0.135***	
			(0.0433)	
SELECTION VARIABLE*POLICY PERFORMANCE FAILURE*ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT RHETORIC				0.0848**
				(0.0418)
Constant	-0.535	-0.538	1.278***	1.292***
	(0.442)	(0.442)	(0.418)	(0.416)
Log Likekihood	-218136.23	-218131.98	-231967.12	-231975.32
AIC	436304.5	436296	463966.2	463982.6
BIC	436455.5	436447	464118.3	464134.7
R squared – 1st level	0.4354	0.4355	0.4406	0.4406
R squared – 2nd level	0.3516	0.3545	0.4863	0.4892
Observations	93,144	93,144	99,042	99,042
Number of groups	25	25	28	28

Unstandardized coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.001, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Tab.4.3 Protest Motivations and Contextual Factors: Multi-Level Regressions. Source: 2014 EES Voter Study.

To get a clear and substantive idea of the underlying statistical relationships, however, we should look at the impacts of protest-related factors under different conditions of the two contextual characteristics at issue. This information is reported at next Fig 4.1, where the conditional marginal effects of perceived political system and party performance failure have been arranged horizontally, so as to facilitate comparisons between the outcomes of models focusing either on the one or the other element.



Note: conditional marginal effects using Model 4 - 7 and keeping all other variables at their mean. Upper and lower curves indicate bounds of confidence intervals at 95% level.

Fig.4.1 Protest Motivations and Contextual Factors: Average Marginal Effects.

Relating to the two upper graphs, in particular, an increasing volume of anti-establishment speeches in public debate implies a higher relevance of both components of protest motivations as determinants of party preferences, exactly as expected. More specifically, their effects become significant only when the anti-establishment-ness of a political environment is above a certain threshold, which is approximately 5,6 for both perceived political system failure and policy performance failure on a scale ranging from 3,4 to 6,5. A similar situation, although in the opposite direction, applies to party system unrepresentativeness. In that case, in fact, protest motivations do not simply increase their slope, and therefore their marginal impact, on party preferences the weaker the distinctiveness of national party platforms, but they get statistical significance only at lower levels of that variable.

Once these points have been finally addressed, let us now complete the picture by looking at the possible interplay between the two factors covered by H4 and H5: party system unrepresentativeness and polarization in anti-establishment terms. In this latter case, each of the estimated models has been provided with a four-way interaction including *y-hats* for each component of protest motivations in turn, a dummy variable for voters with negative attitudes towards politics and party performance (actually, the same 'SELECTION VARIABLE' as before) and the two contextual variables at issue simultaneously. These latter, in particular, have been alternatively estimated in a dichotomous fashion, so as to facilitate the readability of the resulting marginal effects. For the sake of clarity, they are distinguished by the suffix '_DIC'.[48] Moreover, only the highest order multiplicative terms have been reported in the output, as already done in Tab 4.3. Before going into the merits of the presumed interplay, let us now consider for a moment the related regressions in their entirety. These latter have been reported in two successive tables (see Tab 4.4 and Tab 4.5 below), each of which focusing on one of the two proposed hypotheses at a time and on each of the two components of protest motivations in turn.

VARIABLES	Model 8	Model 9
PARTY IDENTIFICATION	2.055***	2.058***
	(0.0131)	(0.0131)
LEFT-RIGHT PROXIMITY	0.342***	0.342***
	(0.00323)	(0.00323)
ISSUE PROXIMITY	0.402***	0.401***
	(0.00832)	(0.00833)
PARTY SIZE	0.0107***	0.0108***
	(0.000594)	(0.000594)
POLITICAL SYSTEM FAILURE	0.257***	0.283***
	(0.0854)	(0.0127)
POLICY PERFORMANCE FAILURE	0.272***	0.0301
	(0.0107)	(0.0528)
SOCIAL STRUCTURE	0.463***	0.462***

[48] More specifically, the median value of anti-establishment polarization of European party systems has been used as a cut point to distinguish between contexts significantly affected by that characteristic (assuming value 1) and others whose division on this matter is overall negligible (signaled with value 0). On the other hand, countries falling into the highest category of party system representativeness according to the original Varieties of Democracy question have been contrasted to all the others.

	(0.00925)	(0.00925)
SELECTION VARIABLE	-1.378**	-1.217**
(1=disaffected and discontented voters)	(0.600)	(0.588)
(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS	-1.405**	-1.391**
	(0.563)	(0.565)
ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT POLARIZATION	-0.173	-0.171
	(0.169)	(0.170)
(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS_DIC*SELECTION VARIABLE*POLITICAL SYSTEM FAILURE*ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT POLARIZATION	0.353***	
	(0.136)	
(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS_DIC*SELECTION VARIABLE*POLICY_PERFORMANCE FAILURE*ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT POLARIZATION		0.584***
		(0.118)
Constant	0.949**	0.940**
	(0.454)	(0.455)
Log likelihood	-231947.49	-231929.12
AIC	463943	463906.2
BIC	464171.1	464134.3
R squared – 1st level	0.4420	0.4421
R squared – 2nd level	0.5333	0.5296
Observations	99,042	99,042
Number of groups	28	28

Unstandardized coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.001, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Tab.4.4 Testing The Anti-Establishment Rhetoric Conditionality Hypothesis: Multi-level Regressions. Source: 2014 EES Voter Study.

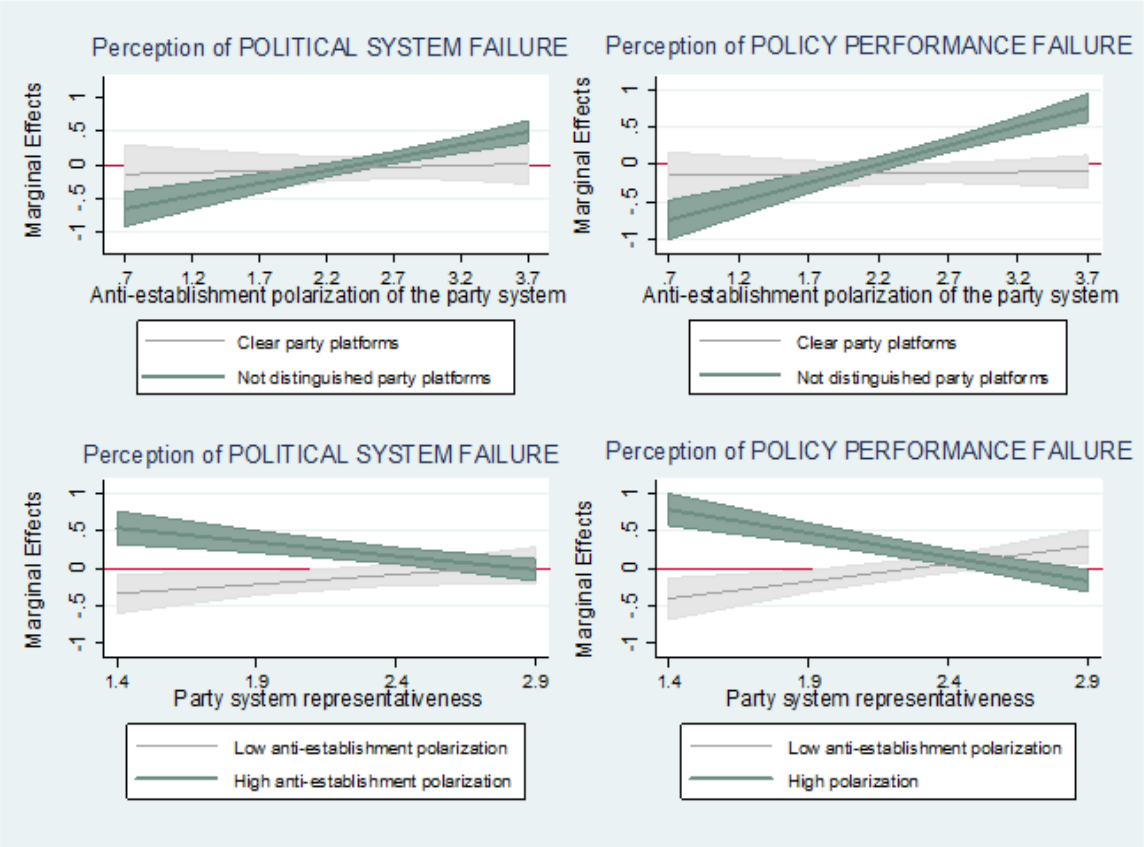
VARIABLES	Model 10	Model 11
PARTY IDENTIFICATION	2.051***	2.052***
	(0.0134)	(0.0134)
LEFT-RIGHT PROXIMITY	0.338***	0.338***
	(0.00334)	(0.00334)
ISSUE PROXIMITY	0.403***	0.402***
	(0.00871)	(0.00872)
PARTY SIZE	0.0117***	0.0117***
	(0.000626)	(0.000627)
POLITICAL SYSTEM FAILURE	0.125	0.281***
	(0.110)	(0.0131)
POLICY PERFORMANCE FAILURE	0.297***	0.00595
	(0.0112)	(0.103)
SOCIAL STRUCTURE	0.464***	0.464***
	(0.00956)	(0.00955)
	(0.110)	(0.0131)
SELECTION VARIABLE	-1.091***	-0.887***
(1=disaffected and discontented voters)	(0.297)	(0.273)

(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS	0.633**	0.634**
	(0.263)	(0.263)
ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT POLARIZATION	1.654*	1.636*
	(0.851)	(0.853)
ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT_POLARIZATION_DIC*SELECTION VARIABLE*POLITICAL SYSTEM FAILURE*UNREPRESENTATIVENESS	-0.588***	
	(0.188)	
ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT_POLARIZATION_DIC*SELECTION VARIABLE*POLICY PERFORMANCE FAILURE*UNREPRESENTATIVENESS		-0.978***
		(0.190)
Constant	-1.319**	-1.319**
	(0.624)	(0.625)
Log likelihood	-218107.65	-218097.87
AIC	436263.3	436243.7
BIC	436489.9	436470.4
R squared – 1st level	0.4380	0.4380
R squared – 2nd level	0.4593	0.4575
Observations	93,144	93,144
Number of groups	25	25

Unstandardized coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.001, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Tab.4.5 Testing The Representational Failure Conditionality Hypothesis: Multi-Level Regressions. Source: 2014 EES Voter Study.

