

Politics of Electoral Reform
The Case of the United Kingdom's 2011 Referendum
on the Alternative Vote

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Thesis Summary

This thesis focuses on the politics of electoral reform. It examines dynamics operating at both the public and political elite levels. The first paper looks at the place of electoral reform in British politics, in particular the place of the Alternative Vote (AV), and demonstrates a positive relationship between disproportionality and interest in electoral reform. The second paper focuses on the tension between representative democracy and direct democracy and considers why the referendum became the pathway to decide on the issue. The third paper analyses the voting behaviour in the UK's 2011 AV referendum and demonstrates that voters cast their votes based on cues and in harmony with the positions taken by the party leaders they trusted. Agreement with campaign statements was also indicative of an individual's vote mediating the impact of partisanship. Direct contact by campaigns did not have much significant effect on a typical individual's vote except for those individuals contacted by the Liberal Democrats. Contact by the Liberal Democrats, contrary to the expectations had an impact in the negative direction of the position endorsed by the Party.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Elections translate preferences of the public expressed in terms of votes cast by the electorate into parliamentary seats and determine who shall form the government, legislate and take executive decisions. The electoral formula shapes the behaviour of politicians and their style of representation (Norris, 2006; Farrell and Scully, 2007).¹

Whilst elections are competitions between diverse interests and ideologies, the rules that translate votes into seats are themselves subject to political struggles. Electoral rules have often evolved at the same time as mass political movements.² In a dynamic and heterogeneous society, electoral systems can be expected to be open to contestation and scrutiny by those who either think the system is unfair or who simply lose out under the status-quo. Parties, politicians and other political actors may seek to improve the quality of democracy or to increase their own representation.

This thesis examines the politics of electoral reform in the United Kingdom (UK) with a focus on the 2011 Alternative Vote referendum. Of particular interest to the thesis is the role of political culture and institutional constraints in conditioning the content of electoral reform proposals and how attempts at reform are carried out. A topic as complex and varied as electoral reform requires detailed case studies.³ Although it is reasonable to assume that a nation's electoral rules may, to some extent, be influenced by exogenous international trends, the preservation of existing rules can be linked

¹ Norris examines the impact of electoral reform on the proportion of female representatives in the Netherlands. Based on Farrell and Scully's study on the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), ballot structure has the highest effect on the style of representation.

² The American Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, for example, is directly linked to the demand to reform voter eligibility rules. This political movement gained momentum as a reaction to polling rules disabling less privileged sections of the public, i.e. African Americans, from voting. Similarly, women's suffrage demands in Britain and the USA in the early twentieth century have shaped and been shaped by the feminist movement. The desire for equal voting rights and democratic elections has been important in conditioning the political movements in numerous other national contexts. Most recently, year 2014 has witnessed mass protests against the Chinese government's desire to institutionally control candidate selection process in Hong Kong elections.

³ The endogeneity of votes, seats and electoral systems makes it difficult to distinguish between the particular effects of each on the other two (McLean, 2006).

endogenously to the national conversation and/or the ability of the actors participating in that debate to resist reform that may appear to contradict historically determined principles. The value of large-N cross-country comparisons in theorizing electoral reform cannot be denied (King et. al, 1994). Nevertheless, electoral reform attempts and processes vary from country to country (Blais and Shugart, 2008). Case studies are, therefore, essential for understanding constitutional, institutional and/or traditional intricacies that vary from one national context to another.

The UK presents itself as an instructive case for the purpose of studying electoral reform mainly due to its multi-layered network of political institutions as well as its long tradition of democratic politics. The political system and history of Britain have inspired countries all over the world. Political events that take place in Britain are, often, quickly communicated to other countries and shape the political and democratic visions of geographically distant populations.⁴ Furthermore, a large portion of the world's democracies are based on the Westminster model. The Houses of Westminster are seen by many as the mother of parliaments.⁵

It is a truism that the debate on electoral reform is as old as elections themselves. Reform of the UK's electoral rules has been subject to parliamentary deliberation from the early 1800s if not from before (Hart, 1992). Yet, the interest on the topic has not always had the same level of intensity. The inter-war years witnessed a sudden increase in the number of eligible voters.⁶ This change was accompanied by a

⁴ One recent example is the spill-over effect created by the Scottish Independence referendum within the context of the European Union. Shortly after the Scottish Referendum took place, Catalonia held its own referendum on becoming independent from Spain.

⁵ This may perhaps slightly owe to the iconic place Big Ben has in many people's minds.

⁶ The Representation of the People Act of 1918 enfranchised women over 30 and men over 21, subject to a minimal property requirement, elevating the number of eligible voters from 7.7 million to 21.4 million. Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act, 1928 lowered the voting age for women to 21 and gave them equal standing to men as voters.

greater parliamentary interest on reforming the electoral formula.⁷ During the three decades following the WWII, the UK became preoccupied with reconstruction and differences had to be put aside in order to create a renewed national ethos (Kavanagh, 1987; Jenkins, 1989). The post-WWII years saw little interest in electoral reform. In the 1970s, however, Britain's increasingly adversarial political environment stimulated renewed interest in the issue (Finer, 1975; Gamble et. al., 1984). The UK's place in relation to Europe also became a highly contested issue domestically and eventually led to the 1975 referendum.⁸ Furthermore, attempts were made to devolve power to Scotland and Wales in 1979. The emergence of polarizing issues on the political agenda illustrated the extent of disagreement about the very nature of the UK. With increasing expression of the variation and diversity in the British political landscape, the nature of Britain's democratic system began to be questioned again (Marr, 2013). This variation has been accompanied by a decreasing support for the two major parties.⁹

In accord with increasing polarization and diversification in British politics and decreasing support for the two major parties, the years from the mid-1970s to 2010 witnessed a renewed interest in reforming the system of electing members to the Houses of Parliament. In May 2011, a proposal to adopt the Alternative Vote (AV) was eventually put to the British people in what became only the second national referendum held in the history of the UK. The proposal failed with the No side receiving more than double the number of votes received by the Yes side.

The existing literature on electoral reform suggests the need to consider cases of non-reform and failed reform attempts, in order to aid theories on cases of actual reform

⁷ In the context of this thesis, 'electoral reform', for the most part, refers to the reform of the formula for electing members to the House of Commons. This definition, unless made explicit, excludes the modification of constituency boundaries and changes made to voter eligibility, electoral administration and campaign funding.

⁸ For a detailed account of the EEC referendum: King (1977).

⁹ The first paper of the thesis will demonstrate this decline.

(Rahat and Hazan, 2011).¹⁰ This thesis adds to the previous case-studies on failed reform attempts by looking at the UK case.¹¹ The thesis focuses on both the long- and short-term developments before the referendum. It also aims to complement recently published literature on the results of the 2011 AV referendum. In order to do so, it addresses the following three aspects by answering three corresponding questions:

1. Content: Why was AV chosen as the alternative to the existing first-past-the post system?
2. Pathway: Why did a referendum become the method to settle the issue of electoral reform?
3. Discourse: What effect did campaign discourse have on the outcome of the referendum?

First, it locates the AV referendum within the perspectives of both the politically motivated electoral reform debates and the existing academic literature on electoral reform. Second, it positions the AV referendum within the context of the British debate on the use of referendums by drawing on the theoretical literature on referendums. Third, it aims to explain the outcome of the referendum itself, using the best data available.

The main focus of this thesis is electoral reform. However, the content of the case necessitates the consideration of literature also on topics including but not limited to the following: constitutional politics, referendums, electoral systems, methodology (survey methods), electoral behaviour and British politics. The relevant selections from

¹⁰ The barriers approach developed by Rahat and Hazan looks at the factors which prevent electoral reform from happening. Their 'negative' approach (a positive one would be to focus solely on factors that result in reform) also highlights the need to integrate diverse and at times incompatible academic approaches to electoral reform under a comprehensive umbrella.

¹¹ For example, Leduc (2009) looks at the failed electoral reform referendums held in the three Canadian Provinces in the first decade of the 21st century.

such diverse literature are integrated into the body of each of the papers whenever need arises.

The proposed reform option and the method to bring it about will be analysed considering two cross-cutting perspectives: The perspective driven by individual and partisan levels of self-interest and one informed by normative evaluations of what a good democracy should be like.¹² No matter the content of a proposed reform and whether or not it would be good for the country as a whole, the manner in which political and democratic channels are used to bring about reform is indicative of the legitimacy of any reform proposal and/or its outcome. Although the move to AV would not have represented a fundamental change of the UK's electoral system,¹³ the topic merits academic attention.¹⁴

The thesis makes use of a selection of primary and secondary sources including the following: personal interviews, British Election Study AV referendum survey data, parliamentary records, anecdotal accounts written by politicians including ones that took part in the coalition negotiations.¹⁵

Electoral rules have more impact on the way politicians behave than socialization (Norris, 2004). The electoral reform debate about proportionality represents the endogenous aspect of electoral reform and leads to a circular relationship between

¹² It is essential to acknowledge, however, that strategic and self-interested motivations may be disguised under convincing normative arguments. Normative evaluations may also take the form of practical concerns in relation to what is appropriate from an institutional, constitutional or traditional perspective.

¹³ The AV Referendum, however, has been described as a major constitutional change by a number of British politicians. The Government's response to the comments received in relation to the Coalition Agreement demonstrates that the Government has seen the AV proposal as constitutional reform. These are available on www.parliament.gov.uk

¹⁴ Electoral systems have consequences for the party systems. Duverger's law (Duverger, 1954) is the seminal work on the effect of electoral systems on the party systems.

¹⁵ Anecdotal evidence includes three insider accounts of the coalition talks in particular: Laws, Adonis and Wilson's memoirs. While Wilson was not a member of the Conservative negotiation team, his account still reveals insider perspective on the negotiation talks. The interview data consists of interviews with Labour party MP's Andy Burnham and Richard Burden, the director of the No campaign Matthew Elliott, Guy Lodge and Glenn Gottfried of the London-based think-tank Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) and two campaigners from the Yes side who asked to remain anonymous.

shifting party systems and electoral reform (Colomer, 2005).¹⁶ Evidence from Western Europe suggests that changes in the variance of the policies offered by the parties are linked to shifting variance of voters' policy preferences and that this effect is stronger under plurality systems (Ezrow, 2007). Plurality systems in which parties are not able to respond to shifts in voters' policy preferences, party system dealignment and increased disproportionality may lead to pressure in favour of electoral reform, as the New Zealand case demonstrated (Vowles, 2008).

An important distinction is that between 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' processes of reform (Renwick, 2010; Shugart, 2008). The spur to reform may come from either elite or public dissatisfaction with existing electoral arrangements (Norris, 1995). Regardless of where impetus for reform originates from, the actors involved in the decision-making differ from one context to another. In Canada, for instance, the public has played an active part in the debate, as both deliberative and direct democratic methods have been utilized there.¹⁷ Similarly, New Zealand held a two-stage referendum in the early 1990s that gave Kiwis the chance to have their say.¹⁸

At first it may seem odd that strategically informed elites and parties should use methods associated with deliberative or direct democracy. Yet, such methods can work to the advantage of politicians who want to take deeply divisive issues outside parliament and prevent direct conflict at the elite level, especially within their own parties'

¹⁶ Colomer turns Duverger's law in the other direction, arguing for a circular relationship between party and electoral systems (Colomer, 2005).

¹⁷ In Ontario, electoral system possibilities were initially evaluated by an assembly consisting of randomly selected citizens. The assembly's final proposal was subsequently put to a referendum, in 2007, for the entire electorate of the state. While the proposal was not adopted, the public definitely had a bigger role in the process in comparison to Italy. For more details on this referendum: 'Democracy at work: The Ontario Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform: a record of Ontario's first citizens' assembly process, the Ontario Citizens' Assembly Secretariat, 2007'.

¹⁸ The first referendum held in 1992 asked New Zealanders whether they wished to see a system change or not. An overwhelming 85 per cent voted for reform. The second referendum held in 1993 asked them to choose among the proposed alternatives. The outcome of the second referendum was pro-reform and country's FPTP system got replaced by MMP (mixed member proportional system).

ranks (Bogdanor, 1981).¹⁹ Alternative pathways like official reviews, committee reports, citizens' assemblies and referendums remove direct liability from the parties and delegate it to other political agents, i.e. the public, lobbying groups, academics and NGOs.

The three papers that comprise this thesis focus on the three questions posed above. The first paper examines why AV, among the many alternatives, became the alternative to the plurality (first past the post) system. The second paper focuses on the factors that led to the decision to hold the post-legislative referendum. The referendum pathway was by no means inevitable. In principle a sovereign UK Parliament could have chosen to alter the system of election without a 'reference to the people'. The British political elite were long suspicious of 'references to the people'.²⁰ This mechanism would not have been seen natural had there not been important changes as a result of 'constitutional flux' involving increasing use of referendums (Norton, 1982). The third paper examines the effect of campaign discourse on the 'typical' individual's referendum vote. Due to the nature of their content, the first two papers focus largely on the political elites and are to some extent intertwined. The elites determined both the question that was referred to the public and its timing. Moreover, the elites were also integral to the campaign process and framed the campaign arguments. The third paper sustains the consideration for the positions of the parties but shifts the attention towards public attitudes and estimates the effect that campaign discourse had on the referendum outcome.

¹⁹ This point has also been made by a number of other scholars.

²⁰ In relation to Winston Churchill's offer to hold a referendum on the continuation of the War-time Coalition, Clement Attlee famously responded: 'I could not consent to the introduction into our national life of a device so alien to all our traditions as the referendum, which has only too often been the instrument of Nazism and Fascism. Hitler's practices in the field of referendums and plebiscites can hardly have endeared these expedients to the British heart.' It was true that referendums were used by the interwar fascists to justify and legitimize their authoritarian rule (see Appendix 1 for an example of Mussolini's referendum propaganda). While Clement Attlee may have said this in contemplation of higher chances of a Labour win in an election held before the war came to a complete end, the omnipresence of this quote, hints at the negative sentiment towards referendums that have existed in Britain.

A substantive part of the thesis obviously covers the period before the 2010 General Election up to the day of the 2011 referendum. Yet, the coalition negotiations, and the period before the 2010 General Election, were only the penultimate stage in Britain's electoral reform debate. In order to contextualize the case and analyse it more effectively, some consideration of the historical background is necessary. Path-dependence and process-tracing are key to processes of electoral reform and to their study, respectively.

Gordon Brown's proposal to hold a referendum in the period leading up to the 2010 General Election was not random and needs to be understood in light of the on-going reform debate within the Labour party.²¹ The process-tracing approach enables us to establish path-dependencies in public policy. The three main types of tests the literature on process-tracing focus on are the hoop, straw in the wind and the smoking gun tests (Mahoney, 2012). The first two try to detect whether the necessary conditions for a causal link exist. The third tests whether the sufficient conditions are met. These tests enable the researcher to draw causal links between events that may be separated by long periods of time. The smoking gun test is useful in revealing the dynamics in the period between Brown's initial overture and the formation of the coalition government.

Our contemporary usage of computer keyboards is path-dependent on a decision made a long time ago, during the time of mechanical typewriters (David, 1985). When the early secretarial typewriters were manufactured, the letter layout was designed (QWERTY) in order to lower the chance of the typewriters becoming jammed during speedy typing. The letters were arranged so that common English words could be typed with ease and efficiency. The layout has, however, been conditioning the way people

²¹ The referendum promise Gordon Brown made pre-election was characterized as an empty gesture by the NGO, Power 2010. Subsequent to Brown's 'democratic opening', the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 received royal assent one month before the 2010 General Election. The clause on the AV referendum was, however, removed from the Bill during the wash-up period.

write. When the electronic typewriters or computers began to replace the mechanical ones, the QWERTY layout was retained even though the problem of jamming no longer existed. People, after all, had been trained and become skilled in the QWERTY keyboard.

In a similar way it is necessary to recognize the importance of decisions made some distance from the particular circumstances of the 2010 general election. It was during John Smith's leadership that the issue of electoral reform had become attached to the referendum pathway. The then Labour leader was concerned about a possible split in his party over electoral reform. The affiliated unions were especially opposed to reform, while the more 'liberal' wing of the party was more sympathetic. In a speech hosted by Charter 88, Smith made a promise to hold a referendum, in the first term of a Labour government (Smith, 1993).

Following John Smith's unexpected death, the referendum idea remained on the Labour agenda. However, a referendum never took place during Labour's period in government. Just before Tony Blair took office, the Cook-MacLennan Agreement was signed between Labour and the Liberal Democrats. Under Blair's premiership, the Independent Commission on the Voting System chaired by Lord Jenkins, a Liberal Democrat peer, was set up. This was in line with Blair's manifesto commitment to review the aptness of alternative electoral systems.²² Jenkins recommended a system called AV-plus that failed to appeal to both reformers and the Labour government. Thereafter electoral reform was all but forgotten and 'kicked into the long grass.'²³ Brown resurrected Jenkins proposal short of the 'plus' element in the hopes of attracting Liberal Democrats to vote Labour and/or encourage them to enter into a coalition in the event of a hung Parliament.

²² This commission was more popularly known as the 'Jenkins Commission'.

²³ Liam Fox uses this expression in reference to the Commission. This quote is used in its full context later on in this chapter.

The 2010 General Election took place in an environment of uncertainty and anxiety for the three parties and the Cabinet Office (Adonis, 2013; Laws, 2010; Wilson, 2010). There was a general concern that the hung parliament should not weaken the UK government's image at home and abroad. The Euro debt crisis and the protests in Greece, which were shown on television each night, added to the sense of urgency to form a government. While the Conservatives were anxious to form the government as soon as possible, the Liberal Democrats wanted to prolong negotiations until they got a better deal on electoral reform.

On the other side, institutional and strategic considerations as well as personal calculations were presumably going through Gordon Brown's mind. He was pressured by the other parties and certain sections of the media to resign but at the same time he felt that it was his constitutional responsibility to stay in office until a deal to form the new government was reached (Adonis, 2013). Brown initially stated that he would step down as the leader of the Labour party by the time of the party conference. The next day, however, he made another statement in relation to his resignation. On 11 May 2010, he immediately resigned as prime minister and the party leader, marking the end of negotiation talks with the Liberal Democrats. Even though he was no longer Prime Minister and never a coalition partner, Brown's actions in the months up to the general election influenced the decisions taken by the new coalition and the trajectory of electoral reform in the UK. Brown's pre-election proposal to hold a referendum on the Alternative Vote was realized under the government formed by the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats. The terms of the United Kingdom's 2011 debate on electoral reform were, therefore, indirectly set by the Labour party. As the conclusive paper of this thesis will demonstrate, the division of Labour party voters in the referendum was decisive also in the failure of the referendum. Not only did the Labour party set the

terms of the electoral reform prospect, but they were also able to influence the outcome of the election, though not necessarily in an intentional manner, by sending mixed elite cues to their voters.