As one can see, while individual-level R squares remain almost the same everywhere, models at Tab. 4.4 are undoubtedly characterized by higher levels of explained variance at the macro-level than any other in this section (they overcome the threshold of 50%, to be exact). This could generally mean that the first of the two contextual interplays tested here actually entails a better characterization of country-level differences in the ways protest motivations have been elicited in 2014. This does not change, however, that observing the marginal effects of protest motivations under different combinations of contextual factors can give us a more precise idea about the actual relationships between the variables of interest



Note: conditional marginal effects using Model 8 - 11 and keeping all other variables at their mean. Upper and lower curves indicate bounds of confidence intervals at 95% level.

Fig.4.2 Protest Motivations Underlying Party Preferences and Contextual Factors: Marginal Effects.

In this regard, we could already claim that most of the trends described in Fig 4.2 appear to confirm our research hypotheses. The two upper graphs, in particular, clearly show that increasing levels of anti-establishment polarization in the party systems are effective in cueing protest motivations only in those environments where parties' ideological platforms are not clearly distinguishable.

Equally positive conclusions can be also drawn about the second interplay investigated here. In fact, as the lower graphs at Fig. 4.2 clearly show, decreasing levels of representativeness of national party platforms significantly boost the impact of protest motivations on party preferences, but only to the extent that parties tend, so to say, to politicize it, i.e. to polarize along an anti-establishment dimension. Unlike the

previous finding, however, here there is also a further point to be made. In fact, notwithstanding that protest motivations visibly increase their explanatory relevance for lower levels of party system representativeness, i.e. from right to left in the graph, the same happens also in the opposite direction. The reference is here in particular to perceived policy performance failure, whose effects become higher and reach significance (however slightly) also in countries where distinguished party platforms are clearly available and polarization in anti-establishment terms is relatively weak. Actually, one may well ask how all this could be possible. A reasonable interpretation could be that not only party system unrepresentativeness but also the existence of a viable set of well defined alternatives favors the expression of voters' discontent with the ruling parties, as it implies higher clarity of responsibility (e.g. Anderson 2000; Bengtsson 2004). In particular, this would explain why perception of policy performance failure would be the only component of protest voting to get significance in that case. If compared to a long-standing perception of political system failure, in fact, day-to-day assessments of the performance of political parties would surely become more accessible sources of political decision-making in contexts providing clear 'incumbent alternatives for dissent' (Lewis-Beck 1988).

Although this account is generally sound, its empirical test is not provided for by this analysis. Notwithstanding this, it is a clear example of how a presumed activating effect of a variable can be far from being unidirectional. This is particularly true in the presence of interplays involving different contextual conditions as those explored here. In other words, it teaches us that, although our assumptions may be extremely plausible, they do not always imply that the same mechanisms cannot be favored also by alternative scenarios.

In any case, we can generally conclude that the present analysis leads to significant and consistent results. Even more importantly, it shows that the choice to frame and to model protest motivations as domain-specific components of voting reasoning can be fruitful. Indeed, they turn out to change their impacts on party preferences in general according to different conditions of national competitive contexts.

CHAPTER 5: HOW DO PROTEST MOTIVATIONS 'COLOR' ELECTORAL RESULTS

In summary, the findings presented so far have shown that protest motivations do actually affect the calculus of voting, and their effects appear to be 'sensitive' to specific environmental conditions. Amongst other things, the nature of the dependent variable which is employed here (party preferences) entails that protest motivations influence preferences toward all parties, i.e. that they are multi-directional in electoral terms. This conclusion, however, represents only a part of the whole picture regarding the protest voting issue. As far as that the picture at the individual level has been completed, in fact, our focus is now ready to go back again to the aggregate level of analysis initially discussed, in order to understand whether protest motivations do actually affect election results and, if so, how. In this respect, what I assumed at the end of Chapter 2 were two distinct research hypotheses. The first one was that increasing preponderance of protest motivations in voters' decision-making has significant macro-effects on the outcomes of an election, regardless of their content (***H6: Protest Motivations' Electoral Effectiveness Hypothesis***). The second, on the other hand, introduced a third contextual variable, possibly explaining differences in part of these macro-effects. This is the degree of rhetorical 'uniqueness' of parties with a pronounced anti-establishment character on the supply side. As a matter of fact, what I supposed in this respect is that the higher the level of distinctiveness of these parties *vis-à-vis* their competitors, the higher the electoral gains that they would get from a higher relevance of protest motivations in the electorate (***H7: Anti-establishment Differentiation Strategy Hypothesis***).

On second thought, implicit in this idea that protest motivations may have macro-level effects there is an evidence-based counterfactual, according to which if protest motivations were more relevant than they actually are, things would go differently in an election. Possibly, they could make the outcomes more uncertain, i.e. more competitive (cf. Elkins 1974, 686), by eroding the electoral fortunes of traditional and/or mainstream parties and at the same time favoring the one of newer or not established ones. But is that true? As already mentioned more than one time, my approach intends to be agnostic about the way protest motivations 'color' electoral

results. Nevertheless, both the hypotheses above appear well suited to the use of a counterfactual approach to the study of election outcomes. As anticipated in Chapter 3, the way this latter is realized here relies on survey data on electoral preferences for all parties (non-ipsative preferences) as reported in the 2014 European Election Study (EES). Alternative solutions could possibly consist in historical comparisons or experimental evidences. However, as van der Eijk correctly noticed, while the first ones rely on the unrealistic assumption that different elections are each other relevant counterfactuals, the second ones usually imply issues of external validity (2015).[49] Relying on a secondary source such as the 2014 EES Voter Study, on the other hand, offers the interesting opportunity to test one's hypotheses in a statistically representative framework. Moreover, as one will see, working with party preferences within a stacked environment makes it technically possible to construct the kind of counterfactuals that are required for assessing the macro-effects of aspects of an election contest, such as the bonuses or deficits incurred by all parties because of the importance of specific considerations in voters' reasoning (see van der Eijk 2002, 14). Of course, this does not mean that counterfactuals based on out-of-survey information would not be ideal at all. Rather, when not available, such as in this case, relevant 'what if' scenarios can be constructed basing on electoral utility measures (see also van der Eijk *et al.* 2007).

The remaining of this Chapter is structured as follows. In the first section I will explore the 'specific weight' of protest motivations on macro-level electoral results. This is to say that I will observe how election outcomes would change in a country *if* protest motivations had a higher influence on voters' decision-making than they actually have *(Protest Motivations' Electoral Effectiveness Hypothesis)*. Afterwards, such counterfactual changes will be put in relationship with some competitive dynamics at the macro level. In particular, I will try to understand to what extent alleged protest parties' differentiation in anti-establishment terms *vìs-a-vìs* all their competitors on the supply side favors a stronger alignment between the strength of protest motivations within the electorate and the electoral fortunes of those that are generally as 'protest' parties in public debate (*Anti-establishment Differentiation Strategy Hypothesis*).

[1] europeanelectionstudies.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/van-der-Eijk_EES-2015-Party-competition_presentation.pdf

5.1. On the electoral consequences of a protest reasoning: a counterfactual approach

Are protest motivations electorally meaningful? Does their relevance within voters' reasoning significantly affect the outcomes of an election? As anticipated just above, the empirical strategy that I will use to answer that question relies on the construction of 'what if' scenarios concerning election outcomes in each of the 28 countries of the European Union. Operationally, this is accomplished by three successive steps, in which original beta coefficients of protest variables in each country are progressively doubled, while those regarding all other individual factors are kept at their same level.[50] For each of these steps, as anticipated in Chapter 3, the obtained predicted preferences are firstly transformed into counterfactual individual votes, by selecting as party choice the highest individual party preference, and then aggregated into counterfactual vote shares.[51] Ultimately, what we get from this procedure are electoral results in a country under baseline conditions and three counterfactual scenarios, describing what would happen at the macro-level if the impact of protest motivations on voters' preferences gets increasingly stronger.[52] For the record, to make sure that growing coefficients actually corresponded to an increasing relevance of protest considerations in voters' reasoning, manipulations have been exclusively applied to the set of voters plausibly rely on them, i.e. those with bad attitudes and opinions towards the performance of the political system.[53] The estimation outputs of such procedure are reported in the final Appendix. As one will see, they include the predicted electoral outcomes in each country of the Study under the baseline condition (first row) and under each counterfactual scenario (second to forth row). On the other hand, what

[50] The predictors employed in this analysis are the same presented in the introductory model of the previous Chapter, reported at Table 4.1.