2. WHY AV? Electoral reform debate trajectory and the 2011 AV referendum

2.1. Introduction

This paper examines the UK debate on electoral reform within a broader historical and constitutional context. More specifically, it focuses on the re-emergence of interest in electoral reform in the period leading up to the 2010 General Election and why the Alternative Vote system (AV) became the proposed alternative to the Single-Member Plurality system (SMP).¹ The popular and obvious explanation is that some deal on electoral reform was essential to persuade the Liberal Democrats to enter the coalition and that AV represented a reasonable compromise to those Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives responsible for the two-party negotiations that took place before the formation of Britain's first post-war coalition in May 2010 (see Adonis, 2013; Kavanagh and Cowley, 2010; Laws, 2010; Quinn et. al, 2011; Wilson, 2010).² This straightforward explanation sums up the game-theoretical mind-set of the negotiation talks and its effect on the final coalition agreement. It does not, however, wholly address the question of why electoral reform became a key policy issue and why specifically AV rather than another reform option, became the focus of the negotiations and, hence, the alternative offered to the voters in the referendum.

This paper will explore how short- and long-term strategic and institutional concerns have narrowed down the choice to one between AV and FPTP. The 2011 referendum will be analysed in a manner informed by previous electoral reform debates in Britain, a discussion of institutional constraints and the constraints added by the

¹ In the UK, SMP is more popularly known as the First Past the Post System (FPTP). Since 'First Past the Post' was used to designate Britain's existing electoral system throughout the campaign period, FPTP will be used from now on to reference the existing system.

² The leader of the Liberal Democrats, Nick Clegg, demanded the prospect of electoral reform from both parties during the negotiation talks. While Single Transferable Vote (STV) was his preference, in the end he conceded to a referendum on AV.

circumstance of the hung parliament that came about following the 2010 General Election.

Section 2 summarises the technical differences between the status quo FPTP system and the AV alternative that was offered to the UK public. In section 3, literature on electoral reform relevant to this paper and to the case as a whole is outlined. Section 4 explores the UK's electoral reform debate from a constitutional perspective. Sections 5 and 6 demonstrate a relationship between parliamentary debates on electoral reform and the level of disproportionality. Sections 7 and 8 focus on the aspects of the election campaign and coalition negotiations informed by an understanding of the main three parties' attitudes towards electoral reform. Section 9 provides some conclusions and draws the threads of the argument together.

2.2. The systems

Scholars have characterized the motivations tied to calls for electoral reform through the theoretical lens of rational choice (Rokkan, 1970; Boix, 1999; Colomer 2005). A party's electoral system preferences can be thought to be influenced by calculations of prospective electoral advantage (under alternative electoral systems) of the party as a whole and/or the aggregate prospective electoral advantage of the individual politicians that comprise the party. These considerations may be categorized within the triad of vote-seeking (Downs, 1957), office-seeking (Riker, 1962) or policy-pursuit (Axelrod, 1970; Budge and Laver, 1986) models of elite behaviour.³ It is theoretically imaginable for the parties to prefer one system over another based solely on principled motivations without serious or successful calculations of the implications of the systems for their own electoral fortunes. In order to analyse the factors behind the positions taken by the

³ For a full survey of the types of possible motivations behind changes to electoral institutions: Benoit, 2004.

British parties, one needs to first clarify the differences between the two systems offered to the electorate in the 2011 referendum.⁴

2.2.1. First past the post

The existing FPTP system divides the UK into units called ‘constituencies’ where votes are counted and a single representative is elected from each unit. There are currently 650 constituencies in the UK as a whole, although their number has varied over time.⁵ Constituencies are supposed to correspond to ‘natural communities’, whose inhabitants share a great deal in common and, therefore, can be represented by a single individual (Weir and Beetham, 1999; Rossiter et. al, 2009). In large part, the boundaries are based on local government boundaries, but in some cases these boundaries cross those administrative units. Each of the four nations that make up the UK has a ‘quota’ or ‘ideal’ number of voters per constituency. The boundaries of the constituencies are recommended to the parliament by the four national Boundary Commissions, independent bodies each of which holds periodic reviews.⁶

Each voter has a single vote (of equal worth), which is traditionally recorded as an ‘X’ against the name of a single candidate. The ‘plurality rule’ states that the ‘winner’ in each constituency is the candidate with the most votes (at least one more vote than their nearest rival). A hypothetical example of an election under FPTP rules is displayed in Table 1:

⁴ Attitudes of the Labour party, the Conservative party and the Liberal Democrats on the issue of electoral reform are presented in section 2.7. The positions the three parties and the remaining British political parties took with respect to the AV referendum are presented in paper 4(4.3.1).

⁵ From 1945 to present, the number of constituencies fluctuated between 625 and 659. House of Commons Library Research Paper 12/43, ‘UK Election Statistics: 1918-2012’, 7 August 2012.

⁶ There are four separate boundary commissions, one each for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Table 1. Hypothetical election result (FPTP)

Candidate	Votes Received	Result
A	2000 (18.2%)	3 rd
B	4000 (36.4%)	2 nd
C	5000 (45.5%)	WINNER

In this example, the winning candidate is C, since s/he has more votes than any other candidate. The difference in the vote totals for the winner (C) and second candidate (B) is informally known as the winner's 'majority'. In this case, the winner has a plurality of the vote, but this only constitutes $(5000/11000) \times 100 = 45.5$ per cent of the total votes. This is not a 'technical majority' (i.e. 50 per cent +1) of the votes cast.

Since each constituency is represented by a single MP, the plurality system is often said to enable a stronger link between the local communities and Westminster compared with those proportional representation systems where multiple Members of Parliament (MPs) represent each geographic unit and the mandate granted by the constituency as a whole is distributed among more than one MP. The local Member of Parliament is the representative of the whole of the constituency, not just those who happened to elect them and, in principle at least, is able to serve their constituents and help seek redress for their grievances (Harvey and Bather, 1982, p.78). Critics of FPTP maintain that it fosters an adversarial style of politics that produces poor public policy (Finer, 1975).

Despite the 'personal' and, arguably, 'inclusive' quality of representation it is inclined to generate, FPTP is not a system that guarantees proportionality at the aggregate national level. The largest party in the House of Commons receives a 'winner's bonus' so that the seats to votes (s/v) ratio exceeds one. In some general elections – such as 1951 and February 1974 – the party with the most votes receives

fewer seats than another party.⁷ Under this system, third parties that have significant vote shares but are geographically dispersed, such as the Liberal Democrats, are heavily penalised. In 1983, for example, the s/v ratio for the Liberal-SDP Alliance was 0.10.⁸ Even when the Liberal Democrats succeeded in targeting and converting votes into seats, their s/v ratio was significantly below one.⁹

2.2.2. The Alternative Vote system

The Alternative Vote system (AV) is no different from FPTP in terms of district magnitude. Votes for candidates are cast in single-member constituencies and the winning candidate is – just as in FPTP – supposed to ideally represent everyone in that constituency. Rather than casting a single vote for one single candidate, however, voters are asked to rank candidates in order of preference. The winning candidate needs to surpass the 50 per cent threshold. If no candidate wins this majority on the first preferences, the last placed candidate is eliminated and their first preference votes are redistributed to remaining candidates on the basis of the second preferences. The papers that rank the eliminated candidate as the first choice but do not express any other preference are eliminated also and are not taken into consideration in the subsequent rounds of counting. This process of eliminating the bottom candidate continues until a candidate wins the absolute majority of the remaining ballots. A hypothetical example of an election under AV rules is displayed in Table 2 below:

⁷ The Conservative party won the 1951 General Election with 48.0 per cent of the UK vote share, corresponding to 321 seats, while the Labour party secured only 295 seats despite achieving 48.8 per cent share of the UK-wide vote. In the February 1974 General Election, Labour were the winners of the election with 4 more seats than the Conservatives despite receiving 0.6 per cent less of the national vote than the Conservative party's share (Butler, 1952; Butler and Kavanagh, 1975).

⁸ Section 2.7.2 will elaborate on the Alliance's position on electoral reform.

⁹ The s/v ratio for the Liberal Democrats for the 2005 election was 0.44.

Table 2. Hypothetical election result (AV)

Candidate	1 st Round	2 nd Round	Final Vote Share	Result
A	2000	Eliminated in the 1 st round		3 rd
B	4000	1300 ¹⁰	50.5% (5300)	WINNER
C	5000	200	49.5% (5200)	2 nd

If the hypothetical elections were held under AV instead of FPTP, candidate B would win, since s/he would be the first to reach the 50 per cent threshold. In the first round of vote counting, the first preference votes received by each of the candidates are noted. The candidate with the least first preference votes (A) is eliminated from the race and his/her second preferences are distributed among the remaining candidates (B and C). In this example, the second choice for a large proportion of A supporters (1300) is candidate B. These votes, when added to B's existing first preference votes, total 5300, which corresponds to 50.5 per cent of the total ballots relevant to the second round of counting. Although candidate C received the most number of first preference votes, his/her final vote tally (5000+400=5200) is less than candidate B's votes and is below the 50 per cent threshold.

It is important to distinguish AV from the two-round system which would require two-stage elections as is the case, for example, with the French and Turkish Presidential elections. AV fulfils the technical majority condition put forward by the two-stage elections. However, under AV only one ballot is used and campaigning between the rounds is not possible. One can make the argument that two-stage elections (held

¹⁰ In this example, 500 of the 2000 ballots that list candidate A as the primary choice are eliminated before the second round of counting since those 500 voters did not indicate any other preferences in addition to their first preference (Candidate A). These ballots are, therefore, non-transferable and are not taken into consideration in the subsequent rounds. If the proposed AV system was adopted, British voters would be free to indicate as many or as few preferences as they wished. Under the Australian type of AV ballots become automatically invalid if the voters fail to assign a number to each of the listed candidates. Australian ballots include a warning ('Remember...number every box to make your vote count') to remind voters of this requirement. See Appendix 3 for an exemplary Australian ballot.

on two separate polling days) are more democratic than AV since they make it possible for the voter to reconsider the remaining candidates against each other and modify candidate choice in-between the rounds.¹¹ Second ballots are naturally more costly because voters may have to go to the polls twice if a majority is not obtained the first round.

The AV system, like FPTP, is not necessarily a proportional system at the national level. Indeed, in some circumstances, it can be less proportional than FPTP.¹² During the campaign period leading up to the 2011 referendum, the 'No' campaign characterized AV as uncommon and, consequently, unworthy.¹³ Yet AV is used quite commonly in Britain in other elections. AV has been used, for example, for electing the Labour party leader, deputy leader and constituency candidates (Quinn, 2012). The Liberal Democrats also used AV in their leadership elections (Kelly, 2015). The House of Commons itself uses this system to elect the Speaker of the House and the chairs of select committees.¹⁴ The City of London chooses its mayor using the Supplementary Vote (SV) system, a variant of AV which allows each voter to declare only a first and second choice among the list of candidates.¹⁵ Moreover, the sequence of ballots that the Conservative party uses in the first stage of the election of their leader is analogous to AV (Quinn, 2012).¹⁶ MPs within all the three largest parties in 2010 were, therefore, familiar with the concept as a result of their participation in those leadership elections.

¹¹ If, in the first stage, a candidate receives more than 50% of the valid votes, that candidate automatically wins the election. In this case, the need for a second stage election no longer exists.

¹² The Independent Commission on the Voting System (1998) set up by Blair had acknowledged this and recommended that 15-20 per cent of the seats should be elected in a proportional manner as top-up seats to counteract AV leading to disproportionality at the national level.

¹³ Disregarding the fact that AV or systems closely resembling AV are used commonly in the UK, David Cameron repeatedly stated that AV was an obscure system used only in Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Australia.

¹⁴ See the Parliament web-site 'Voting systems in the UK': <http://www.parliament.uk/about/how/elections-and-voting/voting-systems/>

¹⁵ <http://www.londonelects.org.uk/im-voter/counting-votes/>

¹⁶ The main difference is that under AV candidates are narrowed down based on recounting secondary preferences indicated on a single original ballot. For electing the Conservative leader, MP's vote in separate ballots after each round of counting until only two candidates are left. The shortlist, consisting of the final two, is then sent out to Party members in the form of another ballot (Kelly and Lester, 2005).

The wider public was unlikely to have come across the system until it was placed before them in 2010.¹⁷

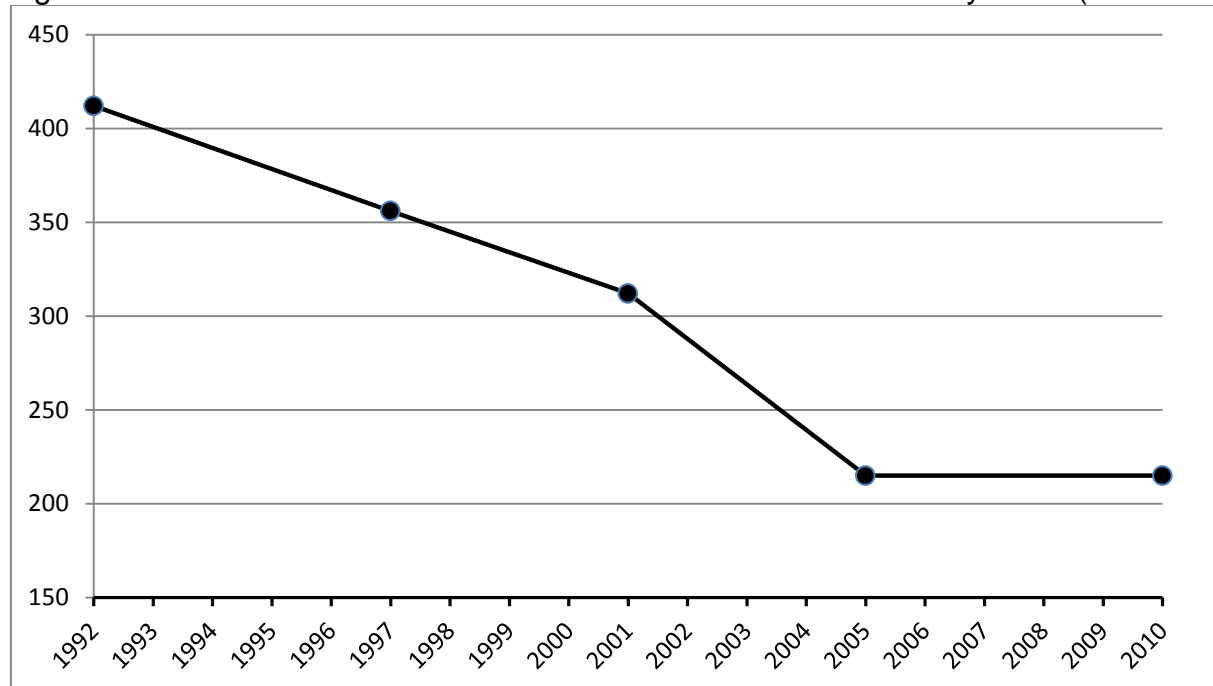
AV arguably strengthens the constituency link. A candidate supported by an absolute majority of preferential votes may presumably have a stronger mandate than a candidate supported only by a simple majority of first preference votes. This mandate case for AV was made by Gordon Brown and also by the Yes supporters.¹⁸ The Electoral Reform Society claimed that the system would ‘ensure a real mandate’ as only nearly one third of MPs can claim support from the majority of voters in their constituency.¹⁹ Figure 1 displays the decreasing trend in the number of MP’s elected by less than 50% of the votes cast in the constituency.

¹⁷ Some UK citizens may have come across AV, or a variant thereof, in trade union leadership elections or in elections of officers in students’ unions at universities.

¹⁸ On 2 February 2010, in a speech to IPPR, Gordon Brown stated that ‘I hope we can move to a situation where every MP is able to say, as they cannot today, that when it came to the final count, they were the choice of an absolute majority’ - “Towards a new politics”, Speech by the Prime Minister to the IPPR (2 February 2010).

¹⁹ <https://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/sites/default/files/introducing-the-alternative-vote.pdf>, p.6.

Figure 1. Number of MP's elected with less than 50% of constituency votes (1992-2010)



The numbers are created based on data from The British Parliamentary Constituency Database, 1992-2005, Release 1.3 compiled by Pippa Norris and May 6th 2010 British General Election Constituency Results Release 5.0 by Pippa Norris.

2.3. Literature on electoral reform

The political science literature that examines electoral reform (e.g., Boix, 1999; Colomer 2005; Cusack et. al., 2007; Calvo, 2009) is closely related to the vast literature on electoral systems (e.g., Duverger, 1954, Rae, 1967; Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Lijphart and Aitkin, 1994; Norris and Crewe, 1994; Farrell, 1997; Farrell and Scully, 2007). The literature on electoral reform is extensive and diverse in itself. Some studies compare different cases of reform (Katz, 2005) while others focus on a single case (Renwick et. al., 2009) or provide regional case studies (Birch et. al., 2002). Some of the literature is technical and descriptive (Farrell, 2011), while some advocate reform and take a normative democratic position concerning which system to choose (McLean, 1991). Cases of non-reform and failed reform attempts have also attracted scholarly attention (Bowler and Donovan, 2008; Rahat and Hazan, 2011).

Considering the enormity of the literature on the topic, analysts studying electoral reform need to be selective in their choice of theory and case. Among the large sea of

literature, Shugart's theoretical framework is particularly relevant for exploring the systemic pressures that led to the hung parliament in the UK in 2010 and ultimately the 2011 referendum. This section will use Shugart's approach as a launch pad to place the case in a theoretical context.

According to Shugart's framework, electoral reform is most likely to occur when vote-maximizing strategies of political actors (contingencies) coincide with normative evaluations (inherent conditions) of the existing system (Shugart, 2008). Normative evaluations may be prompted by systemic failure or crisis. Shugart defines systemic failure as 'the incapacity of the electoral system to deliver the normatively expected connection between the vote and the formation of executive authority' (Shugart, 2008, p.18).