[51] As suggested by van der Eijk (2007), the present analysis does not use actual vote shares of parties as baseline models, as this would negatively affect comparisons between reality and counterfactual situations. Indeed, estimated models always embed a certain amount of error that is not present in actual values. Referring thus to predicted values under real situations allows us to include the same amount of error in both estimates, ensuring that the resulting differences in electoral outcomes are extensively due to coefficient manipulation.

[52] Against that background, one might still wonder why estimating only three scenarios and not four or even more. The answer here is quite straightforward: doubling for three times the original effects of a predictor of party preference represents a maximum threshold beyond which the plausibility of the resulting scenarios would be seriously at risk. I am thankful to Prof. Cees van der Eijk for his precious advices in this respect.

[53] Here they are operationalized as those who disapprove their current government's record and whose mean score across the three items of 'political system failure' is higher than the mid-point of the resulting scale. Cases missing on one of these two information have been excluded from the analysis.

follows here is a discussion of the main results concerning Western Europe. Later on in the Chapter I will switch also to some Eastern European contexts.[54]

Even by a quick look at these data, it already seems clear that the expectations of my *Protest Motivations' Electoral Effectiveness Hypothesis* are generally met. Indeed, there are different Western European parties visibly changing their vote shares along increasing impacts of protest attitudes on party preference. In particular, forces with a clear anti-establishment character appear to benefit most from increasing 'protest' conditions. As I already mentioned in Chapter 3, here they are identified as those with a score equal or higher than 7 on a scale ranging from 1 to 10 measuring the relevance of an anti-establishment dimension in their rhetoric (source: 2014 Chapel Hill expert survey). One of them is certainly the Austrian Freedom Party, whose electoral fortunes register a 8 percentage points increase of its vote share once moving from the baseline condition to the third counterfactual. Similar trends apply also to other political forces within the selection presented here, such as Podemos in Spain, the French National Front, the Danish People's Party and the Party of Freedom in the Netherlands, to name but a few. This latter, in particular, seems to hugely benefit from the presence of a protest voting calculus within the general electorate. Indeed, its vote percentage shifts from approximately 9% under the baseline condition up almost to 20% within the third counterfactual, where it becomes the second-most voted party in the country, immediately after the centrist Democrats '66.

Looking at these results, one might well argue that there is a clear correspondence between the relevance of protest motivations in voters' reasoning and the electoral success of not established parties possibly mobilizing them. However, such a conclusion would miss a good part of the whole picture. In Greece, for example, political challengers like Golden Dawn or the Greek Communist Party do not significantly increase their vote shares along the three counterfactual scenarios. Syriza, on the other hand, seems to do it, but only to a limited extent (only +2,8% of votes along the three scenarios). The situation in Sweden and in the UK looks rather similar. In fact, also the electoral gains of parties like UKIP and the Sweden Democrats appear

[54] In both geographical areas case selection for the present discussion has privileged countries more often associated to protest electoral dynamics or to parties expected to mobilize them over the last years. All results relating to cases not cited within the text are however available upon request to the Author. In any case, they do not imply substantive changes to the emerging scenario.

surprisingly lower if compared to the first cases (only +3,8 and +1,1 percentage points respectively between the baseline model and the third counterfactual). In Italy, moreover, the Five Star Movement would experience a small loss (-0,75%). But that is not all. In some of these countries mainstream alternatives that we would never deem as credible 'protest' options appear to take advantage of protest motivations too. Among these, the Spanish Popular Party and the UK Conservatives, who gain approximately 3 percentage points in their vote shares between the first and the last electoral scenario. Less blatant cases are also the Greek New Democracy, the French Socialists, the Italian New Center Right and Go Italy and, finally, the UK Labour Party. A possible explanation for this could be that, although not usually recognized as protest options, such political actors still have an appeal in that dimension, thanks to elements of their rhetoric or to their programmatic platforms. In any case, all this appears to confirm what I already assumed at Chapter 2, i.e. that any party could be preferred (or discarded) on the base of protest motivations, irrespective of its presumed 'protest' nature, assessed by the observer.

But what is the situation in the Eastern part of the European Union? Theoretically, post-communist countries should constitute ideal environments for the development of protest motivations underlying vote choice, due to high voters' discontent and weak partisan ties between voters and parties after more than four decades of one-party rule. With regard to the electoral consequences, in particular, it has already been shown that in such contexts voters who are disaffected with the status quo generally opt for anti-establishment alternatives, so as to reject all mainstream parties associated with the disappointments of the transition (Pop-Eleches 2010). Yet such finding derives from studies simply contrasting mainstream to non-mainstream alternatives on a cross-country basis. It remains therefore to be seen whether a similar conclusion 'survives' also the counterfactual approach which is proposed here.

Actually, the results reported in the related section of final Appendix seem to present very less obvious scenarios. In Bulgaria, for example, while two well-known populist forces such as the nationalist Attack and Bulgaria without Censorship incur slight losses along the three counterfactuals, Citizens for European Development (GERB), the first governing party to be re-elected in the country during the post-communist period, benefits of approximately a 10% increase of its vote share. But this

is not the only ‘counterintuitive’ case. Also in Estonia, in fact, stronger protest motivations at the individual level result in increasing success of two mainstream actors, the Estonian Centre and Reform Party, at the expenses of the Estonian Greens, a party with a significant anti-establishment appeal, according to CHES data. A similar situation exists also in Hungary, where slight losses of the challengers Jobbik and Politics Can Be Different appear contrasted by small - but still significant - gains by the Hungarian Socialist Party, an opposition force at the time of the survey, but with significant government experience (+2,58 percentage points between the first and the last scenario).

Less counterintuitive results, in this respect, certainly regard Slovakia and Czech Republic. In the first case, in particular, increasing protest motivations on the side of the voters mainly boost the success of the ‘anti-party’ Ordinary People and Independent Personalities (+7,38% of its vote share between the baseline condition and the last counterfactual). In Czech Republic, on the other hand, the same dynamics result in exclusive electoral gains by the two challengers Action of Dissatisfied Citizens and Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia.

It should be said, however, that similar outcomes represent only a minority within the overall sequence of Eastern European scenarios. In addition to the countries discussed so far, in fact, there are also some others in which electoral results change ambiguously, i.e. favoring mainstream and ‘unorthodox’ options simultaneously. Among these are Lithuania, Latvia and Poland. In the first case, in particular, the anti-establishment Order and Justice shares a very slight electoral increase with the social-liberal Labour Party and the pro-EU Liberal Movement. In the second, however, the social-democratic challenger Harmony Centre and the main centre-right incumbent at the time of the survey, Unity, gain 13 and 4,8 percentage points respectively, at the expense of other mainstream forces: the Latvian Reform Party and the Greens and Farmers’ Union. In Poland, finally, both the populist Law and Justice and the liberal-conservative Civic Platform increase their vote shares (+7,5% and +3,9% respectively). However, other anti-establishment actors, such as the Congress of the New Right and United Poland, do not get the same success under the same conditions.

Tacking stock of all these findings, we could currently draw several conclusions. First, voting on the base of strong protest motivations has indeed electoral effects. Such

effects, as one could see, are not always so decisive to change the winner of an election. Actually, it happens only in a minority of countries, including Austria, Finland, Denmark, Poland and Ireland (please refer to the final Appendix for this latter case). Nevertheless, they exist and are quite visible. Not only that, but they also 'color' election outcomes in multiple ways. In fact, the counterfactual analyses above have returned several patterns of electoral consequences, not necessarily boosting the electoral performance of presumed 'protest' parties, as one would guess. To give a more concrete idea of this, Table 5.1 below reports a summary list of the parties involved in the counterfactuals cited so far. The last column on the right, in particular, summarizes for each of them the direction taken by the effects of increasing protest motivations in their national electorate: positive (+) or stable/negative (-). The immediately previous one, instead, specifies whether they have a significant anti-establishment rhetoric, according to the categorization criterion applied to CHES data. As one can easily notice, there is not such a great association between this characteristic and their actual advantage from a protest-based mobilization of the voters. Rather, what is striking here are all those parties, some of which already cited in the text, where more protest motivations result in higher consensus of established forces that no one would have ever suspected. To help visualizing the heterogeneous set of parties actually gaining success from the strength of protest motivations, their names have been reported in bold in the Table here below.[55] On the other hand, anti-establishment forces that do not get advantaged under the same conditions appear in italics and marked with an asterisk.

On the one side, all this means that the so-called multi-directionality of protest motivations I supposed in Chapter 2 is a much broader phenomenon than one could possibly think. On the other side, however, this entails that a protest message by the voters is not so easy to infer in an election. The next and final part of this Chapter will try exactly to focus more in depth on that aspect. In particular, it will try to question and explore one factor that could possibly 'facilitate' the 'readability' of a protest message at the aggregate level, i.e. its alignment with a stronger performance of parties that are generally recognized as conveyers of an electoral protest in public debate.

[55] A minimum threshold of 0,5% increase in electoral performance between the baseline condition and the last 'protest' scenario has been fixed for inclusion among these parties. As an example of the heterogeneity of this group, please consider that parties adopting a strong anti-establishment rhetorical strategy are less than half of them (to be precise, 16 out of 40).

Country	Party name	Party label	Strong anti-establishment rhetoric (Yes/No)	Macro-effects of protest motivations (+/-)
(WESTERN EUROPE)				
AUSTRIA	Greens	Die Grünen	No	-
	Social Democrats	SPÖ	No	-
	Freedom Party	**FPÖ**	**Yes**	**+**
	The New Austria and Liberal Forum	**NEOS**	**No**	**+**
	People's Party	ÖVP	No	-
	*Alliance for The Future of Austria**	*BZÖ**	*Yes*	-
DENMARK	Social Democrats	SD	No	-
	Socialist People's Party	SF	No	-
	Radical Party	.	No	-
	Liberals	V	No	-
	Liberal Alliance	LA	No	-
	Conservative People's Party	KF	No	-
	Danish People's Party	**DF**	**Yes**	**+**
FRANCE	Greens	EELV	No	-
	*Left Front**	*FdG**	*Yes*	-
	Socialist Party	**PS**	**No**	**+**
	Arise the Republic	DLR	.	-
	National Front	**FN**	**Yes**	**+**
	New Anticapitalist Party	**NPA**	**.**	**+**
GREECE	**Communist Party**	**KKE**	**Yes**	**+**
	Syriza	**ΣΥΡΙΖΑ**	**Yes**	**+**
	Democratic Left	ΔΗΜ.ΑΡ	No	-
	PASOK	ΠΑΣΟΚ	No	-
	The River	**Το Ποτάμι***	**No**	**+**
	New Democracy	**ΝΔ***	**No**	**+**
	*Independent Greeks**	*AE**	*Yes*	-
	Golden Dawn	**ΛΣ-ΧΑ**	**Yes**	**+**
ITALY	Centre-Union	UDC	No	-
	New Centre Right	**NCD**	**No**	**+**
	Left Ecology Freedom	SEL	No	-

Country	Party Name	Party label	Strong anti-establishment rhetoric (Yes/No)	Macro-effects of protest motivations (+/-)
	Democratic Party	PD	No	-
	Go Italy	**FI**	**No**	**+**
	Brothers of Italy	Fd'I	No	-
	Northern League	**LN**	**Yes**	**+**
	*5 Star Movement**	*M5S**	*Yes*	-
NETHERLANDS	Green Left	GroenLinks	No	-
	Socialist Party	**SP**	**No**	**+**
	Labour Party	PvdA	No	-
	Democrats '66	D66	No	-
	People's Party	VVD	No	-
	Christian Democratic Appeal	CDA	No	-
	Christian Union	CU-SGP	No	-
	Party of Freedom	**PVV**	**Yes**	**+**
SWEDEN	Green Ecology Party	MP	No	-
	Left Party	**VP**	**No**	**+**
	Social Democratic Labour Party	SP	No	-
	Liberal People's Party	FP	No	-
	Christian Democrats	KD	No	-
	Moderate Coalition Party	M	No	-
	Sweden Democrats	**SD**	**Yes**	**+**
	Centre Party	C	No	-
UNITED KINGDOM	*Greens**	*GP**	*Yes*	-
	Labour	**Lab**	**No**	**+**
	Liberal Democrats	LD	No	-
	Conservatives	**Con**	**No**	**+**
	Plaid Cymru	Plaid	No	-
	*Scottish National Party**	*SNP**	*Yes*	-
	United Kingdom Independence Party	**UKIP**	**Yes**	**+**
(EASTERN EUROPE)				
BULGARIA	**Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria**	**GERB**	**No**	**+**
	Reformist Bloc	Реформаторски блок	.	-
	*Bulgaria Without Censorship**	*BBT**	*Yes*	-
	*Attack**	*ATAKA**	*Yes*	-
	Movements for Rights and Freedom	DPS	No	-
	Alternative for Bulgarian Revival	ABV	No	-
CZECH REPUBLIC	**Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia**	**KSCM**	**No**	**+**
	Czech Social Democratic Party	CSSD	No	-

Country	Party Name	Party label	Strong anti-establishment rhetoric (Yes/No)	Macro-effects of protest motivations (+/-)
	Civic Democratic Party	ODS	No	-
	Action of Dissatisfied Citizens	**ANO2011**	**Yes**	**+**
	Christian and Democratic Union	Christian and Democratic Union	No	-
	Tradition Responsibility Prosperity	TOP09	No	-
	*Party of Free Citizens**	*Svobodnì**	*Yes*	-
	National Socialists	.	.	-
ESTONIA	*Estonian Greens**	*EER**	*Yes*	-
	Social Democrats	SDE	No	-
	Estonian Centre Party	**EK**	**No**	**+**
	Estonian Reform Party	**ER**	**No**	**+**
	Pro Patria and Res Publica	IRL	No	-
HUNGARY	*Politics Can Be Different**	*LMP**	*Yes*	-
	Together 2014	Együtt 2014	No	-
	Hungarian Socialist Party	**MSZP**	**No**	**+**
	Democratic Coalition	**DK**	**No**	**+**
	FIDESZ-KDNP Alliance	FIDESZ-KDNP	No	-
	*Jobbik**	*JOBBIK**	*Yes*	-
LATVIA	Green and Farmers' Union	ZZS	No	-
	Harmony Centre	**SDPS**	**Yes**	**+**
	Unity	**V**	**No**	**+**
	For Fatherland and Freedom	LNNK	No	-
	*Latvian Russian Union**	*LKS**	*Yes*	-
	Reform Party	Reformu partija	No	-
LITHUANIA	Social Democrats	LSDP	No	-
	Labour Party	**DP**	**No**	**+**
	Liberal Movement	**LRLS**	**No**	**+**
	Lithuanian Peasants' and Green Union	LVSZ	No	-
	Christian Democrats	TS-LKD	No	-
	Order and Justice	**TT**	**Yes**	**+**
	Election Action of Lithuania's Poles	**AWPL**	**No**	**+**
POLAND	*Congress of The New Right**	*KNP**	*Yes*	-
	United Poland*	SP*	Yes	-
	Democratic Left Alliance	SLD	No	-
	Civic Platform	**PO**	**No**	**+**
	Law and Justice	**PiS**	**Yes**	**+**
	Polish Peasants' Party	PSL	No	-
	Your Movement	RP	No	-
SLOVAKIA	Direction	Smer-SD	No	-
	Freedom and Solidarity	SaS	No	-

Christian Democratic Movement	KDH	No	-
Democratic Party	**SDKÚ–DS**	**No**	**+**
New Majority	NOVA	No	-
Ordinary People and Independent Personalities	**OĽaNO**	**Yes**	**+**
Party of the Hungarian Coalition	**SMK–MK**	**No**	**+**
The Bridge	Most–Híd	No	-

Tab.5.1 List of political parties subject of counterfactual analyses. Source: own elaboration on data from 2014 European Election Study (EES) and Chapel Hill expert survey (CHES)

5.2. Does parties' anti-élite differentiation affect election outcomes?

As I have mentioned more than one time before, all parties tend to play on anti-establishment chords, although to different extents, and to get electorally rewarded for that, under specific conditions (see Poletti and Segatti 2016). Against that framework, the scenario in which an alleged protest party gets substantively advantaged by stronger protest motivations in voters' decision-making could be thought as the by-product of specific circumstances, possibly having to do with precise patterns of party competition. And that is where my last research question comes into play: does anti-establishment parties' rhetorical distinctiveness on the supply side play a role? As already argued in Chapter 2, we could suppose that the higher the ability of a presumed 'protest' party to present itself as a unique 'protest' option in public debate, the higher the probability that it will get substantively better results *if* protest motivations were more important in an election (***H7: Anti-Establishment Differentiation Hypothesis***).

To test that insight, I adopted a quite straightforward empirical strategy. In fact, I computed the electoral gains/losses in percentage points that each classified anti-establishment party would realize along the different scenarios concerning their country, and plotted them against their actual level of distinctiveness in anti-establishment terms *vis-à-vis* all their competitors.[56] The results of this procedure are shown at Fig. 5.1 below. At first sight, the distribution of the parties within the space seems to hint a trend pointing in the expected direction. Statistically, in fact, increasing distinctiveness of 'protest' parties in anti-establishment terms (x axis) goes, to some extent, with an

[56] Please refer to previous paragraph 3.1.3. for notes on the construction of this variable.

increasing magnitude of their electoral gains in case of *strengthening* protest motivations within the electorate (y axis). However, the overall association between the two variables is not that strong (Pearson r=0,38). Furthermore, just with a closer look at the data, it becomes immediately clear that several cases at the right end of the horizontal axis (especially the True Finns, Flemish Interest and the Party of Freedom) have a huge impact on the observed relationship. In other words, if they were not there, the outcome would be probably different. Overall, this makes it sensible to state that, although there is some association between the electoral performance of a protest party and its 'uniqueness' in anti-establishment terms, things are much more complex. The first thing to be noticed, in this regard, is that some parties get conspicuous electoral gains along the three counterfactuals even though their anti-establishment character is not particularly distinguishable. Among these, the most striking case is certainly the Latvian Harmony Centre (see upper-left corner of Fig. 5.1), whose deviation from all the other observations clearly demonstrates that its fortunes under increasingly protest conditions would be generated by something else than its distinctiveness as a 'protest' option *vìs-a-vìs* its competitors. Further examples regard also the Austrian Freedom Party, the French National Front, the Croatian Labourists and the Slovak Ordinary People and Independent Personalities, to name but a few. On the other hand, there are also some parties that, no matter how hard they try to distinguish on the supply side, would not be rewarded for that, or worse, would incur some losses if voters were increasingly to base their choices on protest motivations in an election. This second category, in particular, covers cases such as the Polish Congress of the New Right, the Estonian Greens, the Portuguese Earth Party and the Italian Five Star Movement.