Reform promises made by politicians may not always reflect a genuine motivation to change the system. The differences Shugart draws between 'act-based motivations' and 'outcome contingent motivations' is of particular relevance here. An act-based motivation occurs when politicians assume the role of the heroic reformer in order to increase their appeal to the public. Such politicians advocate reform, not because they anticipate benefits, but because they expect to benefit from appearing to advocate reform.²⁰ Act contingency differs from 'outcome contingency' which occurs when an actor or set of actors advocate electoral reform on the understanding that reform would, indeed, produce better electoral outcomes for their party in the future.

Shugart's framework points us towards to the distinction between normative/systemic concerns and models that focus on party-interest. The need to bring

²⁰ This occurred in the run up to the 2010 general election when Gordon Brown, the incumbent Labour prime minister, signalled his willingness to hold a referendum on AV in order to put his party on the side of change. The motivation behind this step was to attract the Liberal Democrat voters and to send a positive signal to the leader of the party, Nick Clegg for a potential coalition deal. The fact that Gordon Brown was only beginning to express interest on electoral reform towards the very end of his three year term as the prime minister, naturally, reduced the credibility of his appeal.

together a variety of academic approaches to achieve a more comprehensive and multi-dimensional understanding of the phenomena has been acknowledged by some scholars in the field (Rahat and Hazan, 2011). This theoretical move is imperative in order to avoid the risk of a reductionism which emphasizes one kind of motivation over others (party interest vs. self-interest vs. interest of the country as a whole). In reality, motivations may coexist as embedded cultural realities within political systems or within the public imagination. For instance, people or groups may be motivated by considerations about self-interest but they also need to make sure that they do not demonstrably trespass cultural particularities and violate the rules of civility while participating in politics. Shugart's 'inherent conditions' relate largely to the systemic failure of an electoral system – primarily in terms of the disproportionality that it produces.²¹ Contingent factors relate to the strategic considerations of immediate partisan advantage.

The failure of AV in the UK is an interesting case in itself. Yet, at the same time, we can benefit from looking at the UK case through the lens of scholarly work on other cases (Landman, 2003). There have, for example, been a number of studies on New Zealand, which changed its voting system in 1993 following a referendum. In the New Zealand case, electoral reform appears to have come about as a result of party system dealignment and electoral disproportionality (Vowles, 2008).²² The public dissatisfaction with economic conditions was also instrumental in boosting support behind the attempts to modify the country's electoral system (Nagel, 1998).

²¹ The detection of 'systemic failures' may be based on subjective and normative evaluations about how democracies should work.

²² The general elections held in New Zealand in 1990 produced highly disproportional results. The National Party was able to win 69 per cent of the seats (67 of the total 97 seats) with just 47.8 per cent of the national votes, while the Labour party won just 29 (30 per cent) of the seats with 35 per cent of the votes. The New Labour party won 1 seat in return for 5.2 percent of the vote while the Green Party failed to win any seat despite their 6.8 per cent national vote share. In the 1993 election, more than 30 per cent of the votes went to minor parties (18.2 per cent for Alliance Party, 8.4 per cent for New Zealand First and 2 per cent for Christian Heritage). These votes were translated into just two, two and zero seats respectively.

Vowles argues that because the reduction in the vote shares of the two major parties was not accompanied by a corresponding reduction in their seat shares, concerns were raised about the representativeness of the country's parliament (Vowles, 2008). According to Vowles, this development weakened accountability and the direct link between voters and the MPs— the two things generally assumed to be the strengths of plurality systems. A binding referendum on changing New Zealand's electoral system was held on the same day as the 1993 General Election. The proposal was accepted as 53.9 per cent of those taking part in that referendum voted in favour of a mixed member proportional system that also included provision for six members to be elected by members of the indigenous Maori people (who made up 15 per cent of the electorate).

Electoral reform attempts can be characterized both in terms of a definitive contingent instance (the event of the referendum) as well as a path-dependent process. In accordance with the incremental and path-dependent evolution of the UK's unwritten constitution, where precedents have been essential, the country's electoral reform prospect itself can be characterized in a path-dependent manner.²³ From a theoretical perspective, path-dependence is significant in part because political parties tend towards consistency or reliability (Downs, 1957). Path-dependencies may be formed through negotiations between parties and/or when those who initiate reforms use consultative bodies. Such bodies may help reformers keep the policy window open (Shugart, 2008).

2.4. The British constitution and electoral reform

As implied in the section above, the political discourse on electoral reform may be conditioned by rational calculations by parties pursuing their self-interest. Less

²³ As briefly mentioned in the introduction section, Philip Norton characterizes the (largely uncodified and unentrenched) British constitution as being 'in flux' (Norton, 1982). In a similar manner, the British debates on electoral reform and referendums have shown fluctuation.

obviously, and indeed less cynically, the discourse can reflect a country's broader, and perhaps normatively driven, conceptions on what characterizes a 'good' constitution and, accordingly, the broader debate on constitutional reform (Finer et. al, 1995, Oliver, 2003). These considerations may occasionally either supersede or, at the very least, coincide with partisan considerations.²⁴

Britain has a long constitutional history that one could possibly trace back to as far as 1215, when the Magna Carta was sealed by King John who, in order to keep his rule, had to part with absolute power (Barnett, 2002). In part because it lacks a republican framework, the current political system in Britain is founded on traditions, conventions and sentiments established in the earlier periods, when people doubted the central premise of democracy: that the people were capable of governing themselves. The central concern was to produce 'strong' rather than 'representative' government and this has generally been thought to mean single party government (King, 2001). The UK has not gone through a full and rapid republican conversion in the way defeated imperial powers like Italy or Japan went through at the end of the World War II (Finer et. al., 1995). These countries, unlike the UK, both have written or 'capital C' constitutions (King, 2001). The core of the British constitution, as pointed out in the previous section, is largely unwritten and can be said to have evolved organically and/or gradually.

Other examples suggest that there are sometimes surprising sources of change. Katz, for example, explores the involvement of Canadian courts in electoral reform. He suggests that the courts have prioritized 'individual rights of expression over collective rights of decision' in their rulings on matters involving parties and elections (Katz, 2011,

²⁴ The former Liberals, for example, did not advocate electoral reform until they were replaced by Labour as the principle party of opposition to the Conservatives in the 1930s (King, 2007). In 1917, David Lloyd George – who was the prime minister and leader of the Liberals at the time - blocked a bill to change the system to PR (Blackburn, 1995).

p.602).²⁵ The reasons behind this, Katz argues, are the principles of the Canadian constitution and the lack of reference to political parties therein. This opposition between the individual and the collective in the Canadian context echoes the tension between redistributive and efficiency functions of electoral systems (Tsebelis, 1990).

Although it is thought to be traditional, FPTP has not been the only system for House of Commons elections in the UK. In the past, different kinds of Westminster constituencies had different electoral systems (Blackburn, 1995). Multi-member constituencies were quite common until 1885, when the Redistribution of Seats Act replaced many of them with single-member constituencies in an attempt to standardize.²⁶ For a long time, moreover, university graduates had two votes – one for the constituency in which they lived and one for special university seats. Representatives of these special seats were elected by the Single Transferrable Vote (STV) from 1911 until 1945. Such ‘plural voting’ rules were abolished in the Representation of the People Act 1948 and graduates had just one vote from the 1950 general election onwards (Parry, 2012).

Britain’s constitution does not prescribe a set method regarding matters that are considered constitutional (Hazell et. al., 1996). Whether the electoral reform debate is part of a wider reform agenda or is driven mainly by partisan rationality is an important question that needs to be addressed in order to better understand the process of electoral reform itself (Blackburn and Plant, 1999). Was the real driving force behind electoral reform rational seat-maximization or alliance strategies, or was it based on

²⁵ *Figueroa v. Canada (Attorney General)* (1 SCR 912 [2003]) is one of the cases Katz includes in his analysis. The case challenged the Canada Elections Act’s requirement of political parties needing to run for elections in a minimum of 50 constituencies in order to maintain registered party status. In Canada, this status provides a number of privileges including displaying the party’s name on the ballot alongside its candidate. The Ontario Court ruled that the threshold was not consistent with the section 3 (on voting rights) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Although the Ontario Court of Appeal later reversed this decision, the Supreme Court of Canada gave the final verdict that the legislation violates section 3 and harms individual participants and the entire electoral process.

²⁶ <http://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/electionsvoting/chartists/keydates/>.

normative/value-driven considerations with respect to the electoral system? These two motivations are not mutually exclusive; it is possible to break the discourse on electoral reform into its component parts based on the motivations of the decision-makers. Path-dependence may be relevant for both strategic dependencies and value-oriented lineages in regard to enhancing the democratic quality of a political system. While, as suggested earlier, interests and values may become indistinguishable in the hands of politicians, it is still possible to draw inferences about their 'real' intentions based on their previous actions.

2.5. Disproportionality in the UK

Proportionality (or disproportionality) is the measure of how votes cast by voters are translated into seats in parliament. The principle of proportionality embodies the democratic proposition that all individuals are of equal moral value (Weir and Beetham, 1999).

In 2011, the Yes campaigners did not have the chance to make a strong case using the principle of proportionality since AV is not more or less proportional than the FPTP. Instead, both the Yes and the No campaigns utilized the word 'fairness' to support their respective arguments.²⁷ Since at least the 1970s, 'fairness' has been the key term for advocates of electoral reform in Britain (Norris, 1995). In relation to electoral systems, fairness is an 'essentially contested concept' (Blau, 2004). Blau suggests that the term 'fairness' does not possess a fundamental quality in *what/who* it applies to. This prompts us to ask the following question: Towards what or whom should the electoral system be fair? The national constituency, regional constituencies,

²⁷ The Yes campaign characterized AV as a system fairer than the FPTP based on the premise that it would prevent candidates supported by less than 50% of constituency voters from winning. The No campaign argued that AV was not a fair system because it made possible the scenario of a candidate who was the first choice for the highest number of voters in a certain constituency not being elected as the MP of that constituency.

executive bodies of political parties, one political ideology at the expense of parties that defend alternative ideologies, individual candidates or the individual voter? While it is possible to extend this list, the level of the definition is crucial in answering the above. Blau argues that the 'nebulous language of fairness' can be avoided by focusing on the prior principles on which our assessment of fairness is based (Blau, p.175). The particular conception of fairness that guides the design of an electoral system may determine which types (citizens, politicians, parties, etc.) or sub/super-types (e.g. major parties, minor parties, citizens belonging to a minority ethnic group, class of MPs elected by the constituency ballot vs. class of MPs elected through the party list in mixed electoral systems) of actors are advantaged or disadvantaged (or victimized) by that system.²⁸

While the AV referendum race itself did not revolve around arguments on proportionality, political scientists' interest on measures of (dis)proportionality implies some academic recognition of proportionality as an indicator of a political system's democratic merits.²⁹

There are various measures of disproportionality (e.g., Gallagher's index, Rae's index, Loosemore-Hanby's index, Saint-Lague index, deviation from proportionality (DV) score). Although, in theory, different methods of seat allocation would require different measures, the Gallagher Index (Gallagher, 1991), is generally taken to be a universal

²⁸ The electoral system itself can be considered an essentially contested institution, with various beneficiaries having direct or mediated stakes in it. According to Blau there are five common specifications of the concept of fairness as it is applied to electoral systems: Equality, populist, winner-takes-all, majority and plurality. An electoral system reflecting a preference for the winner-takes-all specification would be advantageous towards parties with regional but biased against smaller parties with nationally spread supporters. The characterization of each new election as a level playing field may weaken the 'fairness' argument made in defence of territorially dispersed parties like the Liberal Democrats. If the Michigan Model (party identification being stable and closely tied to vote) is valid (Campbell et al., 1960), the level playing field argument does not hold. On the other hand, the rapid fall in the partisan support of Liberal Democrats between 2010 and 2015 contradicts the Michigan Model. The Model will be discussed in more detail in section four in relation to voting behaviour in the referendum.

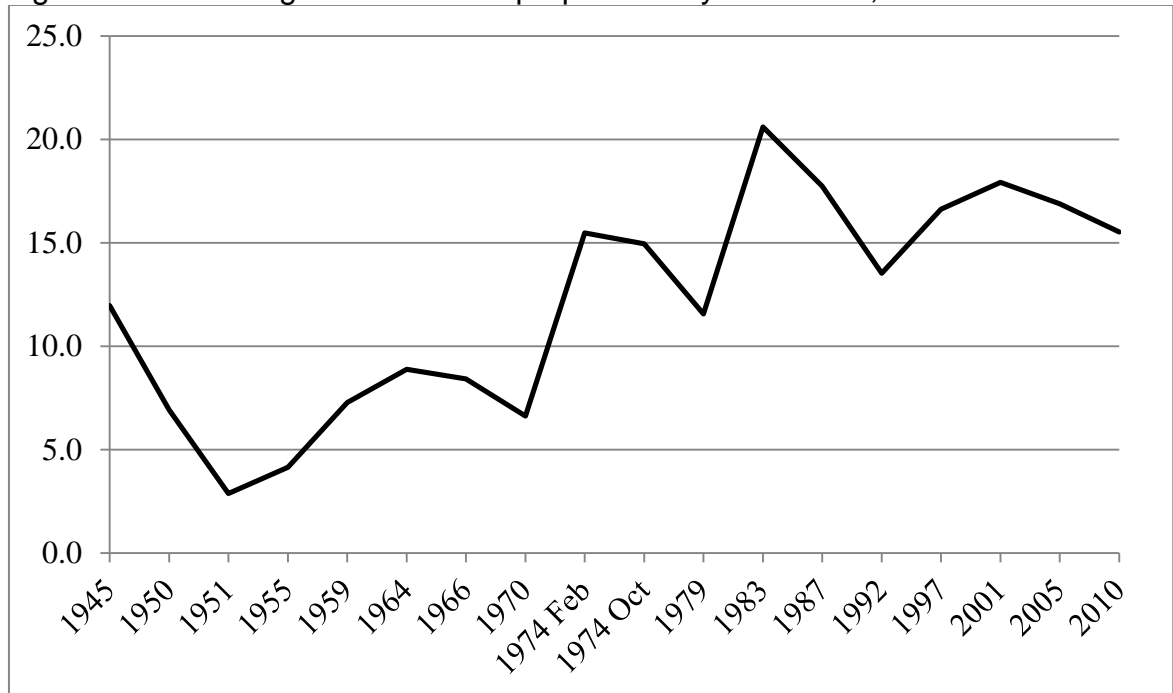
²⁹ The definition of political system here obviously excludes one-party dictatorships that have almost perfect proportionality (as well as very high turnout) figures.

measure and the best indicator of disproportionality in the general sense (e.g. Taagepera and Grofman, 2003). The Gallagher Index will, therefore, be used here as a supplement to the s/v ratio. The Index is a least squares measure based on the following formula:

$$LSq = \sqrt{\frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=1}^n (V_i - S_i)^2}$$

where, V_i is the vote share for a specific party and S_i is the parliamentary seat share. Figure 2 demonstrates the calculated Gallagher index value for the eighteen post-WWII elections in the UK. The value for each election is based on the differences between the vote shares of five groups and their corresponding seat shares: Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrats, PC/SNP and other. The Index starts off high in 1945 but declines in the 1950s. It then tracks upwards to 1970 and then leaps upward in February and October 1974, due to the increase in vote for the Liberals and also the Nationalist parties (the SNP in Scotland and Plaid Cymru in Wales) (Nagel and Wlezien, 2010). It remains high and then leaps upwards in 1983. The Index then declines in 1992, before increasing again in 1997 and 2001 and dipping slightly in 2005 and 2010.

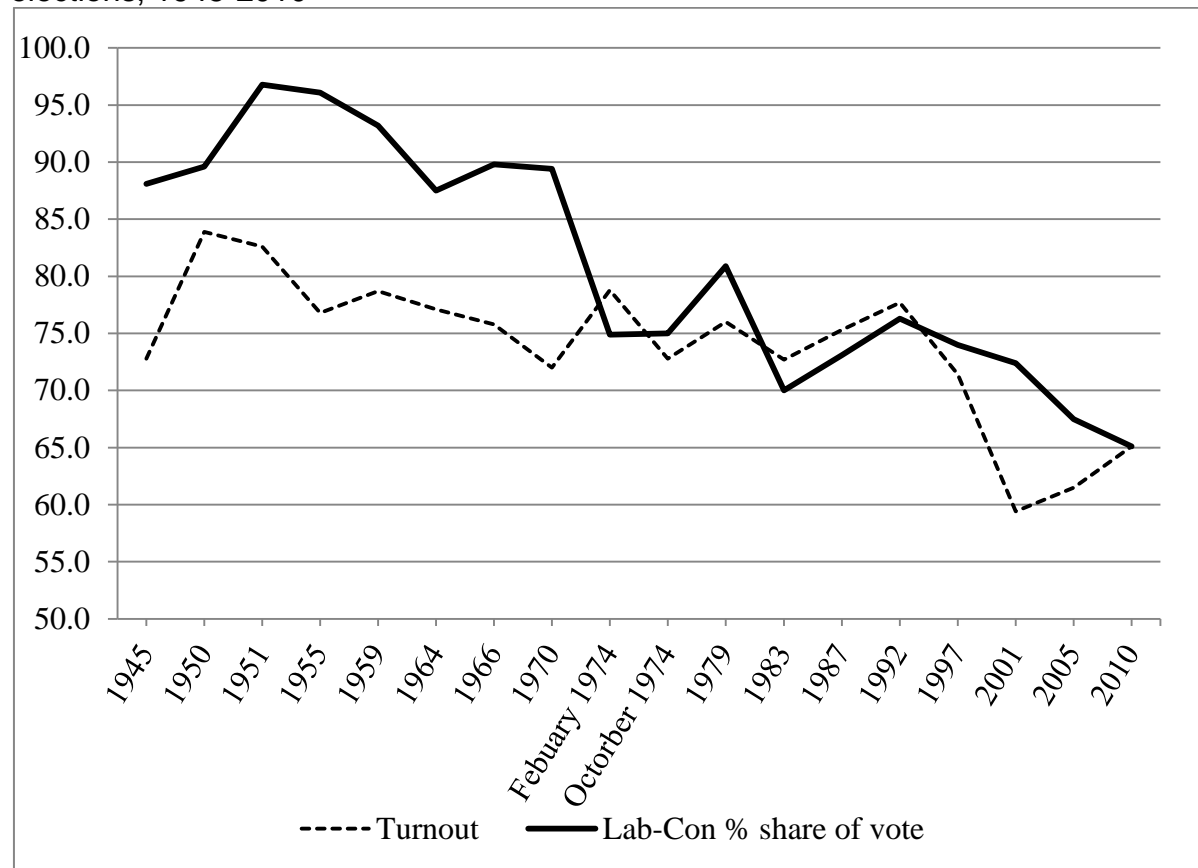
Figure 2. The Gallagher Index of disproportionality for the UK, 1945-2010



Index values are calculated based on election result figures taken from the House of Commons Library Research Paper 'UK Election Statistics 1918-2012' (RP 12/43, 7 August 2012).