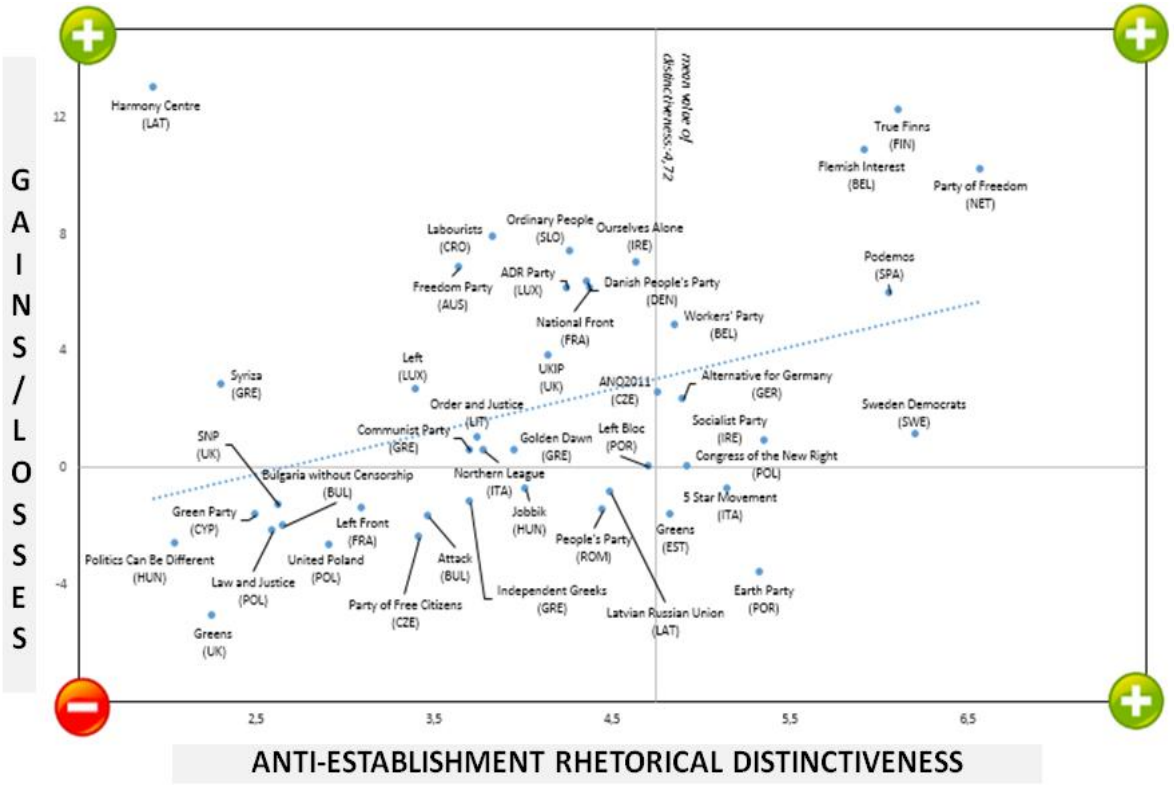


Fig.5.1 Anti-establishment parties' electoral gains/losses (%) between the last and the first counterfactual scenario by their level of anti-establishment distinctiveness on the supply side. Source: own elaboration on data from 2014 European Election Study (EES) and Chapel Hill expert survey (CHES).

To make both these groups more distinguishable between them and from all the cases more in line with the initial expectations, the plane has been sectioned into four parts, resulting from the crossing of two lines: a horizontal one separating electoral gains from losses, and a vertical one, dividing parties with under and over-average levels of anti-establishment distinctiveness. Actually, what this trick makes clearer is the limited success of my original *Anti-Establishment Differentiation Hypothesis*. In fact, partitioning the graph into several areas helps to get a more precise idea of the size of its possible violations. Yet all this leads to wonder why the proposed explanation does not work as much as one would expect.

One of the possibilities could be that, beyond one's party distinctiveness in anti-establishment terms on the party side, some other factors are also in play. In particular, it seems worth pointing out here that an anti-establishment rhetoric could be not only relevant in itself, but also as a framing device for specific issues and for proposing political solutions (see Entman 2003, 417). In this sense, some 'protest' parties,

although massively investing in a populist competitive strategy, still might not be voted on a protest basis, because what they really appear to compete for is the issue that they present within that frame. This would explain, in particular, why the lower region of the graph is significantly populated by single-issue parties, such the UK, Estonian and Cypriot Greens, the Portuguese Earth Party and the Hungarian Politics Can Be Different, to name but a few. However, this reasoning would also entail that parties in the upper region of the graph are substantively different from the first. By the sound of things, it could well be that their anti-establishment rhetoric is more explicitly oriented, and then effective, in mobilizing voters on the base of pure protest motivations. However, such result could also be due to the strategies of their competitors. For example, a party might be seen as a distinct protest option not only because it explicitly claims to be one, but also because all other parties collectively reject it (see also Van Donselaar 1991; Fennema 1997, 2004; van der Brug, Fennema and Tillie 2000). Actually, this could be the case for some parties of the present selection, such as the French National Front, the Austrian Freedom Party, the Dutch Freedom Party and the Belgian Flemish Interest. All these, in fact, have been to various extents stigmatized during their history and get substantively rewarded by the presence of protest motivations in the electorate, as noticeable also from their location in the upper quadrants of Fig. 5.1.

Other parties, however, would significantly improve their performance due to protest motivations even without being rejected by the whole political arena. Among these, the already mentioned 'Harmony Centre', positioned in the upper-left corner of the graph above. This is in fact a rather relevant social-democratic challenger in the Latvian Parliament, combining since 2011 an anti-establishment message with criticism toward the conditions imposed by the EU and the IMF upon Latvia's debt crisis (see Lansford 2014).

All this to say that any comprehensive explanation of 'what makes protest motivations actually favor the success of generally recognized protest parties' would probably rely on more than one factor. In this respect, what the present exploration allows us to generally conclude is that parties' rhetorical 'uniqueness' in anti-establishment terms does not matter that much. Nevertheless, something else seems actually going on in the data and looks worth of further investigation. Future analyses,

in particular, should enlarge the scope of possibly relevant competitive dynamics, including but not being limited to the rhetorical dimension. Moreover, they should estimate the simultaneous effects of these on counterfactual gains or losses of anti-establishment parties. A final element to be taken into account, finally, is also the threshold beyond which protest motivations actually spill into individual party choice. The way counterfactuals are currently constructed, in fact, basically assumes that higher protest motivations always convert into individual votes. Actually, this is not too much of a problem when it comes to measuring macro-effects of individual level variables, such as in this case. Previous research has already made clear, in fact, that the impacts of increasing turnout on election outcomes in Europe are usually exceedingly low (see van der Eijk, Schmitt and Sapir 2011).[57] Nevertheless, a detailed study on the amount of intensity needed by protest motivations to trigger electoral mobilization at the individual level would certainly be noteworthy.

[57] With specific regard to the 2009 EP Election, van der Eijk, Schmitt and Sapir have shown that the vote share of the overwhelming majority of parties vote would have been *'less than 2 percent different from what it actually was had turnout been (much) higher (across all countries: approximately 50 percent higher than the actual level in the 2009 EP election)'* (2011, 190)

CONCLUSIONS

Now that all the seven research hypotheses of this work have been tested and discussed, the time has come to put and evaluate them from a more general perspective. In this regard, it seems worth recalling here the starting point where it all began, i.e. that the notion of protest voting is overall undeveloped in electoral research (see van der Brug and Fennema 2007). Actually, all signs of such underdevelopment have been outlined in Chapter 1, where alternative definitions, empirical approaches and findings about protest voting have been systematized, mapped and critically evaluated for the first time. Conceivably, the problems emerging from such heterogeneous mosaic are more than one. First of all, different conceptual definitions of the same object reduce the comparability between different case studies. The same applies to multiple empirical approaches, which, furthermore, returned conflicting evidences about the existence of protest voting. More precisely, while analyses based on self-reported motivations by the voters looked generally more promising, studies relying on inferential techniques definitely gave less leeway in that respect. In addition, it has also to be remembered that current studies are basically centered on single countries. This means that, irrespective of their theoretical and/or empirical approaches, they generally focus on specific contexts, if not on specific parties, deemed as credible collectors of protest motivations on a case-by-case basis. On the one side, a similar approach displays scholars' determination to go into the merits of national political commentaries, sometimes challenging widely-held beliefs about who gets advantaged of an electoral protest and sometimes pandering to them. On the other side, it uncovers a criticality that approximately all current analyses on protest voting share, i.e. the idea that protest motivations in an election would not occur if not in the presence of a party visibly aiming to mobilize them, namely an apparent 'protest' party. In conceptual terms, this assumption is also reflected by the fact that in all definitions presented in Chapter 1 the attitudinal sphere of the voter appeared inextricably linked with a behavioral component, consisting in voting a party (or party type) presumably matching his protest motivations. And yet, focusing on a presumed driver of vote choice by apriorising its possible electoral effects is likely to result in a too simplistic - and possibly misleading - view of its dynamics. And even if it were not the case, a similar approach would miss in

any case a clear distinction between the psychology of an electoral protest and its electoral consequences. Actually, students of protest voting have never dealt with these two elements separately. In fact, as mentioned a bit earlier, their aim was simply to test common sense hypotheses about the motivational bases of presumed protest parties' success, often within specific countries. However, if one wants to get a broader and more comprehensive view of what is actually going on with protest motivations, some additional steps are required. Most of them coincide with the analytical effort realized at Chapter 2. In that section, in fact, the general construct of protest voting has been broken into two smaller dimensions (the role of protest motivations in individual decision-making and their effects at the electoral level), in turn subjected to several research hypotheses. One thing to be clarified in this regard is that such procedure does not necessarily compromise the concept itself of protest voting. Rather, it avoids the risk of a superficial analysis, by highlighting the internal components of any electoral phenomenon and allowing to understand how protest motivations actually behave within them. In this sense, any conclusion about the empirical consistency of protest voting can only come from the findings of the related analyses.

But what do the empirical chapters of this work say about this? Once specified that the framework in which they move frames protest motivations as factors affecting preferences toward all parties, the first multi-level models on the stacked version of the 2014 EES Voter Study already seem to be clear in that regard. In fact, they do not simply highlight that party and system performance considerations generally matter in voters' reasoning (see Tab. 4.1), but also that, when it comes to potential protest voters (i.e. respondents with explicitly negative opinions on those topics), they do not tend to overpower issue or ideological motivations (see Tab. 4.2). Overall, this means that the original idea of a protest vote as a vote primarily cast to scare the elite and that is not policy or ideologically driven appears not confirmed by the data. In some ways, one could possibly say that there is not much new in all this. After all, also the first seminal studies in this area came to similar conclusions, i.e. that there is not something like a pure protest vote. Yet the basis for this assessment is now completely different. In those first cases, in fact, the focus was exclusively on specific parties (anti-immigrant, to be exact), presumably attracting protest votes. Now, however, the attention is definitely more oriented to the general calculus of voting, and thus to preferences toward all

parties. Not only that, but the empirical inconsistency of protest voting as a relatively distinct type of vote, if compared to issue and/or ideological voting, does not automatically imply that protest motivations are absolutely stranger to an election. Rather, the picture that emerges from the analysis is of a mixed reasoning, of which protest motivations are a concrete part, together with alternative predictors of party preferences, such as ideological, issue or partisan considerations. Under the perspective of the Hirschman's *Exit, Voice* and *Loyalty*, this could be interpreted as the fact that 'voicing' one's protest cannot do without a certain level of attachment toward the preferred options and, by reflection, some 'loyalty' toward the responsiveness of political institutions themselves.

But the mixed nature of disaffected voters' reasoning is not the only remarkable finding of this work. In fact, what the analyses above have also highlighted is that protest motivations are amenable to features of the political contexts, such as ideological (un)representativeness and the spread of an anti-establishment rhetoric in the party system (see Tab. 4.3 and Tab. 4.4). Moving up to the macro-level study of the electoral consequences, moreover, protest motivations have also turned out to 'color' election outcomes in multiple ways, not only favoring apparent protest parties, but also 'unsuspected' mainstream actors.

In view of all this, what to say, in the end, about the role of protest motivations in an election? As already stressed above, they do not fit the original expectations of the so-called protest voting hypothesis. Indeed, both the idea of an electoral choice prevalently driven by resentment and its association to voting for an apparent 'protest' party represent nothing more than a theoretical model, that lives probably more in our minds than in real electoral dynamics. Rather, as already assumed in Chapter 2 and subsequently confirmed, what they really represent is a self-contained and domain-specific component of voting reasoning, affecting preferences toward all parties. At the macro-level, the counterfactual analyses presented at Chapter 5 have clearly stressed that any party can, at least in theory, take advantage of protest motivations by the voters during an election contest, regardless of its level of anti-establishment-ness.

Of course, further steps will be required in the future in order to deepen and to refine this picture. First, the obtained findings should be put also in a temporal perspective. In fact, extending the analysis to previous years would definitely help to

open a window onto the observation of micro and macro-level effects of protest motivations over time. In addition to this, new triggering factors, including but not limited to the realm of party competition, should be considered. In particular, the role of social channels of political mobilization should be taken into consideration. For example, the volume of social movements in a country, as well as the number of protest actions undertaken in it over a precise time span, could be supposed as cueing protest motivations by the voters and to favor the distinctiveness of a 'protest' option over the others. Not only that, but while in some countries parties generally recognized as 'protest' options have been initially set up as social movements (e.g., Podemos in Spain, coming from the aftermath of the Indignados movement), in others this has not been the case. Does a similar factor possibly make a difference in how specific parties are evaluated by the voters? As a backdrop to all this, however, a further issue is still pending: how do protest considerations actually relate to the other elements structuring voters' reasoning? Actually, what we know for now is that perceptions of policy and political system failure do not overpower more mainstream predictors, such as ideological or issue proximity to parties. However, it would be also useful to understand whether their effects on party preferences are either independent or in interaction with other factors. For example, as I speculated at Chapter 4, once elicited by the context, they could act as a trigger for additional considerations that would make the structure of individual choice even more rich and complex. On the electoral side, finally, the possible relationship between protest motivations and abstention remains here basically unexplored. Yet further research could possibly shed light also on this further point.

As you can imagine, the list of things to do could be even longer. For now, however, I will stop here. As I already argued, this work has been conceived since the beginning as a first, significant effort to deal with a still undeveloped topic in electoral research, usually associated to specific contents of political choice (e.g. voting for presumed 'protest' parties). Actually, breaking existing stereotypes on this point calls now seriously into question the consistency of the same concept of protest voting, while an alternative way to look at the role of protest motivations in electoral environments comes upon the scene. It is now up to new studies to make further progress in that direction and put the obtained results in a wider context.

APPENDIX

Table A.1. Protest Motivations and Contextual Factors: Multi-Level Regressions (Complete version). Source: 2014 EES Voter Study.

VARIABLES	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
PARTY IDENTIFICATION	2.054***	2.054***	2.057***	2.057***
	(0.0134)	(0.0134)	(0.0131)	(0.0131)
LEFT-RIGHT PROXIMITY	0.337***	0.337***	0.342***	0.342***
	(0.00334)	(0.00334)	(0.00323)	(0.00323)
ISSUE PROXIMITY	0.404***	0.403***	0.401***	0.401***
	(0.00871)	(0.00872)	(0.00833)	(0.00834)
PARTY SIZE	0.0117***	0.0118***	0.0107***	0.0108***
	(0.000626)	(0.000627)	(0.000594)	(0.000595)
POLITICAL SYSTEM FAILURE	0.192***	0.281***	0.523***	0.285***
	(0.0680)	(0.0131)	(0.0690)	(0.0127)
(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS	0.332*	0.332*		
	(0.175)	(0.175)		
POLITICAL SYSTEM FAILURE*(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS	0.0384			
	(0.0261)			
SELECTION VARIABLE	-0.191	-0.173	-0.341*	-0.173
(1=disaffected and discontented voters)	(0.164)	(0.158)	(0.195)	(0.186)
POLITICAL SYSTEM FAILURE*(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS	0.233		-0.939***	
	(0.199)		(0.227)	
SELECTION VARIABLE*(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS	0.0575	0.0642		
	(0.0724)	(0.0694)		
SELECTION VARIABLE*POLITICAL SYSTEM FAILURE*(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS	-0.202**			
	(0.0832)			
POLICY PERFORMANCE FAILURE	0.294***	0.193***	0.270***	0.313***
	(0.0112)	(0.0593)	(0.0107)	(0.0560)
SOCIAL STRUCTURE	0.463***	0.463***	0.463***	0.463***
	(0.00955)	(0.00955)	(0.00925)	(0.00925)
POLICY PERFORMANCE FAILURE*(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS		0.0428*		
		(0.0229)		
SELECTION VARIABLE *POLICY PERFORMANCE FAILURE		0.564***		-0.660***
		(0.204)		(0.223)

SELECTION VARIABLE*POLICY PERFORMANCE FAILURE*(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS		-0.334***		
		(0.0855)		
ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT RHETORIC			-0.196**	-0.199**
			(0.0832)	(0.0830)
POLITICAL SYSTEM FAILURE*ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT RHETORIC			-0.0470***	
			(0.0139)	
SELECTION VARIABLE* ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT RHETORIC			0.0478	0.0242
			(0.0356)	(0.0344)
SELECTION VARIABLE*POLITICAL SYSTEM FAILURE* ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT RHETORIC			0.135***	
			(0.0433)	
POLICY PERFORMANCE FAILURE*ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT RHETORIC				-0.00768
				(0.0116)
SELECTION VARIABLE*POLICY PERFORMANCE FAILURE*ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT RHETORIC				0.0848**
				(0.0418)
Constant	-0.535	-0.538	1.278***	1.292***
	(0.442)	(0.442)	(0.418)	(0.416)
Log Likelihood	-218136.23	-218131.98	-231967.12	-231975.32
AIC	436304.5	436296	463966.2	463982.6
BIC	436455.5	436447	464118.3	464134.7
R squared – 1st level	0.4354	0.4355	0.4406	0.4406
R squared – 2nd level	0.3516	0.3545	0.4863	0.4892
Observations	93,144	93,144	99,042	99,042
Number of groups	25	25	28	28

Unstandardized coefficients; standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.001, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A.2 Testing The Anti-Establishment Rhetoric Conditionality Hypothesis: Multi-level Regressions (Complete). Source: 2014 EES Voter Study.