Figure 2 can be roughly divided into three periods. The first, between 1950 and 1970, is a period of low disproportionality (Index <10). The second period, between February 1974 and 1979, is a period of moderate disproportionality (Index <15). The third and final period from 1983 until 2010 has high disproportionality (Index >15). These figures clearly demonstrate that the UK electoral system has become increasingly disproportional and, by this simple standard, 'unfair'.

Figure 3. Turnout and the Labour-Conservative share of the vote in British general elections, 1945-2010



The figure is based on the House of Commons election statistics data.

In addition to decreasing proportionality, another development in the political system has been the decline in electoral support for the two major parties that have governed the UK during the post-war period until the formation of the coalition in 2010. Figure 3 displays the joint vote share of the Conservative and Labour parties. Their joint share of the vote peaks in the 1950s at around 95 per cent and then tracks down, falling particularly sharply in February 1974 and 1983. By 2010, less than two out of three of the entire electorate supported one of the two major parties. Strikingly, the two major parties have not attracted more than four in five voters since 1979. The concern caused by the increasing disproportionality of the electoral system revealed in Figure 2 may have been offset by the fact that the major parties alternated in power. The turnover of governments meant that if a government became unpopular, it would be replaced with a

new one through elections. Figure 3, however, demonstrates that the two major parties' hold over the electorate has declined.

This concern is compounded by another change. As Figure 3 also shows, turnout has fallen from over 80 per cent to around 65 per cent. The declining share of the vote received by the major parties, coupled with the declining turnout, means that a diminishing proportion of the electorate have voted for the government over the years (see Figure 4). In the 1950s, this proportion was between 35 and 40 per cent. In the 1970s, it fell to around 30 per cent. By 2005, a mere 21.6 per cent of the electorate cast their vote for Labour, the party that formed the government. The formation of the coalition in 2010 increased the proportion of the electorate supporting the governing parties, largely because the two coalition partners obtained a combined 59.1 per cent of the total vote.³⁰ The low turnout figure of 65 per cent, however, still kept the proportion of the electorate voting for the governing parties below 40 per cent.

The steady decline in both the level of public engagement in parliamentary elections and support for the two major parties can be deduced from the figure just above. Although there have been upward sparks in turnout and support in some of the elections, the overall trend has been downward. Voter turnout is correlated with how close an election result is (Downs, 1957; Riker and Ordeshook, 1968; Cox and Munger 1989; Matsusaka 1993). The explanations on the causal mechanisms that underlie this relationship are varied. While Downs (1957) and Riker and Ordeshook (1968) suggest that a higher turnout level in close elections is due to increase in the motivations of the voters to influence the outcome, Cox and Munger (1989) and Matsusaka (1993) offer an alternative explanation concerning the root cause of boosted turnout: Voters themselves are not the ones sensitive to the predicted competitiveness of elections; increased

³⁰ In 2015, this figure fell to 24.4 per cent as the Conservatives were returned to office with 37 per cent of the national vote on a 66 per cent turnout.

turnout is instead due to the efforts of political elites who decide to boost their voter mobilization activities in tight looking electoral contexts. Proportional systems tend to have higher turnout levels, but clearly one needs to be cautious about jumping to conclusions about causality (Blais and Aarts, 2006).

Declining turnout and party support are contributory causes for declining government effectiveness in the UK (Whiteley, 2009). 'The expenses scandal' of 2009-2010 was used by campaigners on both sides during the AV referendum campaign.³¹ Heath suggests that 'the expenses scandal and the divide between voters and politicians that it came to symbolise inevitably cast a shadow over the 2010 election' (Heath, 2011, p.133). The media response to the expenses scandal drove party leaders to propose measures, during the pre-election debates, which would hypothetically discipline the MPs of their respective parties. To be sure, the scandal had a short-term and limited impact on British politics (Van Heerde-Hudson, 2014). Yet, the coincidence between the scandal and the campaign implied that the scandal may have had some influence in conditioning the campaign arguments. The suggestion that voters' ability to punish MP's is bounded by rules of the electoral system should be taken into consideration (Vivyan et. al, 2014). The MPs scandal elevated the debate on electoral reform to a more central position (Renwick et. al., 2011).

³¹ The media exposure of lavish MPs had raised scepticism among the UK public with regards to whether the tax money is being well spent. For public perceptions of the expenses scandal, see Allen and Birch (2011). The Yes campaign stressed the need to make MP's more accountable by means of a 'better' electoral system. The No campaign argued that the funds needed for the proposed switch to a new electoral would be better for the country if it was spent on better services for the citizens.

Figure 4. Proportion (%) of the electorate voting for the governing parties, 1945-2010



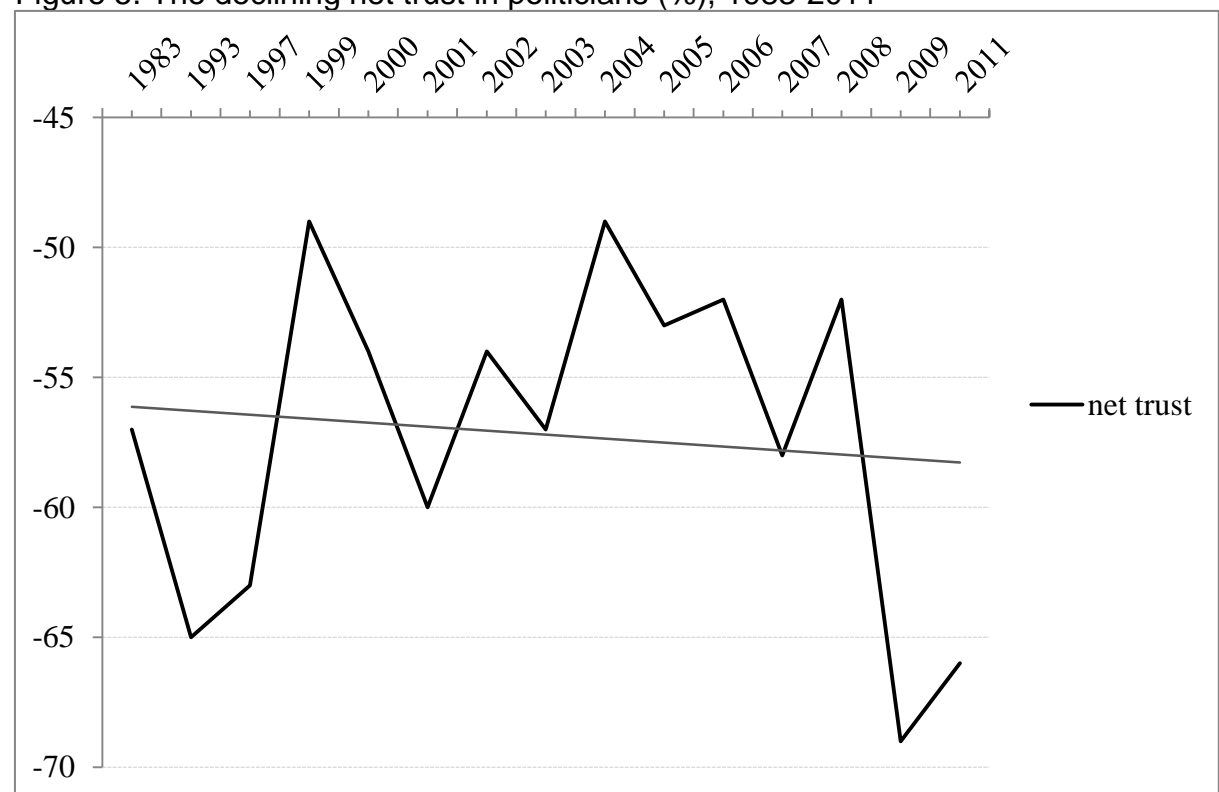
Figure is based on the House of Commons election statistics data.

The leaders' proposed measures included the power of recall and a more 'competitive' electoral system. The scandal also conditioned the two opposing referendum campaigns. The Yes campaign argued that AV's 50 per cent threshold would make MP's more accountable and elections more competitive. The No campaign, on the other hand, took advantage of the heightened public sensitivity about irresponsible spending of public money, claiming that the switch to AV would lead to £250 million of public money being wasted. In short, both sides tried to associate their position with the cause of 'political reform'.

Another factor to consider in relation to increased demands for reform is declining trust in politicians. The proportion of the population expressing distrust has always exceeded the proportion expressing trust, so that net trust (per cent of the public that trust politicians minus per cent of the public that do not) has hovered around -50 according to Ipsos-MORI (see Figure 5). In the wake of the expenses scandal in 2009,

however, trust fell to a new low of -69 and remained at -66, two years later. This widespread concern was reflected in the 2010 prime ministerial debates, which devoted a significant proportion of the time allocated to the issue of parliamentary standards (Allen, Bara and Bartle, 2013). The 'political class' found themselves in the dock and the party leaders made efforts to portray themselves as the representatives of an outraged public (Heath, 2011). As Heath suggests, during the second half of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century, the public appears to have gradually become more disconnected from the 'political class', support for the two main parties has declined, turnout went down and party membership declined.³²

Figure 5. The declining net trust in politicians (%), 1983-2011



Source: Ipsos MORI

³² Membership figures for earlier periods are not particularly reliable, since practices varied between constituencies and there were no national membership lists until the mid-1990s. See Butler and Butler (2011).

2.6. Electoral reform and the political agenda

Electoral reform and AV has competed for attention with a large number of issues and are part of a wider 'political agenda', loosely defined as a set of issues that are under discussion or consideration – particularly by policy-makers. There are various ways of measuring the 'agendas' of the government, political parties and the wider public (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993; John et. al, 2013). The government's agenda, for instance, can be measured by looking at the content of election manifestos (Norris et. al., 1999) or Queens' Speeches (Jennings and John, 2009).

These measurements can be supplemented by frequency measurements of key terms used in parliamentary discourse. The level of interest in electoral reform by British parliamentarians has varied over time. The place of electoral reform on the British political agenda can, thus, be estimated by examining the official record of parliamentary debates and correspondence.³³ Figure 6 displays the year-specific results of keyword searches in the Hansard database of the terms 'electoral reform', 'Alternative Vote', 'single transferrable vote' and 'voting reform'.³⁴ This source provides a good indicator of the actual official debates that have taken place in the Houses of Parliament.³⁵

The two peaks for 'Alternative Vote' around years 1917 and 1930 correspond to the reform bills that were discussed in the parliament around that era. A speaker's conference on electoral reform was set up in 1916 and produced its report in 1917. The Speaker's Conference of 1916-17 as well as the Ullswater Committee of 1930 recommended the Alternative Vote (Butler, 2004). The peak around 1997 mainly

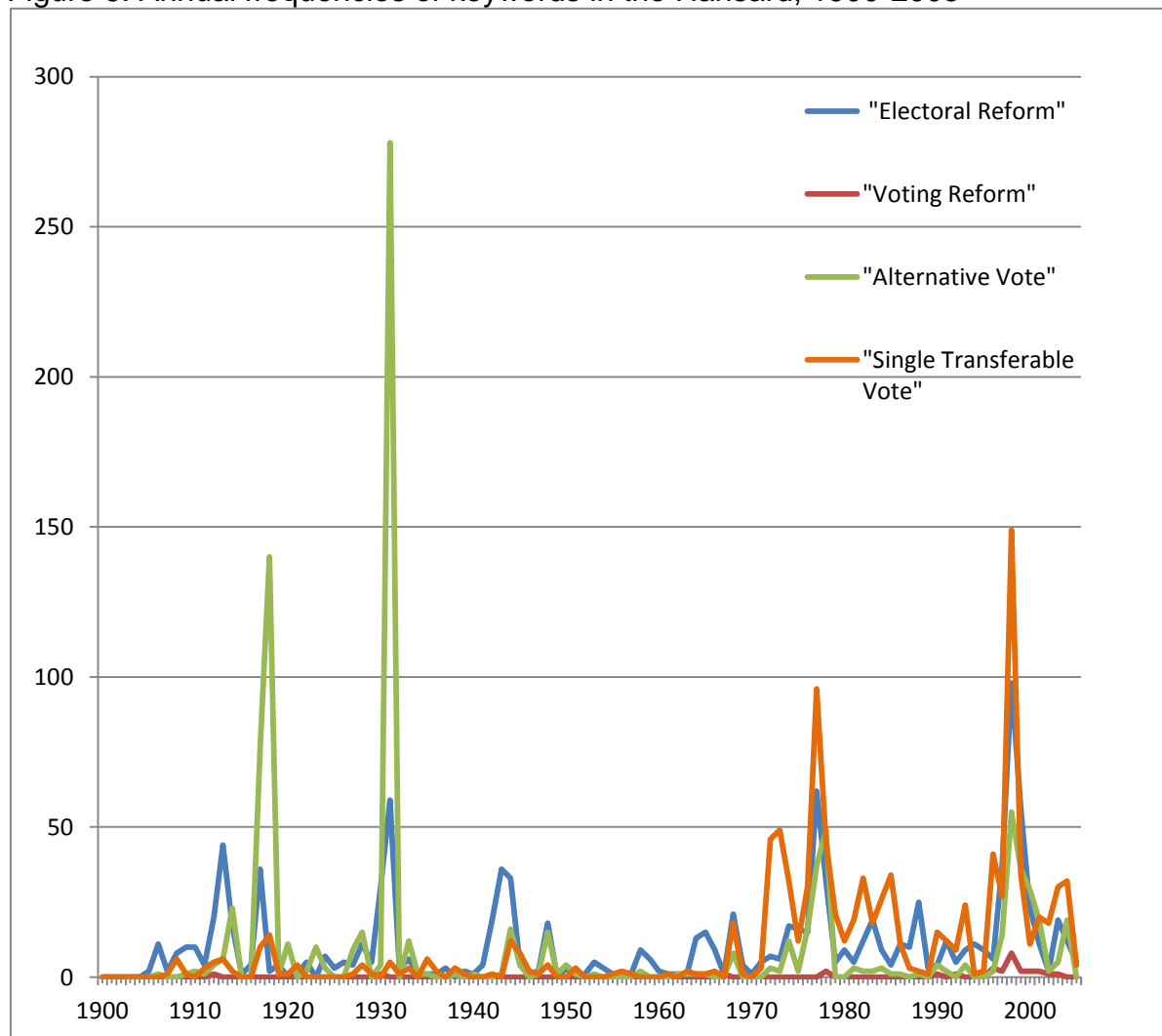
³³ As paper 3 will demonstrate there is little evidence of any public interest in electoral reform. It is difficult to argue that the parliamentary interest reflected or was caused by wider interest.

³⁴ Hansard's online search engine's results are labelled under seven categories: Lords sittings, Commons sittings, Westminster Hall sittings, Written Answers, Written Statements, Lords reports and Grand Committee reports.

³⁵ The analysis covers the debates that took place in both the House of Lords and the House of Commons. For the details of the parsing status: <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/volumes/>

corresponds to the discussions that took place at Westminster regarding which electoral systems to use for elections to the devolved assemblies. On the other hand, the modest peak for 'electoral reform' during World War II comes as a surprise, as one would expect electoral reform to be down the list of priorities during a major war.

Figure 6. Annual frequencies of keywords in the Hansard, 1900-2005

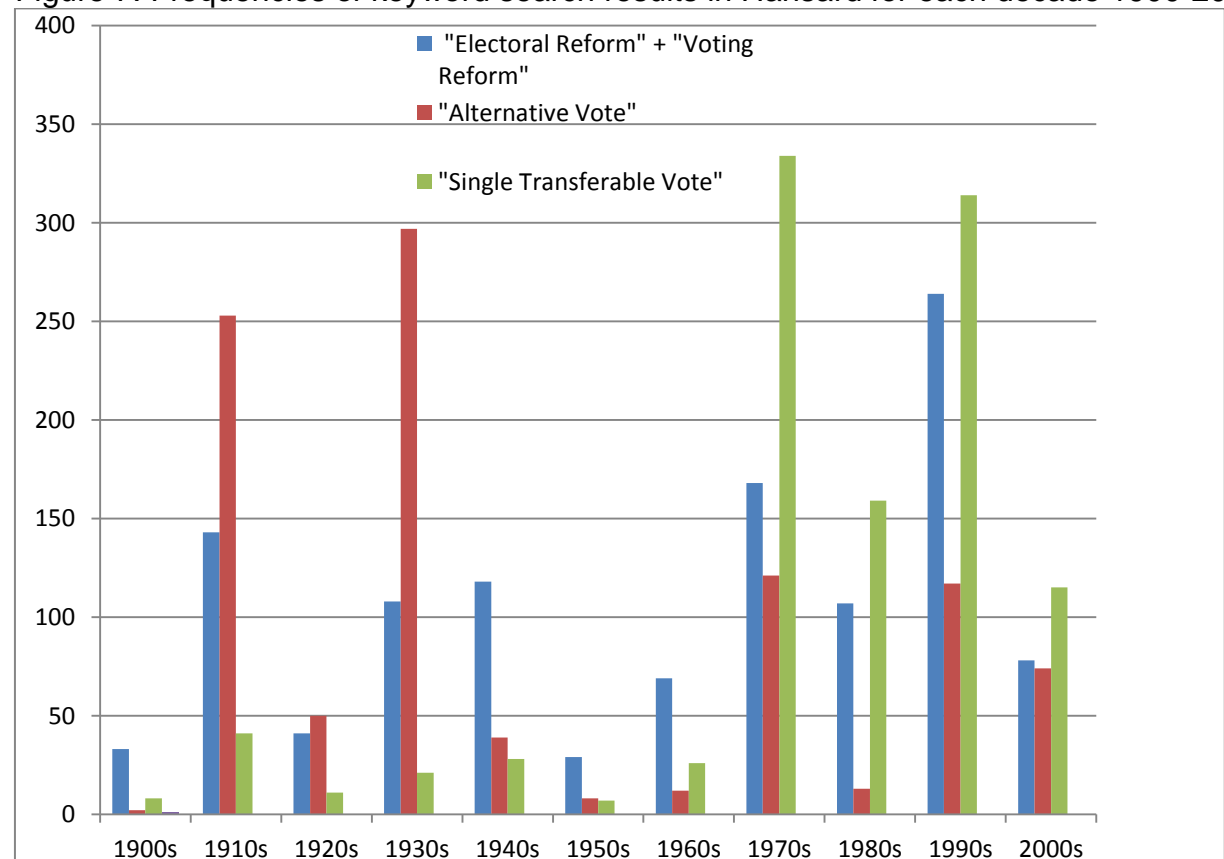


The figure is based on search result data from <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/>

The same data are presented again in Figure 7 in the form of a bar chart demonstrating the occurrence of mentions in each decade. The bar chart groups electoral reform and voting reform together under a single category. The figure hints at a significantly greater interest in electoral reform in the 1910s and 1930s in comparison

to the 1950s and 1960s. In the two decades following the WWII, Britain had more pressing priorities than electoral reform; namely, the reconstruction of a nation that had suffered greatly during the war. The issue re-emerged in the 1970s with the growth of the Liberal and Nationalist parties (Webb, 2000), and in the 1990s after a long period of single party rule by the Conservatives.

Figure 7. Frequencies of keyword search results in Hansard for each decade 1900-2005



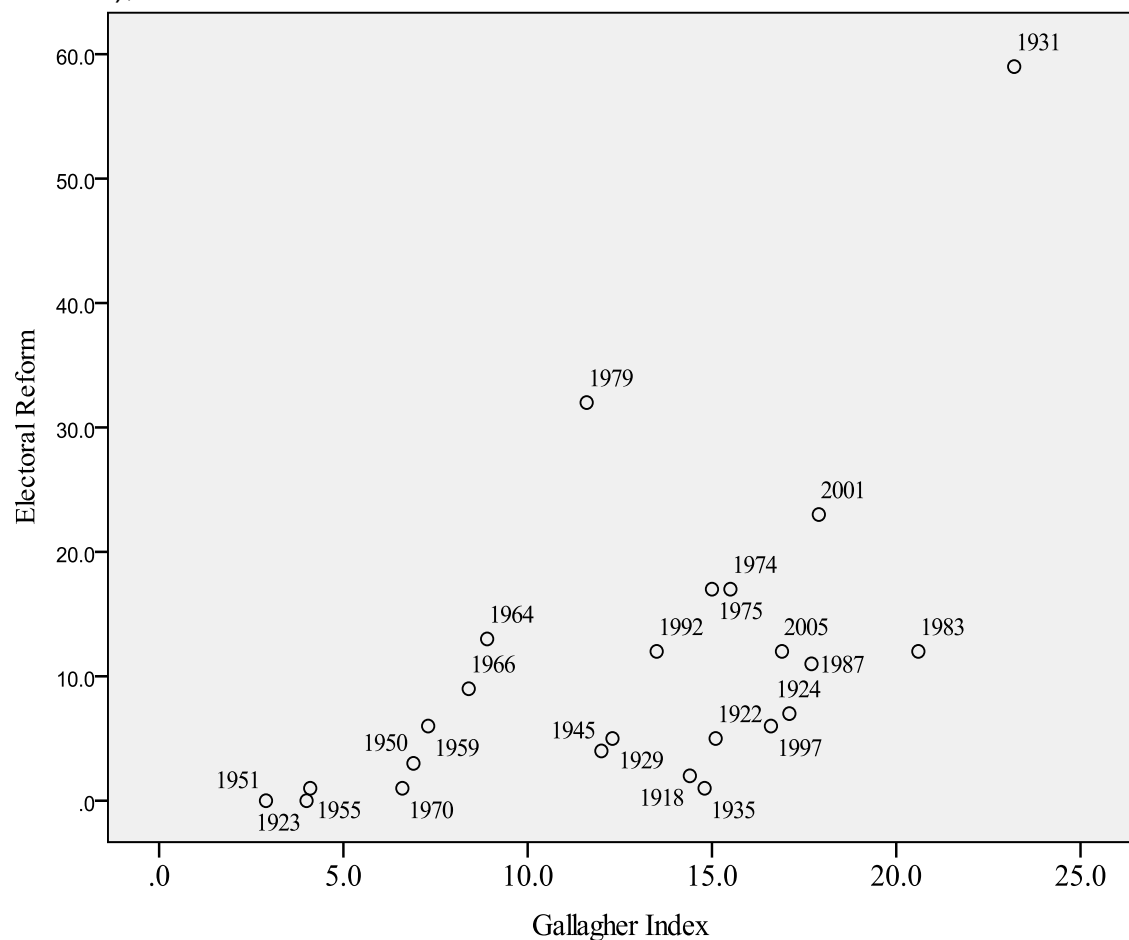
The figure is based on search results gathered from hansard.millbanksystems.com.

Looking at these frequencies in isolation does not give us the entire picture. It is, therefore, essential to examine the relationship between proportionality and interest in electoral reform. Figure 8 displays the relationship between the Gallagher Index and mentions of electoral reform in the Houses of Parliament. The relationship between the two is positive: as disproportionality increases, so does talk of electoral reform at

Wesminister. The Pearson's correlation coefficient is 0.57 ($N=24$, $p<0.01$).³⁶ While the relationship appears to be accentuated by a single case – that of 1931, when the Gallagher index peaks as does mention of electoral reform – the correlation between disproportionality and mentions of electoral reform is still moderately strong: 0.45 ($N=23$) even with exclusion of this outlier. To be sure, correlation is not causation.

Disproportionality may cause parliamentary debate about electoral reform for two reasons: (a) because it increases concern about unfairness and (b) because it creates strategic opportunities.

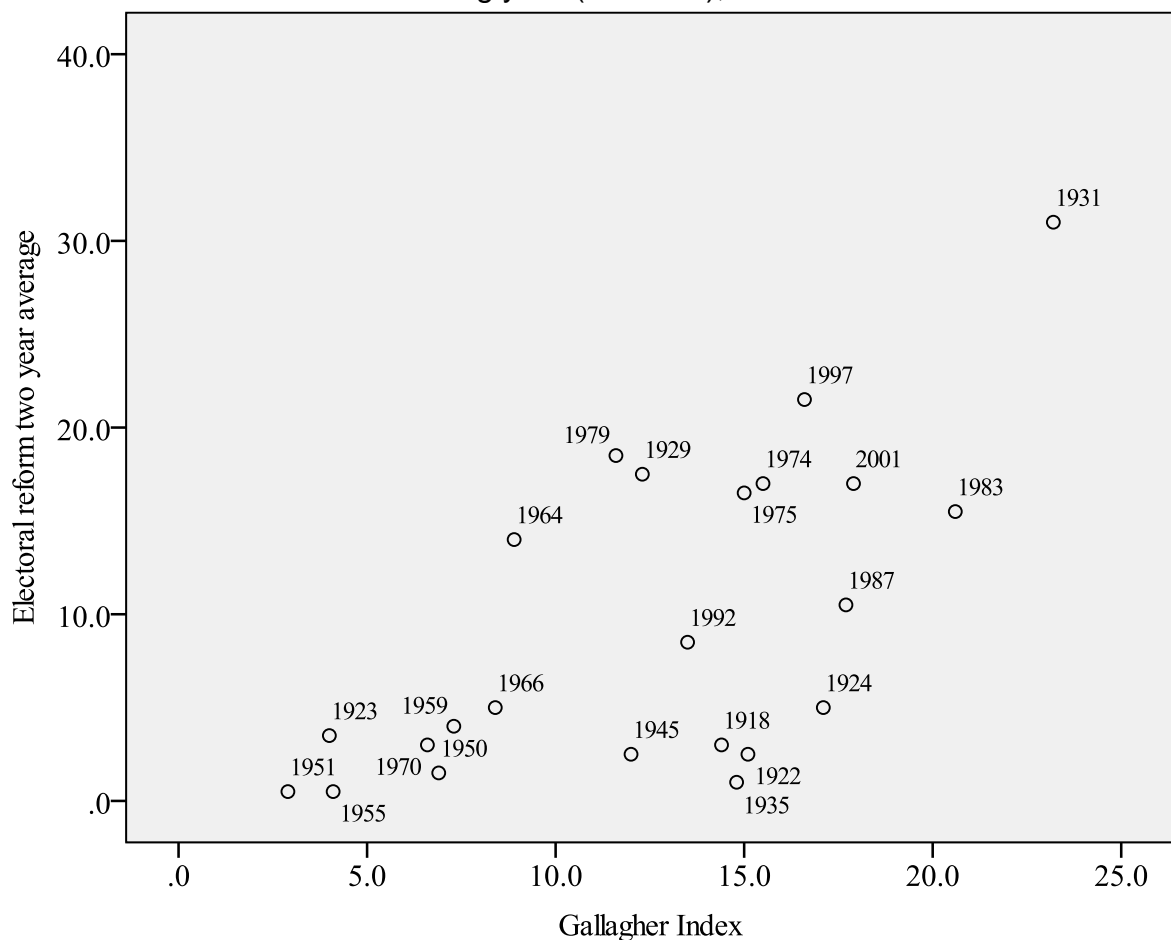
Figure 8. Relationship between disproportionality and mentions of electoral reform (Hansard), 1918-2005



³⁶ There have been 24 general elections between 1900 and 2010.

The analysis in Figure 8 signals that disproportionality has an effect on the Westminster agenda in the same year that the election has taken place. It may, however, also have a delayed impact. Figure 9 displays the repeated analysis taking into consideration the possibility of this impact. There is again a relationship between disproportionality and the agenda as indicated by mentions of 'electoral reform'. The Pearson's R in this case is 0.65 (N=23, $p < 0.001$). This once more provides evidence that disproportionality is associated with discourse of electoral reform in both Houses of Parliament.

Figure 9. Relationship between disproportionality and average mentions of electoral reform in the same and the following year (Hansard), 1918-2005



As paper 3 will show, electoral reform and constitutional reform do not rank highly on the public's agenda. Yet, as the parliamentary records indicate, electoral

reform has been debated by British parliamentarians for more than a century. The remainder of this paper will, therefore, focus on the content of the debate at an elite level by looking at the parties, and in particular the Labour party. The following sections will demonstrate that Labour party has been pivotal in Britain's electoral reform debate by coupling the Alternative Vote with electoral reform.

2.7. The political parties' and electoral reform

The only UK institutions that have the power to transform a policy into legislation are political parties or, more specifically, those political parties that have a reasonable chance of forming the government. Parties may officially seek public approval for a policy either through the party manifesto or invite the electorate to make a direct choice in a referendum.

The hung parliament environment in 2010 created the conditions to bring about reform since power was dispersed among the parties.³⁷ This section elaborates on the electoral reform prospect from the standpoint of the three main parties with a particular emphasis on the Labour party.

2.7.1. Labour

The Labour party's interest in electoral reform has fluctuated throughout the twentieth century. In the early part of the party's history, certain factions within the party expressed interest in reform. The 1931 spike in Figure 6 relates to the Speaker's Conference on electoral reform held during the period when Labour governed as a minority government. From the time Labour replaced the Liberals as the main party of

³⁷ This is the case since no single party had an absolute mandate in forming the government. According to Richard Burden MP '[constitutional convention] would have been a better way [to decide on this issue]' (Burden, 2014). One can argue that the negotiation talks have in practice acted as an informal type of constitutional bargaining.

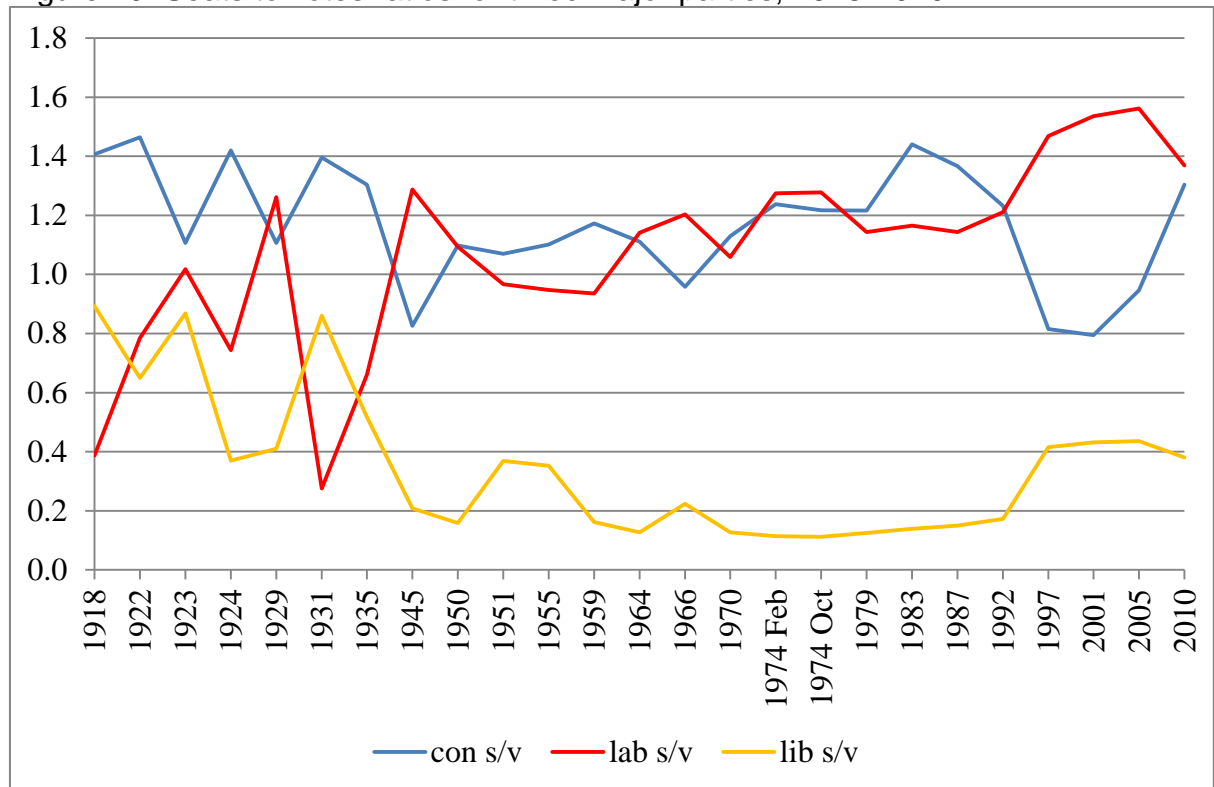
opposition to the Conservatives in the late 1930s, right through to the late 1980s, the party showed little interest in electoral reform (Morris, 2005).

The party's lack of engagement was largely because Labour was one of the two major parties throughout this period and confidently expected to alternate in power with the Conservatives as the political pendulum swung from right to left.³⁸ The party governed from 1945 to 1951, from 1964 to 1970 and from 1974 to 1979. As Figure 10 shows, the Labour party's s/v ratio regularly exceeded 1, suggesting that it profited from the FPTP system, gaining more representation than its national vote would have given it in a proportional system. In 1945 and 1966, moreover, the party obtained massive parliamentary majorities. The 1945 government – which created the National Health Service, expanded the welfare state and nationalised a great deal of industry – came to represent the 'ideal' Labour government. It was widely cited as an example of what a Labour majority government could achieve.

The four consecutive electoral defeats from 1979 until 1992, however, caused many within Labour to worry whether the pendulum would still swing back in their favour and stimulated increasing interest in electoral reform (Anderson and Mann, 1997). The growing realisation that the existing system had enabled the Conservatives to win elections on a minority of the vote and pursue a radical New Right political agenda caused Labour to reconsider its support for FPTP. At the same time, there were increasing demands from Scotland, Wales and some English regions to devolve power to protect those areas from the consequences of Conservative domination in Westminster (Marr, 1992).

³⁸ For the application of the 'pendulum' idea to British elections (1945-2005), see Lebo and Norpoth, 2007.

Figure 10. Seats to votes ratios for three major parties, 1918-2010



Data are based on House of Commons Library Research Paper 'UK Election Statistics 1918-2012' (RP 12/43, 7 August 2012).

At its 1990 Party Conference, the Labour party voted to set up the Electoral Systems Working Party, known as the Plant Commission, in order to examine the options for possible reform. In July 1991, the Working Party published its first interim report titled *Democracy, Representations and Elections*. In this report various possible electoral system options were outlined (Labour, 1992). The second interim report, which was published in the summer of 1992, excluded STV as an option for the Commons based on the reason that STV would dilute the constituency link. This second report recommended AMS for the proposed Scottish Parliament. In its final report, published in early 1993, the Working Party recommended Supplementary Vote for the Commons, a system that, like AV would have preserved existing single-member constituencies and would have likely continued to produce a majority for the largest party.³⁹ The Party also

³⁹ This system was adopted in elections for the London Mayor.

recommended a regional list system for the second chamber to replace the House of Lords.

The Labour party's commitment to holding a referendum on electoral reform dates back to 1993, when John Smith, the then leader, made the promise in order to avoid a damaging split on the issue.⁴⁰ Although Smith's promise to hold a referendum on the issue as soon as Labour came back to power was not realized, this commitment was sustained in the reviews prepared and committees established during Blair's leadership.

These changes in the policy on electoral reform coincided with other changes that could be categorized as constitutional change. From 1989, the Scottish Constitutional Convention (SCC) – made up of Labour, the Liberal Democrats, churches and trade unions – met to discuss devolution.⁴¹ The Scottish Labour party had narrowly agreed in 1990 that the new parliament would be elected by a form of proportional representation (King, 2007). Following John Smith's premature death in 1994, Labour expressed a desire to fulfil promises on both devolution and electoral reform, partly as a memorial to their 'lost leader'.⁴² New Labour, under Tony Blair, expressed a wider interest in constitutional reform and advocated policies that took the party closer to the Liberal Democrats. Beyond that, the two parties formed the Joint Consultative Committee on Constitutional Reform (JCC), comprised of representatives from both Labour and the Liberal Democrats. This Committee led to the signing of the so-called 'Cook-Maclennan Agreement', which established an agreed agenda for change that included devolution, freedom of information, the House of Lords and the incorporation of

⁴⁰ Smith's commitment was made at a Charter 88 event: 'A citizens' democracy': speech by John Smith, leader of the Labour party at an event hosted by Charter 88, Church House, Westminster, Monday 1 March, 1993.

⁴¹ The SCC was boycotted by the Conservatives and the Scottish National Party (SNP) were not interested in participating (Dunleavy and Margetts, 1999).

⁴² 'One of Smith's favourite ways of proceeding was to set up committees and working parties' (McSmith, 1994, p.329). This way of proceeding in relation to electoral reform continued under Blair.

the European Convention on Human Rights (Blackburn and Plant, 1999, pp. 468-80).