VARIABLES	Model 8	Model 9
PARTY IDENTIFICATION	2.055***	2.058***
	(0.0131)	(0.0131)
LEFT-RIGHT PROXIMITY	0.342***	0.342***
	(0.00323)	(0.00323)
ISSUE PROXIMITY	0.402***	0.401***

	(0.00832)	(0.00833)
PARTY SIZE	0.0107***	0.0108***
	(0.000594)	(0.000594)
POLITICAL SYSTEM FAILURE	0.257***	0.283***
	(0.0854)	(0.0127)
POLICY PERFORMANCE FAILURE	0.272***	0.0301
	(0.0107)	(0.0528)
SOCIAL STRUCTURE	0.463***	0.462***
	(0.00925)	(0.00925)
	(0.0854)	(0.0127)
ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT POLARIZATION	-0.173	-0.171
	(0.169)	(0.170)
POLITICAL SYSTEM FAILURE* ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT POLARIZATION	0.0166	
	(0.0297)	
(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS_DIC	-1.405**	-1.391**
	(0.563)	(0.565)
(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS_DIC*POLITICAL SYSTEM FAILURE	0.0497	
	(0.105)	
(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS_DIC*ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT POLARIZATION	0.444**	0.439**
	(0.212)	(0.212)
(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS_DIC * POLITICAL SYSTEM FAILURE *ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT POLARIZATION	-0.0231	
	(0.0378)	
SELECTION VARIABLE	-1.378**	-1.217**
	(0.600)	(0.588)
SLECTION VARIABLE*POLITICAL SYSTEM FAILURE	-0.440	
	(0.316)	
SELECTION VARIABLE*ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT POLARIZATION	0.422*	0.367*
	(0.223)	(0.219)
SELECTION VARIABLE* POLITICAL SYSTEM FAILURE* ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT POLARIZATION	0.0358	
	(0.117)	
(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS_DIC*SELECTION VARIABLE	0.480	0.570
	(0.620)	(0.606)
(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS_DIC*SELECTION VARIABLE*POLITICAL SYSTEM FAILURE	-0.797**	
	(0.367)	
(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS_DIC*SELECTION VARIABLE* ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT POLARIZATION	-0.107	-0.120
	(0.230)	(0.225)
(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS*SELECTION VARIABLE*POLITICAL SYSTEM FAILURE*ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT POLARIZATION	0.353***	
	(0.136)	

POLICY PERFORMANCE FAILURE* ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT POLARIZATION		0.0933***
		(0.0200)
(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS_DIC *POLICY PERFORMANCE FAILURE		0.155**
		(0.0760)
(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS_DIC *POLICY PERFORMANCE FAILURE*ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT POLARIZATION		-0.0561**
		(0.0285)
SELECTION VARIABLE*POLICY PERFORMANCE FAILURE		0.0726
		(0.240)
SELECTION VARIABLE*POLICY PERFORMANCE FAILURE*ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT POLARIZATION		-0.210**
		(0.0978)
(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS*SELECTION VARIABLE*POLICY PERFORMANCE FAILURE		-1.185***
		(0.298)
(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS*SELECTION VARIABLE*POLICY PERFORMANCE FAILURE*ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT POLARIZATION		0.584***
		(0.118)
(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS	-1.405**	-1.391**
	(0.563)	(0.565)
Constant	0.949**	0.940**
	(0.454)	(0.455)
Log likelihood	-231947.49	-231929.12
AIC	463943	463906.2
BIC	464171.1	464134.3
R squared – 1st level	0.4420	0.4421
R squared – 2nd level	0.5333	0.5296
Observations	99,042	99,042
Number of groups	28	28

Unstandardized coefficients; standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.001, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A.3 Testing The Representational Failure Conditionality Hypothesis: Multi-Level Regressions (Complete). Source: 2014 EES Voter Study.

VARIABLES	Model 10	Model 11
PARTY IDENTIFICATION	2.051***	2.052***
	(0.0134)	(0.0134)
LEFT-RIGHT PROXIMITY	0.338***	0.338***
	(0.00334)	(0.00334)
ISSUE PROXIMITY	0.403***	0.402***
	(0.00871)	(0.00872)
PARTY SIZE	0.0117***	0.0117***
	(0.000626)	(0.000627)
POLITICAL SYSTEM FAILURE	0.125	0.281***
	(0.110)	(0.0131)
POLICY PERFORMANCE FAILURE	0.297***	0.00595
	(0.0112)	(0.103)
SOCIAL STRUCTURE	0.464***	0.464***
	(0.00956)	(0.00955)
	(0.110)	(0.0131)
SELECTION VARIABLE	-1.091***	-0.887***
	(0.297)	(0.273)
SELECTION VARIABLE*POLITICAL SYSTEM FAILURE	-0.794**	
	(0.352)	
SELECTION VARIABLE*ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT POLARIZATION		
SELECTION VARIABLE*POLICY PERFORMANCE FAILURE		-1.066***
		(0.368)
(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS	0.633**	0.634**
	(0.263)	(0.263)
POLITICAL SYSTEM FAILURE*(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS	0.0817*	
	(0.0464)	
ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT POLARIZATION_DIC	1.654*	1.636*
	(0.851)	(0.853)
ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT POLARIZATION_DIC*POLITICAL SYSTEM FAILURE	-0.00259	
	(0.148)	
ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT POLARIZATION_DIC*(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS	-0.606*	-0.601*
	(0.341)	(0.342)
ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT POLARIZATION_DIC*POLITICAL SYSTEM FAILURE*(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS	-0.0272	
	(0.0586)	
SELECTION VARIABLE*(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS	0.364***	0.321***

	(0.132)	(0.122)
SELECTION VARIABLE*POLITICAL SYSTEM FAILURE*(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS	0.161	
	(0.156)	
ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT POLARIZATION_DIC*SELECTION VARIABLE	1.232***	1.095***
	(0.357)	(0.335)
ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT POLARIZATION_DIC*SELECTION VARIABLE*POLITICAL SYSTEM FAILURE	1.743***	
	(0.438)	
ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT POLARIZATION_DIC*SELECTION VARIABLE*(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS	-0.392**	-0.371**
	(0.158)	(0.148)
ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT POLARIZATION_DIC*SELECTION VARIABLE*POLITICAL SYSTEM FAILURE*(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS	-0.588***	
	(0.188)	
POLICY PERFORMANCE FAILURE*(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS		0.128***
		(0.0427)
ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT POLARIZATION_DIC*POLICY PERFORMANCE FAILURE		0.263**
		(0.128)
ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT POLARIZATION_DIC*POLICY PERFORMANCE FAILURE*(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS		-0.117**
		(0.0514)
SELECTION VARIABLE*POLICY PERFORMANCE FAILURE*(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS		0.337**
		(0.160)
ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT POLARIZATION_DIC*SELECTION VARIABLE*POLICY PERFORMANCE FAILURE		2.475***
		(0.446)
ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT POLARIZATION_DIC*SELECTION VARIABLE*POLICY PERFORMANCE FAILURE*(UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS		-0.978***
		(0.190)
Constant	-1.319**	-1.319**
	(0.624)	(0.625)
Log likelihood	-218107.65	-218097.87
AIC	436263.3	436243.7
BIC	436489.9	436470.4
R squared – 1st level	0.4380	0.4380
R squared – 2nd level	0.4593	0.4575
Observations	93,144	93,144
Number of groups	25	25

Unstandardized coefficients; standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.001, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A.4 Counterfactual Scenarios For Increasing Effects of Protest Motivations: Austria, Spain and France (%)

Scenarios	AUSTRIA					
	Greens	Social Democrats	Freedom Party	NEOS	People's Party	Alliance For The Fut. of Austria
Baseline model	16,03	25,71	21,75	12,22	21,59	2,7
Counterfactual 1	14,92	25,56	23,97	12,86	21,27	1,43
Counterfactual 2	13,65	25,87	26,51	13,33	19,52	1,11
Counterfactual 3	11,9	25,08	28,57	15,4	18,57	0,48

Scenarios	SPAIN						
	Coalition for Europe	Podemos	Socialist Workers' Party	Citizens	Popular Party	Left for The Right to Decide	Union, Progress and Democracy
Baseline model	2,9	28,11	24,7	4,94	22,66	7,84	8,86
Counterfactual 1	2,56	29,13	24,7	4,09	23,68	7,5	8,35
Counterfactual 2	2,56	31,86	23,85	2,39	23,85	8,52	6,98
Counterfactual 3	2,56	34,07	21,12	1,36	25,72	9,37	5,79