The agreement stated:

‘56. Both parties believe that a referendum on the system for elections to the House of Commons should be held within the first term of a new parliament.

57. Both parties are also agreed that the referendum should be a single question offering a straight choice between first past the post and one specific proportional alternative.

58. A commission on voting systems should be appointed early in the next parliament to recommend the appropriate proportional alternative to the first past the post system. Among the factors to be considered by the commission would be the likelihood that the proposed system would command broad consensus among proponents of proportional representation. The commission would be asked to report within twelve months of its establishment.’ (Blackburn and Plant, 1999, p.476).

Tony Blair remained far from convinced that Labour would be able to defeat the Conservatives at his first election as leader of his party. He, therefore, also made additional efforts to get the support of the Liberal Democrats through talking directly to their leader, Paddy Ashdown. These talks are recounted at length in the Ashdown diaries (Ashdown, 2002). Blair considered inviting Ashdown to join the new government right until the last moment, when the sheer size of Labour’s victory in 1997 made it both unfeasible and unnecessary. Nevertheless, in its 1997 Manifesto, the Labour party had expressed it was ‘committed to a referendum on the voting system for the House of Commons’. The careful wording of the manifesto document meant that this commitment was not a firm pledge (Labour, 1997). In contrast, setting up a commission early in the term was promised in the manifesto. In a move to keep this promise, the Independent

Commission on the Voting System was established by the Labour government in December of 1997. The Commission was chaired by Roy Jenkins, the prominent Liberal Democrat and former Labour chancellor and home secretary. The 'Jenkins Commission' was asked to recommend the best alternative 'system or combination of systems' to FPTP. It was asked to follow four requirements:

- broad proportionality
- the maintenance of a link between MPs and geographical constituencies
- the need for stable government
- an extension of voter choice (Secretary of State, 1998).

The second and third bullet points were included at the insistence of the Labour Party, while the first and fourth criteria were demanded by the Liberal Democrats. Labour modified the original 'proportionality' requirement of the Liberal Democrats to 'broad proportionality' (Dunleavy and Margetts, 1999) As Jenkins himself wrote in the report, these requirements were 'not entirely compatible' with each other.⁴³

During the preparation process of the Commission's report, political scientists David M. Farrell and Michael Gallagher, commissioned by the McDougall Trust, published a document which evaluated seven different electoral systems based on the above four requirements. This was one of the many submissions received by the Commission. In the forward page of the submission Tom Ellis, the chairman of the McDougall Trust, depicted two different cultures in British politics. On the one hand, he suggested, that the 'country's oligarchic political culture' acted as a resisting force for attempts for reform. Britain's 'social culture' was a concept incompatible with the former. The submission concluded that different systems would perform best on the each of the

⁴³ These words are expressed in the paragraph 1 of the Introduction (Chapter One) section of the report.

criteria, but that on balance, Additional Member System (AMS) would be the best replacement for the current system.

The Electoral Reform Society, the parent organization of McDougall Trust, prepared a separate submission to the Jenkins Commission in April 1998. The submission was a comprehensive report that promoted the STV system for the House of Commons. The report had one core section devoted for each of the four conditions stated in the terms of reference according to which the Jenkins Commission was set up.

In October 1998, the Commission tried to square the circle by recommending the AV-plus system. This entailed 80 to 85 per cent of MPs to be elected from individual constituencies using AV and the remainder from regional lists in order to make up for potential disproportionality AV would cause. Jenkins himself warned in the report that:

Within this mixed system the constituency members should be elected by AV. On its own AV would be unacceptable because of the danger that in anything like present circumstances it might increase rather than reduce disproportionality and might do so in a way which is unfair to the Conservative party. With the corrective mechanism in operation, its advantages of increasing voter choice and of ensuring that in practice all constituency members (as opposed to little more than half in recent elections) have majority support in their own constituencies become persuasive (Secretary of State, 1998, chapter 9).

The report included a 'Note of Reservation' by Lord Alexander, a Conservative peer, who supported all the recommendations in the Report except using AV to elect the constituency representatives. He instead preferred to retain FPTP. Although the report was received favourably by the then Lib Dem leader Paddy Ashdown and Tony Blair, it met with strong criticism from the supporters of the status quo.

During the House of Commons debate on voting systems, which took place on 5 November 1998, Labour MPs also expressed their criticism of the Jenkins report. Gerald Kaufman, for instance, shared his reservations in relation to the effect a possible referendum would have on the Labour party. He made a link between the EU referendum of 1975 and the possibility of an AV referendum and accused Lord Jenkins for trying to split the Labour party:

The Financial Times reported today that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will allow Cabinet Ministers to take either side of the argument in a referendum campaign. We had that in 1975 and the direct result was the split that developed in the party right through to 1980; it was Lord Jenkins who split the Labour party in 1980. In 1980, Lord Jenkins nearly inflicted a terminal split on my party and he is now trying to do that in another way.⁴⁴

Here, Kaufman reverses the proposition that referendums are mechanisms that parties use in order to prevent controversial issues from dividing the party as a whole by delegating the final decisions on those issues to the people.

In the same debate, Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, provided a guarded reaction to the Jenkins Report. He suggested that electoral reform should be seen as one component in the government's overall constitutional reform agenda and that the regional and European Parliament election experiences need to be examined in order to come up with a healthy recommendation for the Commons:

The second reason for not jumping to an instant conclusion on the Jenkins report is that the recommendations need to be seen in the context of the Government's wider, far-reaching programme of constitutional reform. We need to see how the new election systems settle down in

⁴⁴'Voting Systems' HC Deb 05 November 1998 vol 318 cc1032-113.
<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1998/nov/05/voting-systems>

Scotland, Wales, London and the European Parliament. It is particularly important that we look at the commission's proposals alongside reforms to the House of Lords, which will follow the removal of the right of hereditary peers to sit and vote in the other place. It would not be wise to embark on reform to the House of Commons electoral system until we are more certain of the changes that will take place in the other place.⁴⁵

Straw emphasized the necessity to evaluate the experience in regional assemblies and the system used to elect MEPs as more proportional systems had been used for those elections.⁴⁶

At Westminster, Labour remained divided over reform but the issue was largely overshadowed by both domestic issues and the Iraq War of 2003 and the changed security climate. The lack of action by Labour presumably contributed to Nick Clegg's unwillingness to participate in a rainbow coalition with Labour and the smaller and regional parties after the 2010 general election. Despite the deterioration in relations with the Liberal Democrats, the 2001 Labour manifesto kept open the possibility of reform.⁴⁷ It stated:

The government has introduced major innovations in the electoral systems used in the UK – for the devolved administrations, the European Parliament, and the

⁴⁵ 'Voting Systems' HC Deb 05 November 1998 vol. 318 cc1032-113.

<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1998/nov/05/voting-systems>

⁴⁶ As a result of Straw's commitment, the Ministry of Justice published Review of Voting Systems: the experience of new voting systems in the UK since 1997 in 2008, when Straw was the Secretary of State. The report, while acknowledging some of the benefits of PR, did not sponsor or promote a change of the existing system. 'The Governance of Britain – Review of Voting Systems: the experience of new voting systems in the United Kingdom since 1997' Cm7304, Ministry of Justice, January 2008.

⁴⁷ In 1999, Paddy Ashdown was replaced by Charles Kennedy as the leader of the Liberal Democrats. Change in leadership was an important factor in the change in relations between the Liberal Democrats and the Labour party. In a Guardian interview (21 January 2002), Kennedy expressed the intention to replace the 'project' of co-operation between the two parties with 'a policy of equidistance' (Russell and Fieldhouse, 2005, p.196). History section of the Liberal Democrats' official website states that "from the outset Ashdown's successor, Charles Kennedy, was less inclined to work with Labour, focusing instead on replacing the Conservatives as the principal party of opposition." <http://www.libdems.org.uk/history>

London Assembly. The Independent Commission on the Voting System made proposals for electoral reform at Westminster. We will review the experience of the new systems and the Jenkins report to assess whether changes might be made to the electoral system for the House of Commons. A referendum remains the right way to agree any change for Westminster (Labour, 2001, p.35).

According to Paddy Ashdown, the actual unwillingness of the Labour leadership to proceed with electoral reform damaged Labour's relations with the Liberal Democrats (Ashdown, 2000). In Scotland, however, the Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition at Holyrood adopted the Single Transferrable Vote (STV) system in elections to local authorities from 2004.

The 2005 Labour manifesto devoted a paragraph to electoral reform, albeit a shorter one:

Labour remains committed to reviewing the experience of the new electoral systems – introduced for the devolved administrations, the European Parliament and the London Assembly. A referendum remains the right way to agree any change for Westminster (Labour, 2005, p.110).

This commitment was later realized with the preparation of the abovementioned Ministry of Justice report sponsored by Jack Straw. At this point, it is imperative to recall Shugart's theory on how electoral reform might (re)appear on the agenda:

...the appearance on the public agenda of serious consideration of alternative electoral systems tends to follow systematic patterns of inherent conditions (the tendency of FPTP systems to generate normatively unacceptable outcomes) and contingent factors based on both a disadvantaged party's outcome-oriented interest in reform and the

establishment of a public-opinion context in which the very act of promoting (or being seen to block) reform has electoral consequences (Shugart, 2008, p. 55).

Gordon Brown's statements in the run up to the General Election of 2010 provide an example confirming with this theory. In his speech at the 2009 annual Labour conference, Brown said that:

There is now a stronger case than ever that MPs should be elected with the support of more than half their voters – as they would be under the Alternative Voting system. And so I can announce today that in Labour's next manifesto there will be a commitment for a referendum to be held early in the next Parliament it will be for the people to decide whether they want to move to the AV (Brown, 2009).

On 2 February 2010, shortly before the general election, Brown recommitted Labour to hold a referendum on AV in the subsequent Parliament in an article published in the Guardian. One of his main justifications was that it would be necessary to give the people a chance to reform politics in the wake of the expenses scandal. He stated:

I believe we can now build a progressive consensus in favour of change, so we will bring forward legislation to hold a referendum on moving to the AV system, which should be held before the end of October 2011. We must act now. I am determined to do everything I can to take on and persuade those who want to deny the people the chance to decide at a referendum, and I will build support across the Commons, the Lords and the country. This is about giving the people

a choice, and it can unite those who believe in electoral reform with those who want to maintain a strong constituency link.⁴⁸

In the *Guardian* article, Brown went well beyond the electoral reform offering to consult more widely on whether there should be a written constitution.⁴⁹

I want us to address the question of a written constitution – an issue on which I am inviting all parties to work together in a spirit of partnership and patriotism. If we are to decide to have a written constitution, it would be fitting to complete it in time for the 800th anniversary of the signing of Magna Carta in Runnymede in 1215.⁵⁰

As the incumbent prime minister, Brown was in a position to structure the national debate on the topic. Yet, the contents of the 2009 conference speech and the timing of the *Guardian* article – just three months before the election – suggest that Brown was mainly motivated by naked partisan considerations. His choice of AV appears, to a large extent, path dependent. The Jenkins proposals were picked off the shelf, shorn of the plus element. While Brown seemed to have made a principled argument for adopting AV, the 2009 poll conducted by YouGov for Electoral Reform Society implied that vote maximization considerations may have also been important from his perspective, motivating him to behave in an ‘act-contingent’ manner.⁵¹

⁴⁸ “Towards a new politics”, Speech by the Prime Minister to the IPPR (2 February 2010).

⁴⁹ It is tempting to characterize the publication of the Draft Cabinet Manual before the end of Brown’s term as, perhaps, an exercise attempt towards a codified constitution. The Cabinet Manual can also be seen as a tool for Brown to prepare the country and the party for the possibility of a hung parliament. It may, on the other hand, be seen as an attempt for Gordon Brown to extend the influence of his rule beyond the approaching end of his turn as the Prime Minister. This is a side issue to this thesis and separate research needs to be done on the topic.

⁵⁰ “Towards a new politics”, Speech by the Prime Minister to the IPPR (2 February 2010).

⁵¹ The survey measured the likelihood of voters to vote Labour in the 2010 election if Labour promised to bring about voting reform. It suggested that Labour would gain votes from Lib Dems if Labour initiated reform of the electoral system. It is logical to assume that the findings from the survey were used by the

Brown's move did not prompt a positive reaction. Commentators on the left criticised Brown for not proposing a genuinely proportional alternative. Peter Tatchell, a prominent LGBT rights activist and Green Party member, said, 'if Labour is sincere about a fair voting system it would hold a referendum on Jenkins' recommendations for Alternative Vote Plus' (Tatchell, 2009). Commentators on the right criticised Brown's commitment as a cynical ploy (Davis, 2010). By the time of the 2009 conference, and certainly by the spring of 2010, Brown was well aware that the forthcoming election might well result in a hung parliament. In this scenario, the prospect of electoral reform became a major negotiation tool between the Labour party and the Liberal Democrats. The hung parliament created a 'policy window' in which Liberal Democrats and advocates of electoral reform found the opportunity to make their point to the wider public (Kingdon, 1984).

Following Labour's 1997 election victory, British politics had been accompanied with a 'perceived lack of choice' (Allen, 2006). Like Labour leaders before him, Tony Blair did not want to sacrifice the electoral system that had given him a strong mandate (Naughtie, 2001). The Jenkins Report, which advocated 'AV-plus' was effectively put aside although Labour promised to monitor the performance of new electoral systems in the devolved institutions before recommending changes for elections to Westminster (Labour, 2001).⁵² The party's interest in reform did not increase much after the victory of 2005, when its 35 per cent share of the vote gave it 55 per cent of seats in the House of Commons. This might have been taken as an indication that it was dependent on the

Electoral Reform Society to demonstrate to Labour party and its supporters the electoral benefits of a referendum promise on voting system reform. Guardian's cover of this survey:
<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2009/sep/06/electoral-reform-labour-general-election>

⁵² 'The government has introduced major innovations in the electoral systems used in the UK – for the devolved administrations, the European Parliament, and the London Assembly. The Independent Commission on the Voting System made proposals for electoral reform at Westminster. We will review the experience of the new systems and the Jenkins report to assess whether changes might be made to the electoral system for the House of Commons. A referendum remains the right way to agree any change for Westminster', (Labour, 2001. p. 35).

‘national lottery’ of the first-past-the-post electoral system (Weir and Beetham, 1999). Few in Labour expressed much concern. Governing parties understandably favour the existing electoral arrangements (Pilet and Bol, 2011).

The issue came back on the Labour party’s agenda towards the end of Gordon Brown’s leadership, as the electoral tide turned against Labour in the wake of the financial crisis of 2008 (Allen and Bartle, 2011). Brown repeated his electoral reform referendum bid in an article in the Guardian in early 2010, though he was careful not to personally endorse change.⁵³ This policy was contained in the 2010 Labour manifesto. Although Brown’s justifications for his proposals centred on the need to restore faith in the system after the MPs expenses scandal by subjecting the electoral system to public approval, his attempts represented a move to attract Liberal Democrat voters to vote strategically for Labour candidates where possible and to induce the Liberal Democrats to join a coalition in the event of a hung parliament. Having been let down by Labour in the past, the Liberal Democrats expressed little belief in the substance of these proposals. The issue resurfaced in the first prime ministerial debate when Brown suggested reforming the electoral system so that MPs would be elected with more than 50 per cent of the votes.⁵⁴ While the suggestion was welcomed by Clegg, his response suggested mistrust. The promise of a referendum on AV was eventually included in the coalition agreement simply because it was the most that the Conservatives were prepared to offer and the least the Liberal Democrats were prepared to accept (Allen and Bartle, 2011).

The move by Brown followed a long tradition of using electoral reform as a means of promoting a dialogue and possibly ‘progressive coalition’ between the Labour party and Liberal Democrats (Marquand, 1999). The history of this dialogue has drawn

⁵³ <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/feb/02/vote-to-give-politics-back-brown>

⁵⁴ http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/16_04_10_firstdebate.pdf

the attention of scholars. Bartle argued that the word 'co-operation' had negative connotations for many Labour members as the word is associated with MacDonald's 'alleged 'betrayals' in 1931' and with the 'gang of four' in 1981 (2001, p.231). Bartle also suggested that the renewed sentiment between the two parties with Blair's leadership could be seen as an indication that the parties would continue to co-operate in the following years. Bartle predicted that 'Blair – or possibly a successor – may find that proportional representation for Westminster is the price of coalition' (2001, p.240).

Bartle's prediction turned out to be wrong. A proportional system was *never* offered by Labour as it was Labour which actually determined the terms of the subsequent referendum. Marquand's hopes that Labour's victory in 1997 would represent 'a much-needed marriage between social liberalism and social democracy, between the Labour and Liberal traditions' (Marquand, 1999, ix) did not materialize.

As already demonstrated, there is positive association between the frequency of mentions of 'electoral reform' in the Hansard record of Parliamentary debate and the level of disproportionality in general elections from the end of WWI until Blair's third election win (1918-2005). During the post-WWII period, the issue re-emerged following the two 1974 elections, which witnessed the rise of the old Liberal Party and the first hung parliament in the post-war period. The 19.3 per cent of the national vote that the Liberals won in February 1974 gave the party just 14 Westminster seats, while their 18.3 per cent share translated into only 13 seats in the subsequent October 1974 election; an election that produced a tiny Labour majority that disappeared after by-election losses in 1976.⁵⁵ The low seats to vote ratio for the Liberals in these two general

⁵⁵ <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons/lib/research/rp2003/rp03-059.pdf>

elections stimulated academic interest in electoral reform (Finer, 1975; Bogdanor, 1981; Norton, 1982), but appeared to find little echo at the mass level.

2.7.2. The Liberal Party, Alliance, Liberal Democrats and electoral reform

The previous section on Labour inevitably covered the Liberal Democrats within the context of cross-party negotiations around the issue. It did not, however, cover all aspects of the Liberal stance on electoral reform. This section touches briefly on the Alliance and the Liberal Party.

The Liberal Democrats were created in 1988 as a result of a merger between the Liberal party and the Social Democratic party (SDP) (Crewe and King, 1995). The Liberal party has been committed to electoral reform since the early twentieth century when it was overtaken by the Labour party in terms of vote share (MacIver, 1996). In accordance with the party's general commitment to dispersing power and pluralism, the Liberal Democrats have advocated STV (MacIver, 1996). STV is often categorized under the list of PR systems, but it does not by default produce proportional results. Despite that, the system has the potential to produce highly proportional results especially when parties and voters manage to act strategically under its rules (Farrell and Katz, 2014).

The SDP, which was formed in 1981 as a result of breakaway by moderates on the right of the Labour party, established an electoral alliance with the Liberal party immediately after its formation. The two parties formed the SDP-Liberal 'Alliance' that fought the 1983 and 1987 general elections. Although the Alliance obtained 26 and 23 per cent of the vote in those elections, they were not successful in winning many seats because their votes were not geographically concentrated enough to translate into the same percentage of seats in the Commons (Crewe and King, 1995).

In November 1981, The Liberal/SDP Alliance Commission on Constitutional Reform had been established by the two parties. In July of the following year, the Alliance Commission published its first report on electoral reform.⁵⁶ The report recommended a system called 'Community Proportional Representation' which would entail preferential voting (STV) in 'natural communities'. In this system, MPs would be selected in boroughs and shires in a proportional manner. Each constituency would correspond to a community and the constituencies' member size would correspond to the size of the natural communities. In calculating constituency sizes, local factors would be taken into consideration. It was proposed that the system to be introduced through the Electoral Reform Bill would determine the method of creating the new constituencies. The Commission concluded its report by emphasizing the importance of electoral reform for achieving economic welfare and social progress.⁵⁷ The Report also stated that the Commission has decided to eliminate the Alternative Vote system from further consideration on the basis that AV would not solve the problem of proportionality at the national level.

Seventeen years after the formation of the Liberal/SDP Alliance Commission on Electoral Reform, another joint commission, which would potentially have a greater impact, was formed. Robert MacLennan, Michael Steed and Anthony Lester from the Liberal Democrats became members of the Joint (Labour - Liberal Democrats) Consultative Committee on Constitutional Reform (1997). As mentioned earlier in the section, the electoral reform section of the Committee's report paved the way towards the inclusion in the Labour manifesto 1997 the commitment to set up what later became known as the Jenkins Commission.

⁵⁶ Electoral Reform: First report of the Joint Liberal/SDP Alliance Commission on Constitutional Reform, July 1982.

⁵⁷ p.18, paragraph 55. The method of equating electoral reform with economic welfare has also been a theme utilized by the Yes campaign during the referendum campaign.

2.7.3. The Conservative party and electoral reform

The Conservative party has long supported FPTP. The party, until 1997 at least, had some claim to be historically the most successful electoral party in the western world.

Writing in 1994, Seldon and Ball argued that:

The Conservative party has dominated British politics to such an extent that during the twentieth century that it is likely to become known as the 'Conservative century'. Either standing alone or as the most powerful element in a coalition, the party will have held power for seventy of the hundred years since 1895. For much of the remaining thirty their opponents had only a fragile grip upon office - the main anti-Conservative party has secured a significant majority in only three parliaments: the Liberals in 1906-10, Labour 1945-50 and 1966-70. By contrast it has been rare for Conservative ministries to lack a working majority in the House of Commons (Seldon and Ball, 1994, p.1).

The Conservative party was unlikely to advocate reforming a system that had been associated with such success and electoral hegemony. When Conservatives claimed that the system produced strong government, they, in effect, meant that it produced strong *Conservative* government. The logic behind Churchill's famous 1931 quote that, under AV, elections would be decided by the 'most worthless votes given for the most worthless candidates' was echoed eighty years later in David Cameron's campaign rhetoric by means of the argument that some votes would have more worth than others under AV.⁵⁸ Cameron claimed the Alternative Vote contradicted the one voter one vote principle because some people's votes would be 'counted' more than once. Conversely, Alternative Vote can also be seen as a system that strengthens the

⁵⁸ House of Commons debate (02 June 1931) on Representation of the People (No. 2) Bill, http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1931/jun/02/representation-of-the-people-no-2-bill#S5CV0253P0_19310602_HOC_298

one voter one vote principle as the number of ‘wasted’ votes would diminish with second, third, etc. preferences of the voters being taken into consideration. The minimisation of ‘wasted votes’ at the constituency level does not necessarily ensure proportionality at the national level.

There is a distinctive conservative philosophical argument for not reforming the electoral system. FPTP was seen by some to be an important part of the British political tradition (Heywood, 2008). Conservatives have an attachment to historic institutions such as constituencies (Davis, 2010). Despite these philosophical reservations, some conservatives have advocated electoral reform when they have been out of office and faced with an apparently radical Labour party. In the mid-1970s for example, Lord Hailsham advocated electoral reform in order to prevent a Labour government carrying out radical reforms on the basis of a minority of the vote. During his appearance on BBC One on 14 October 1976 in a Dimbleby lecture, Lord Hailsham publicly characterized the UK as on course towards an ‘elective dictatorship’ and proposed a written constitution for the country which would bring about a system of checks and balances (Lord Hailsham, 1976). A group called Conservative Action for Electoral Reform (CAER) had already been formed in 1974 with support from nearly a hundred Conservative MP’s (Margetts, 2003).⁵⁹

The Conservative party’s contribution to the House of Commons debate on Voting Systems, which was held on 5 November 1998, following the publication of the Jenkins Report, exemplifies the justifications for their objections to the Report. Liam Fox expressed his doubts regarding the independence of the Jenkins Commission:

We must take exception at the outset to the title of the debate, which refers to the report of an ‘independent’ commission. It could not have

⁵⁹ CAER’s official website claims that according to public opinion polls held in 1974, 70% of Conservative voters supported electoral reform at that time. CAER website: <http://www.conservativeelectoralreform.org/>

been less independent. It was a rigged commission—a sham process—which might as well have begun with its conclusions and worked backwards towards its remit. That is effectively what it did. It was a plan for an arranged marriage between a minority party and a section of the governing party—a relationship in which neither side knows the outcome. What we can say is that the matchmaker was a self-confessed political colossus who was uniquely placed to judge the relationship between the two, having played a pivotal role in the near destruction of both. We saw today a bravura performance by the Home Secretary—a kicking into the long grass of Olympic standard, on which we congratulate him.⁶⁰

Fox also challenged the top-up component of Jenkins's proposed system by claiming that it would weaken the link between the constituency and the MPs by giving more power to 'party bosses'. Later on in the debate, Eleanor Laing MP used the New Zealand example to demonstrate that an AV top-up system for electing the members of the House of Commons would be both confusing and result in creating two classes of MPs.⁶¹ On 4 November 1998, during the Prime Minister's Questions, William Hague, the Conservative leader at the time, had characterized the Jenkins Commission's proposals as a 'dog's breakfast'.⁶²

The 2010 Conservative manifesto expressed little interest in electoral reform, though it did promise to act to equalise the size of constituencies. It stated:

We support the first-past-the-post system for Westminster elections because it gives voters the chance to kick out a government they are fed up with (Conservatives, 2010).

⁶⁰ <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1998/nov/05/voting-systems>

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199798/cmhansrd/vo981104/debtext/81104-18.htm>

By the time of the 2010 general election the electoral system, a seven per cent lead in the popular vote would have given the Labour party 357 seats, whereas the Conservative party actually won only 306 seats (Worcester et. al., 2011). One of the reasons for this is that the average Labour constituency is smaller than the average Conservative constituency, enabling the Labour MPs to be elected with fewer votes (Worcester et. al., 2011). Clearly, the Conservative position on electoral reform and AV was based partly on vote-maximisation strategies and not only on the wish to 'conserve'.

Pilet and Bol (2011) suggest that time in government is a factor that lowers electoral reform demand of a party and the opposite for time in opposition. This was the case with the Labour party. It did not seem to apply, however, to the Conservatives, who did not show much appetite for electoral reform even after Labour's triumphant decade under Blair's premiership.

2.8. Electoral reform and the coalition

The underrepresentation of Liberal Democrats' votes was emphasized by Nick Clegg immediately following the 2010 general election results. Clegg hinted that any coalition arrangement between his party and another party would be based on a promise to 'fix' a system, that was 'broken' at least in part, as a result of the underrepresentation of the Liberal Democrats.

The Liberal Democrats initially entered into negotiations with the Conservatives since they were the party with the most number of elected candidates. They then had brief meetings with Labour (Wilson, 2010; Laws, 2010; Adonis, 2013). The Conservatives needed Liberal Democrats to make a stable coalition. Labour, on the other hand, needed the Liberal Democrats and the minor parties to form a coalition with a tiny majority. Labour's 'rainbow coalition' would include parties of diverse ideological traditions (including the Greens, SNP, Plaid Cymru and possibly the Democratic

Unionist Party) and would have been vulnerable on almost every division. Andrew Adonis has argued that Clegg and Laws were involved in talks with Labour for tactical reasons: 'It was essential to bring Labour into play to put pressure on the Tories to give ground on electoral reform.' (Adonis, 2013, p.153) On May 7, 2010 Chris Huhne told other members of the Liberal Democrats negotiation team that 'it is absolutely vital to strengthen our bargaining position, by making the rainbow coalition a real possibility. If we can do this, we might even persuade David Cameron to accept a referendum on voting reform.' (Laws, 2010, p.43) At the outset, the Liberal Democrats had characterized the negotiations with Labour as a tactical as opposed to a principled matter.

The Liberal Democrats rejected the initial offer by the Conservative party to establish a committee of inquiry on electoral reform. When Gordon Brown announced his intention to step down as Labour leader, the prospects for a rainbow coalition improved. The Conservative party, in return, improved its offer on electoral reform to include a referendum on the Alternative Vote system (Quinn et. al., 2011).

Yet, the Liberal Democrats were not the 'kingmakers' in 2010 that they had expected to be. They could not have formed a working majority with Labour and arguably had no other choice but to enter a coalition with the Conservatives. To be sure, Labour could have produced a coalition of minority parties that would have a technical majority but that would have been vulnerable on each division. In the precarious economic circumstance of May 2010, such a coalition would have been difficult, if not impossible. This made the negotiating position of the Liberal Democrats in 2010 weaker than they had hoped. The Liberal Democrats negotiations were able to make the Conservative party anxious about a possible coalition with the Labour party in return for

AV legislation without a referendum, and this appears to have put enough pressure on the Conservatives to extract a promise of a referendum on AV.

In the morning of May 10, 2010, David Cameron stated that Conservative MPs 'have shown that they are prepared to put aside party interests in the national interest by agreeing to a referendum on electoral reform' and passed the ball to the Liberal Democrats. David Cameron had the impression that the Labour party had offered the Liberal Democrats AV without a referendum (Robinson, 2010). William Hague also made a media announcement of the Conservative offer of a referendum on AV. The Liberal Democrats, weary of the kind of reviews the Labour party conducted them during Blair's premiership responded positively to the offer.

In the event, STV was never a real option. The Liberal Democrats had to respond to AV, which was placed on the table by Gordon Brown, the prime minister. The Alternative Vote would potentially work to the benefit of Liberal Democrats in subsequent elections as it would have given them the opportunity to align themselves in order to obtain the second preferences of major party voters on a constituency by constituency basis. Although STV has long been the favoured policy for the Liberal Democrats, Nick Clegg may have realized the potential for the Liberal Democrats to turn AV to their advantage in their campaign activities. AV ensured that the MP gained support of an absolute majority of the voters of the constituency. For a party which defies the traditional left-right distinction and rather promotes the diffusion of the liberal ideology into the entire political landscape, the Liberal Democrats could have taken the opportunities provided by AV to their advantage (MacIver, 1996).

2.9. Conclusion

The referendum on AV became the mutually acceptable meeting point between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats as the negotiation talks approached their end.

Yet neither AV nor the commitment to holding a referendum on electoral reform was in the manifestos of either party. The coalition adopted the policy of AV and referendum as this was already proposed by the outgoing government.

The Liberal Democrats argued for a specific type of electoral reform because its obvious benefits for the party accordingly fell under the outcome contingency category. Outcome contingent motivations are serious motivations towards actual reform. Yet, according to Shugart, such motivations are necessary but not sufficient conditions for initiating a process of electoral reform (Shugart, 2008).

AV has had a central position within Britain's electoral reform debate for more than a century. Looking at the reviews prepared on electoral reform during the preceding Labour government, the long tradition of parliamentary debate on the topic and Brown's overture to the Liberal Democrats in the period leading up to the 2010 General Election, the UK case conforms to Shugart's theory. Rational considerations may have driven the parliamentary (legislative) activity on the topic, but the debate also reflected other factors and a more remote cause. Yet, the actors also had to think about the health of the political system as a whole.

The next paper shifts the attention from the content of the reform proposal to the agreed means to reach it: the referendum. In a similar manner, it will demonstrate the lack of unity in opinion in relation to when it would be constitutionally appropriate to use referendums.

3. REFERENDUM AND ELECTORAL REFORM IN THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION

3.1. Introduction

The first part of this thesis examined the narrowing down of the UK's electoral reform prospect to a choice between the First Past the Post (FPTP) and the Alternative Vote (AV) systems. This paper now analyses the factors leading to the decision to make the proposed reform conditional on a nation-wide post-legislative referendum.¹

In 1993, John Smith had promised to hold a referendum on electoral reform in Labour's first term. Although no referendum on AV was held under Labour, the findings of the reviews and the recommendations of multiple committees throughout the Labour party's thirteen year-term maintained a commitment to the referendum as the proper method to decide on the issue. The idea of electoral reform became bundled together with the referendum mechanism.² Gordon Brown's pre-election overture to the Liberal Democrats fused at the end of Labour's term in office. Brown's statements structured the 2010 coalition negotiations around the Labour party's proposals.

This paper will demonstrate that the referendum pathway was chosen due to two main reasons:

1. The British constitution has been in a state of flux and referendums are used more often because some public input is now thought to be essential in settling constitutional issues.

¹A deliberative democracy method such as citizens' assembly could have instead been chosen by the coalition as the pathway to electoral reform. It could have also been formally acceptable if the political system reformed itself via a parliamentary vote only.

² From a normative democratic perspective, the international trend towards more frequent use of referendums makes it instinctive to assume that the modification of the rules of the democratic game needs direct approval of the electorate. Yet, this was not at all inevitable. For instance, during Blair's premiership, proportional representation was adopted for elections to the European Parliament (EP) without the referral of the issue back to the people. The European Parliament Elections Act 1999, which changed the English, Scottish and Welsh electoral systems for electing members to EP from FPTP to a regional closed list system, was legislated without a referendum.

2. The referendum exports policy controversies outside the parliament and is thought to prevent controversial issues ruining the harmony within the coalition.³

The central concern of this thesis is to explore the intervening steps between the original causes which condition the viable reform options (strategic, historical, contextual, institutional factors and the effect of previous reform attempts) and the outcome of the reform demand.⁴ Manifesto texts, reports on electoral systems and the memoirs of politicians provide the evidence that enables us to make causal links.

It is impossible to dispute the claim that partisan self-interest plays a big role in successful or failed electoral reform. Yet, the complexity of electoral reform processes and the multiplicity of the actors necessitate the consideration of previous commitments made by UK parties or governments. Furthermore, one must take into account the international trend towards the increasing use of referendums. In this environment, the limits of acceptable reform content or blocks on the routes towards reform have for the most part been predetermined.

The paper begins by examining the previous referendums that have taken place in Britain and their place to the British constitution. Referendums are associated with attempts to manage intra-party dynamics and may not necessarily result from consideration for the quality of democratic decision-making at the mass level. In the case of the coalition government, the referendum exported this major policy division outside the coalition and gave the coalition partners an opportunity to differentiate

³ This does not, however, necessarily mean that the outcome will be as intended. For example, Gerald Kaufman MP argued that referendums lead to deeper divisions within parties. Kaufman's point of view is included in the previous paper.

⁴ For more on intervening conditions, see Collier et. al., 2010.

themselves.⁵ This resulted in only the second instance of an ‘agreement to disagree’ in British political history (Silkin, 1989).

3.2. Referendums in the UK

It can be argued that the referendum can supplement representative democracy (Saward, 1998; Budge, 1996; Budge 2001). It can also be argued, on the contrary, that referendums subtract from the authority of representative institutions. The place of referendums in the UK constitution has been debated in Westminster since at least 1885.⁶ The following sub-section examines the referendums held in the UK before the AV referendum.

3.2.1. Previous examples of referendums

The referendum does not have an indispensable or established role in the UK’s democratic tradition.⁷ On occasion, political questions have been handed to public in the national, regional or local contexts, but exercises in direct democracy have been the exception rather than the norm.

During the 38 year period between 1973 and 2011, the UK witnessed one nation-wide and nine regional referendums.⁸ Four of these ten referendums were held within the 13 months that followed 2 May 1997, the day New Labour came into power under Tony Blair’s leadership. In addition to the ten referendums, local polls have been conducted by different local authorities throughout the twentieth century.⁹ The only

⁵ Hazell and Yong (2012) emphasize the desire of the coalition partners to differentiate themselves from each other while keeping harmony within the government.

⁶ The word ‘referendum’ appears in Hansard records for the first time in 1885. 1885 also happens to be the publication year of the first edition of A.V. Dicey’s seminal work (Dicey, 1885), in which he advocated referendums.

⁷ This claim is a logical derivative of the rarity of its usage. In Switzerland, for example, multiple national referendums are held yearly and referendums are commonly used in the canton and local levels.

⁸ This list leaves out the 2011 AV referendum and local referendums held in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000.

⁹ The Temperance (Scotland) Act of 1913 gave Scottish localities the right to hold polls on the prohibition or restriction of alcohol usage. This right was later revoked with the enactment of the Licensing (Scotland)

nation-wide referendum held prior to the 2011 AV referendum was on the continued membership of the European Economic Community (EEC).¹⁰ The most significant referendum before the EEC referendum was the 'Border Poll' of 1973, which asked the public of Northern Ireland whether they wanted to remain part of the United Kingdom or join with the Republic of Ireland.¹¹

On 1 March 1979, residents of Scotland and Wales voted in two separate post-legislative referendums on the issue of devolution in their respective regions. Yes voters marginally outnumbered the no voters in Scotland (51.6% vs. 48.4%), but since the Yes vote fell well-short of 40% support of the eligible electorate required by the Scotland Act 1978 the proposal did not go through. The Welsh devolution proposal was also emphatically rejected – by 79.7% of the Welsh voters.¹²

The EEC referendum, the Irish, Scottish and Wales referendums of the 1970s have all been advisory. They were not preceded by an act of government that would automatically change statute based on results. The AV referendum on the other hand was a post-legislative referendum that would not have required further legislation had the Yes side won.