Scenarios	FRANCE							
	Greens	Left Front	New Anticapitalist Party	Socialist Party	Union of Dem. and Indep.	Union for a Popular Movement	Arise The Republic	National Front
Baseline model	10,35	7,89	2,46	31,4	11,58	19,47	1,23	15,61
Counterfactual 1	10,53	8,07	1,93	31,4	11,58	19,65	1,05	15,79
Counterfactual 2	9,82	7,54	2,46	32,11	9,65	19,65	0,88	17,89
Counterfactual 3	8,6	6,49	2,98	32,81	7,89	18,6	0,88	21,75

Source: Own elaboration on 2014 European Election Voter Study

Table A.5 Counterfactual Scenarios For Increasing Effects of Protest Motivations: Denmark, Netherlands and Greece (%)

Scenarios	DENMARK						
	Social Democrats	Socialist People's Party	Radical Party	Liberals	Liberal Alliance	Conservatives People's Party	Danish People's Party
Baseline model	26,93	10,96	7,85	23,55	3,11	5,28	22,33
Counterfactual 1	26,39	10,55	8,12	23,41	2,98	5,28	23,27
Counterfactual 2	5,58	10,01	7,44	23,68	3,25	5,01	25,03
Counterfactual 3	24,9	8,93	7,04	22,87	2,98	4,6	28,69

Scenarios	NETHERLANDS							
	Green Left	Socialists	Labour	Democrats '66	People's Party	CDA	CU-SGP	Party of Freedom
Baseline model	9	14,84	12,53	21,65	13,14	11,44	8,15	9,25
Counterfactual 1	8,76	15,21	11,92	21,41	12,17	11,07	7,91	11,56
Counterfactual 2	8,15	15,21	11,19	20,8	11,31	10,46	7,91	14,96
Counterfactual 3	7,06	14,96	10,22	21,05	10,71	9,61	6,93	19,46

Scenarios	GREECE							
	Communist Party	Syriza	Democratic Left	PASOK	The River	New Democracy	Independent Greeks	Golden Dawn
Baseline model	8,11	34,37	3,39	7,08	9	22,57	5,16	10,32
Counterfactual 1	8,11	35,69	2,95	6,93	9	21,53	5,31	10,47
Counterfactual 2	8,55	36,58	1,77	5,6	9,44	22,27	4,87	10,91
Counterfactual 3	8,7	37,17	1,18	4,87	9,59	23,6	3,98	10,91

Source: Own elaboration on 2014 European Election Voter Study

Table A.6 Counterfactual Scenarios For Increasing Effects of Protest Motivations: United Kingdom, Italy and Sweden (%)

Scenarios	UK						
	Greens	Labour Party	Libdem	Conservatives	Plaid Cymru	SNP	UKIP
Baseline model	13,86	22,44	8,09	35,48	0,83	3,14	16,17
Counterfactual 1	12,54	22,44	8,09	36,14	0,83	2,81	17,16
Counterfactual 2	10,07	22,94	7,59	37,46	0,83	2,31	18,81
Counterfactual 3	8,75	23,76	7,1	37,95	0,66	1,82	19,97

Scenarios	ITALY							
	Centre Union	New Center Right	Left Ecology Freedom	Democratic Party	Go Italy	Broth. of Italy	North League	5 Star Movement
Baseline model	4,3	2,8	4,67	40,19	17,2	5,23	7,48	18,13
Counterfactual 1	3,93	3,18	4,3	40,37	17,57	5,79	7,66	17,2
Counterfactual 2	3,36	3,18	4,49	40,37	18,32	5,61	7,66	17,01
Counterfactual 3	2,43	4,11	5,05	40	17,76	5,23	8,04	17,38

Scenarios	SWEDEN							
	Green Ecology Party	Left Party	Social Democratic Labour Party	Liberal People's Party	Christian Democrats	Moderate Coalition Party	Sweden Democrats	Centre Party
Baseline model	17,22	13,32	25,37	10,79	3,33	21,13	5,17	3,67
Counterfactual 1	16,42	14,35	25,26	10,79	2,99	21,24	5,4	3,56
Counterfactual 2	15,15	15,61	25,26	10,33	2,87	21,13	6,2	3,44
Counterfactual 3	13,89	18,71	24,45	9,87	2,64	20,67	6,31	3,44

Source: Own elaboration on 2014 European Election Voter Study

Table A.7 Counterfactual Scenarios For Increasing Effects of Protest Motivations: Evidences from Estonia, Bulgaria and Hungary (%)

Scenarios	ESTONIA				
	Estonian Greens	Social Democrats	Estonian Centre Party	Estonian Reform Party	Pro Patria and Res Publica
Baseline model	4,17	23,38	25,93	30,56	15,97
Counterfactual 1	4,17	23,15	26,39	31,48	14,81
Counterfactual 2	3,24	21,06	29,17	31,71	14,81
Counterfactual 3	2,55	17,59	32,64	33,8	13,43

Scenarios	BULGARIA					
	GERB	Reformist Bloc	Bulgaria Without Censorship	Attack	Movements for Rights and Freedom	Alternative for Bulgaria
Baseline model	56,66	11,6	6,14	6,83	9,9	8,87
Counterfactual 1	61,77	8,87	5,8	6,14	9,56	7,85
Counterfactual 2	63,48	7,85	4,78	5,8	9,22	8,87
Counterfactual 3	67,58	6,83	4,1	5,12	8,87	7,51

Scenarios	HUNGARY					
	Politics Can Be Different	Together 2014	Hungarian Socialist Party	Democratic Coalition	FIDESZ-KDNP Alliance	Jobbik
Baseline model	7	4,72	12,79	6,09	53,42	15,98
Counterfactual 1	6,24	4,41	13,24	6,39	53,73	15,98
Counterfactual 2	5,18	4,57	13,55	6,54	54,34	15,83
Counterfactual 3	4,41	4,87	15,37	6,85	53,27	15,22

Source: Own elaboration on 2014 European Election Voter Study

Table A.8 Counterfactual Scenarios For Increasing Effects of Protest Motivations: Evidences from Slovakia and Czech Republic (%)

Scenarios	SLOVAKIA							
	Direction	Freedom and Solidarity	Christian Dem. Movement	Democratic Party	New Majority	Ordinary People and Indep. Personalities	Party of The Hungarian Coalition	Bridge
Baseline model	42,95	6,88	17,79	4,19	7,21	11,41	5,37	4,19
Counterfactual 1	42,62	7,72	16,78	4,19	8,05	11,41	5,03	4,19
Counterfactual 2	40,94	6,21	14,6	4,87	8,22	14,93	6,21	4,03
Counterfactual 3	40,27	5,37	12,42	5,03	7,38	18,79	6,71	4,03

Scenarios	CZECH REPUBLIC							
	Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia	Czech Social Democrats	Civic Democratic Party	Action of Dissatisfied Citizens	Christian and Democratic Union	Tradition Responsibility Prosperity	Party of Free Citizens	National Socialists
Baseline model	16,59	22,47	8,3	24,13	8,14	10,11	7,54	2,71
Counterfactual 1	17,65	21,72	8,14	24,89	7,84	9,8	7,24	2,71
Counterfactual 2	19,91	21,12	7,84	25,19	6,64	10,41	6,64	2,26
Counterfactual 3	23,53	19,16	8,45	26,7	5,88	9,65	5,13	1,51

Source: Own elaboration on 2014 European Election Voter Study

Table A.9 Counterfactual Scenarios For Increasing Effects of Protest Motivations: Evidences from Lithuania, Latvia and Poland (%)

Scenarios	LATVIA					
	Greens and Farmers' Union	Harmony Centre	Unity	For Fatherland and Freedom	Latvian Russian Union	Reform Party
Baseline model	10,06	17,4	42,98	22,43	2,73	4,4
Counterfactual 1	8,39	20,55	46,96	17,19	3,35	3,56
Counterfactual 2	6,92	25,58	47,8	13,21	2,94	3,56
Counterfactual 3	6,29	30,4	47,8	9,43	2,52	3,56

Scenario	LITHUANIA						
	Social Democrats	Labour Party	Liberal Movement	Lithuanian Peasants and Greens' Union	Christian Democrats	Order and Justice	Election Action of Lithuania's Poles
Baseline model	23,4	18	15,4	5,6	20,4	14,4	2,8
Counterfactual 1	24	17,2	15,6	5,6	20,2	14	3,4
Counterfactual 2	23,2	18	16,4	5,4	19	14,6	3,4
Counterfactual 3	22,4	19,4	16,6	4,2	18,6	15,4	3,4

Scenario	POLAND						
	Congress of The New Right	United Poland	Democratic Left Alliance	Civic Platform	Law and Justice	Polish Peasants' Party	Your Movement
Baseline model	9,44	5,08	8,47	34,38	32,45	4,36	5,81
Counterfactual 1	10,17	5,08	7,75	34,62	34,62	3,39	4,36
Counterfactual 2	9,93	4,36	6,54	35,11	37,05	3,15	3,87
Counterfactual 3	9,44	2,42	5,33	38,26	39,95	2,18	2,42

Source: Own elaboration on 2014 European Election Voter Study

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