The 18 years of Conservative rule, 1979-1997, under Margaret Thatcher and John Major did not witness any national or regional referendums. Margaret Thatcher opposed referendums in principle. This was based in part on a commitment to representative democracy and on the lack of any clear rules or conventions about when

Act of 1976. Similarly, the Licensing Act 1961 gave local Welsh communities the right to initiate referendums on whether to maintain the Sunday alcohol usage ban. The Sunday Closing (Wales) Act 1881 had originally introduced this ban.

¹⁰ 67.2% of the voters voted yes in that referendum, resulting in the United Kingdom to remain part of the EEC.

¹¹ 98.9% of the votes expressed a desire to continue the union with Britain. However, the legitimacy of the referendum was questionable due to the fact that the referendum was boycotted by a significant portion of the Roman Catholic population. This boycott resulted in a low turnout figure of 59%. BBC on 9 March 1973: 'Northern Ireland votes for union'.

¹² For detailed figures on the Scottish and Welsh referendums: Dewdney, R (10 November 1997). Results of Devolution Referendums (1979 % 1997), Research Paper No97/113. Social and General Statistic Section, House of Commons Library.

referendums should be held. The British government's ability to call referendums only when it suited their political purpose was why Thatcher, as herself stated, did not favour holding them (Thatcher, 1975).

The referendum made a return to British politics as soon as the Labour party returned to power. Labour's 1997 election manifesto had contained a clear commitment to hold referendums on devolution in Scotland and Wales by the autumn of 1997 (Labour, 1997). Soon after Tony Blair became the Prime Minister, these referendums were held as promised. The referendum held in Scotland on 11 September 1997 asked for voters' consent on the devolution and tax-varying powers. Both proposals were accepted, leading to the establishment of a Scottish Parliament. The referendum held in Wales one week later led to the establishment of the Welsh Assembly. In their 1997 manifesto, the Labour party had also promised to hold a referendum in London regarding the governance structure of the city. The Labour party complied with the promise and held a referendum on the issue on 7 May 1998. Seventy-two per cent voted Yes and resulted in the establishment of the Greater London Authority, made up of a directly elected mayor and a separately elected assembly.

Although there was no explicit commitment to a referendum on Northern Ireland in Labour's 1997 manifesto, it acknowledged the 'general acceptance that the future of Northern Ireland must be determined by the consent of the people as set out in the Downing Street Declaration'. The Downing Street Declaration, which had been issued on 15 December 1993 by John Major and the Irish Prime Minister Albert Reynolds, introduced the self-determination rule on the condition that any alteration to the political status of Northern Ireland would be founded on the majority support of the people of

Northern Ireland.¹³ Similar to how the AV referendum was dependent on the path set by previous policy work on electoral reform, the Northern Irish referendum on the Good Friday Agreement reflected the decisions taken during the term of the previous government.

On 10 April 1998, less than a year after Tony Blair became the Prime Minister, the governments of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland signed the Good Friday Agreement. The agreement included a proposal to amend the Republic of Ireland's constitutional claim on Northern Irish territory and enabled the move towards devolution in Northern Ireland, followed by the decommissioning of paramilitary forces in the two years following the referendum, provided that the agreement would receive the support of majorities in both Northern Ireland and the Republic. On 22 May 1998, the referendum on the Good Friday Agreement was held separately in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland. The Agreement became a reality as 71.1% of Northern Ireland public voted in support of it and the Republic also accepted the proposal in a simultaneous referendum which produced 94.4% majority support for the Agreement.

Fewer referendums were held in the following years. The only referendum between 1999 and 2011 was the North East referendum of 2004, which asked residents in the northeast of England whether to set up an elected assembly for the region.¹⁴

A series of referendums on the introduction of directly elected mayors were held in various cities, in accordance with the Local Government Act of 2000. On 3 March 2011, a regional referendum was held in Wales on increasing the legislative power of the Welsh Assembly to cover a wider range of issues. The Yes side won the referendum.

¹³ The majority requirement was loosely defined in the Declaration. It was not clear from the document itself whether the majority referred to the majority of the electorate or simply the majority of the voters in a referendum. Downing Street Declaration: <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/docs/dsd151293.htm>

¹⁴ This proposal was defeated 22.1% vs. 77.9%. For a detailed analysis of this referendum: Sanford, 2009.

3.2.2. Referendums and the British constitution

Although large scale referendums (at the national or regional level) did not take place in the United Kingdom until the 1970s, the debate on whether referendums should be used in British politics has rumbled on for a long time. At the turn of the twentieth century referendums were discussed in Westminster in relation to resolving highly contentious issues such as the Irish Home Rule and Tariff Reform. These two were cross party issues that caused divisions within parties. In both cases the referendum was considered as the method of resolving them (Bogdanor, 1978, 1981).

The year 1910 was a year of particularly intense discussions on the value of referendum as a method of governmental decision-making. At the Constitutional Conference of 1910, the Unionists proposed that referendums should be used when the House of Lords disagreed with the House of Commons. In particular, the Unionists demanded a UK-wide referendum to settle the issue of Home Rule for Ireland.¹⁵ This never took place.

Many supporters of the referendum not only saw it as a constitutional tool but also as the essential device for settling constitutional reform demands. A convention appears to have been emerging in Britain since the 1970s that fundamental changes to the constitution are preceded by referendums. There are, however, cases where reforms have not been subject to public consultation in the form of a referendum. The Human Rights Act, Freedom of Information Act and House of Lords reforms were not made the subject of a referendum. Nevertheless, there appears to have been an emerging presumption that major constitutional reform should involve the people. It is informative to consider why the public were not consulted when Proportional Representation (PR) was adopted for the EU elections, for the Lisbon Treaty and when

¹⁵ In contrast, the devolution referendums held in the 1970s and 1990s were all held solely in those regions that were directly affected by the proposals.

the Human Rights Act 1998. This consideration provides a better understanding of the relationship between referendums and constitutional changes.¹⁶

The House of Lords Constitution Committee's 12th Report on Referendums noted that political scientists disagree about the advantages and disadvantages of referendums. The Report, nevertheless, supported the use of the referendum for electoral reform. The Report states the following sub-conclusion:

94. Notwithstanding our view that there are significant drawbacks to the use of referendums, we acknowledge arguments that, if referendums are to be used, they are most appropriately used in relation to fundamental constitutional issues. We do not believe that it is possible to provide a precise definition of what constitutes a 'fundamental constitutional issue'. Nonetheless, we would consider to fall within this definition any proposals:

- To abolish the Monarchy;
- To leave the European Union;
- For any of the nations of the UK to secede from the Union;
- To abolish either House of Parliament;
- To change the electoral system for the House of Commons;
- To adopt a written constitution; and
- To change the UK's system of currency.

This is not a definitive list of fundamental constitutional issues, nor is it intended to be.¹⁷

¹⁶ The definitive answer to this question can be the subject of another research project.

¹⁷ 'Referendums in the United Kingdom, 12th Report of Session 2009-10', p.27. Author: Select Committee on the Constitution, House of Lords.
<https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldselect/ldconst/99/99.pdf>

The 1975 referendum entrenched Britain's position within Europe. Accordingly, the decision not to hold referendums on EU issues like switching to PR for EP elections, the Lisbon Treaty and the Human Rights Act of 1998 could be justified by the belief that the 1975 referendum represented public consent for Britain's commitment to Europe as a package. It was only in 2014, nearly forty years after the referendum, that the government agreed to consult the public again over the UK's place in the European Union.

The Salisbury Convention holds that the unelected chamber should not block legislation that was in the election manifesto of the governing party.¹⁸ AV had not been proposed in either of the coalition parties' manifestos. During the negotiations, The Conservative party was careful to consider the future dynamics of the Parliament and the need to maintain harmony with the House of Lords as well as his own Commons backbenchers. The Political Reform section of the Coalition Agreement (section 24, p. 26) stated that the members of the coalition parties would be whipped *in both Houses* to pass the referendum bill.¹⁹ It is, however, perfectly probable for Westminster politicians to defy their whips.²⁰

From a democratic perspective, the coalition had to deal with the problem of legitimacy considering that the voters of neither of the parties technically gave consent to the Coalition Agreement, which included the plan to hold the AV referendum. The Conservatives had not mentioned electoral reform in their manifesto. The 2010 manifesto of the Liberal Democrats promised a 'more proportional' electoral system without mentioning the referendum as a pre-condition (Liberal Democrats, 2010,

¹⁸ The Convention discourages the House of Lords from adding wrecking amendments or voting against manifesto bills in the second or third reading. For a bill to be considered a manifesto bill, it would have to be directly connected to a policy commitment stated in the manifesto(s) of the governing party/parties.

¹⁹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/78977/coalition_programme_for_government.pdf

²⁰ For an account of revolts and rebellions during Blair's premiership, see Cowley (2002).

p.88).²¹ The Labour party was the only party, among the largest three, that had promised a referendum on AV as a 2010 manifesto commitment, and it did not form the government.

It was argued by life peer Baroness D'Souza that only policy issues common to the manifestos of both coalition partners should be subject to the Salisbury Convention.²² The coalition's mandate on holding the referendum was strengthened as the agreed deal matched Labour's manifesto promise. While this was not technically enough to satisfy the manifesto condition from the perspective of the House of Lords, it certainly gave the coalition a more powerful argument in defence of the process of electoral reform. Even if the Lords had doubts on the legitimacy of holding a referendum on AV, Labour could hardly vote against its own commitment. This factor enhanced the democratic legitimacy of the decision. In the Westminster system, the party with a majority in the House of Commons is almost omnipotent and is very powerful over government policy.

The Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA) established the Electoral Commission, the UK's governing body for election, party finance and the monitoring of election administrators.²³ The Electoral Commission is responsible for the conduct of national and regional referendums in the United Kingdom. While how referendums should be conducted has been outlined by this Act, no article defining which issues should be subject to the referendum has been included in it in an explicit manner. Nor does PERA provide general written criteria concerning the conditions

²¹ Even if AV was adopted, this would not have necessarily been in harmony with the Liberal Democrats' manifesto commitments. Nick Clegg had shifted from dismissing AV as a 'miserable little compromise thrashed out by the Labour party' before the 2010 General Election to promoting it as 'a baby step in the right direction' during the campaign period. Considering, however, that it was not, in theory, guaranteed that elections under AV would have been more proportional and representative, Nick Clegg's shifting discourse was incompatible with the Liberal Democrats manifesto.

²² Baroness D'Souza's blog article, 17 November, 2010: <http://lordsoftheblog.net/2010/11/17/is-the-coalition-agreement-a-manifesto/>

²³ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/41/contents>

under which a referendum should be used to settle a specific issue. The Act sets out campaign expenditure limits in relation to referendums, which may influence the decision on whether or not to hold a referendum.

The traditional British constitution was founded on the twin principles of parliamentary sovereignty and the rule of law. These two principles largely co-existed but there are tensions between them. For the purposes of this paper, however, it is not necessary to consider either the rule of law or its relationship with parliamentary sovereignty. It is the relationship between popular sovereignty, its instrument being the referendum, and the parliamentary sovereignty that is at issue here.

The standard definition of parliamentary sovereignty was provided by Dicey, the legal constitutional theorist:

The principle of Parliamentary sovereignty means neither more nor less than this, namely that Parliament thus defined has, under the English constitution, the right to make or unmake any law whatever: and, further, that no person or body is recognised by the law of England as having a right to override or set aside the legislation of Parliament (Dicey, 1885, p.38).

One difficulty in using referendums in the UK is that they are incompatible with the parliamentary sovereignty principle and the Burkean view of representation.²⁴ In the UK, like any other representative democracy, MPs are elected through competitive elections. In a general election, the winning party is given the mandate to govern based on the policy package as summarised in its party manifesto. Although the relationship between a constituent and his or her representative may continue throughout the term of a parliament, there is nothing to guarantee that the representative's parliamentary votes will reflect the 'public will'.

²⁴ Burke, contrary to the delegate view, argues for a role of the representative as the trustee of the constituents.

The principle of parliamentary sovereignty pre-dated the emergence of modern democracy and the extension of the franchise to the industrial working class and women. This principle has survived until today. In contrast with other systems, such as the US, it has never been suggested in the traditional British constitution that the people were sovereign.²⁵ In Britain's system of representative democracy, the citizen's role was limited to choosing representatives to Parliament (the House of Commons) in free and fair elections (Harvey and Bather, 1975). The people's representatives made policy and were then held accountable in subsequent elections. Lincoln's conception of democracy as 'government of the people, by the people, for the people' was very different to the traditional view of democracy in Britain.²⁶ Democracy in the traditional British constitution was government 'for the people' but not 'by the people' and only distantly 'of the people'.²⁷

The traditional British constitution did not bar referendums or exclude other forms of direct democracy. A referendum was thought to be merely advisory and could not bind the parliament (King, 2007). It was thought that the parliament would not ignore the will of the people expressed in a referendum because it would suffer electoral consequences. This provided another reason for the political elites to ignore or deflect demands for wider participation in referendums. Once the people had spoken, they would be impossible to ignore. They might advocate various kinds of practices – such as capital punishment – that the political elite either knew would be wrong or thought wicked. Like the founding fathers in the US, many members of the British elite worried about the mob-like tendencies of the public (King, 2012).

²⁵ The US Declaration of Independence begins with 'We the people...'.

²⁶ The transcript of the Gettysburg address can be found at: <http://www.nps.gov/liho/historyculture/gettysburgaddress.htm>

²⁷ L.S. Amery as quoted in King (2001, p.32): "Our system is one of democracy, but of democracy by consent and not delegation, of government of the people, for the people, with, but not by the people".

Although there was no bar on referendums under the traditional British constitution few politicians ever advocated their use. Those politicians that did advocate referendums were labelled ‘populists’ or ‘rabble rousers’. Few Conservatives advocated references to the people because government was thought to be best left to those who were educated and trained to govern.

John Stuart Mill was one of the few people who advocated greater participation and thought that it would make better citizens. In *On Liberty*, he wrote:

... in many cases, though individuals may not do the particular thing so well, on the average, as the officers of government, it is nevertheless desirable that it should be done by them, rather than by the government, as a means to their own mental education—a mode of strengthening their active faculties, exercising their judgment, and giving them a familiar knowledge of the subjects with which they are thus left to deal. This is a principal, though not the sole, recommendation of jury trial (in cases not political); of free and popular and local municipal institutions; of the conduct of industrial and philanthropic enterprises by voluntary associations (Mill, 1859).

Few liberals took up John Stuart Mill’s demand for wider participation by the people in the process of government. Even Labour, the ‘People’s Party’, did not advocate experiments in direct democracy. Socialism was to be developed by the party and managed by bureaucrats. In 1911, the Fabian Society published a pamphlet titled ‘The case against referendum’ which questioned the ‘intrinsic worth’ of the referendum as an instrument of democratic governance by claiming that referendums were tools that could be manipulated by the rich and the elite (Sharp, 1911). The pamphlet argued that the referendum would transfer the control from principled politicians to the interest of the wealthy who would be able to manipulate the opinions of the public more easily

than they could 'any reasonably honest and public-spirited representative assembly'. These concerns are addressed in PPERA, which sets campaign donation limits.²⁸ This perspective clearly prioritizes parliamentary democracy to populism. Referendums cannot be seen as mechanisms to improve democracy. On the contrary the referendum device can turn into a weapon of capital interests. 'A mere count' of heads would not mean that the decision would be better than the one taken by a smaller group of well-informed representatives (Sharp, 1911).

In the UK, elections are the primary legitimizing and checking mechanism for parliament. The mandate is transferred from the people (principal) to parliament (agent) (Harvey and Bather, 1982, p.49). In an ideal democracy, one can expect such changes (to the way elements of that system communicate with each other) to be made conditional on the endorsement of the principal (the people).

The Fabian pamphlet dwelt on the distinction between public and popular opinion and made a case against referendums by suggesting that legislation often gathers popular support after its implementation. Based on this perspective, the opinions of the people are not pre-determined but are a reaction to governmental behaviour. The pamphlet quoted Ramsay MacDonald; who said that discovering the will of the people 'is the task of the statesman who knows how far expressed desire is not real desire, who understands how he is to speak for what is in the heart but not on the lips of the people, and who, without mandates, and even against mandates, does what the people really want.' (Sharp, 1911, p.15)

In 2010, the uncertainty of a hung UK parliament in the depths of the Euro debt crisis meant that the negotiations needed to be concluded as soon as possible for the 'national interest.' The Liberal Democrat leader, Clegg, did not have enough time to

²⁸ Financial limits on referendum campaigns are outlined in Part 7 Chapter 2 of PPERA.

push for electoral reform without a referendum from either of the other two parties (Laws, 2010). David Cameron, however, was led to believe that AV legislation without a referendum was offered by Gordon Brown (Wilson, 2010). David Cameron said that he had ‘had a conversation with Nick when [he’d] argued very vigorously that you couldn’t do Alternative Vote without a referendum— it would be wrong’ (Robinson, 2010).

Some countries lack a real culture of democratic deliberation. Democracy is often equated merely with the procedure of elections and referendums have often presented themselves as propaganda tools for populist leaders to further justify their positions and legitimize their power. Some MPs worried that referendums would make government impossible and compel ministers to implement policies made by the people (King, 2007). For these reasons, it is safe to say that referendums have rarely been advocated and those politicians that did advocate them were viewed with suspicion.

Just like electoral reform, the 1970s witnessed the democratic case of holding referendums gaining momentum in some circles. The Conservative MP Philip Goodhart, Liberal MP Jo Grimond and Labour MP Tony Benn supported referendum for its intrinsic democratic value (Norton, 1982). These contributions did not cohere into a demand for wider reform.

The change in the status of referendums in Britain can, in part, be explained by the technological advances of the century. With exposure to more varieties of media channels and heightened ability to reach and consume information, it can be argued that people are more aware of politics and are more qualified to decide on detailed issues (or at least they have better means to find information when they need to). Yet, there is little evidence that voters are better informed today. Nevertheless, the level of political awareness is a function of the level of democracy that exists within a specific political context. Evidence from the European Union and Switzerland suggests that

citizens become better informed politically when avenues for their political participation are extended (Benz and Stutzer, 2004). This finding is in accordance with J.S. Mill's point on the benefits of political participation. Benz and Stutzer further suggest that citizens' political knowledge is endogenous to the systems they live in. They maintain a positive relationship between the frequency of referendums and the general level of public awareness on politics. Moreover, giving the public the chance to modify the electoral rules may create the opportunity for ingrained learning on the political system itself.

Those British politicians who provided a principled justification for a move towards direct forms of democracy have been a small minority. It should be noted that few politicians suggested that the public have a right of initiative of the kind used in the US or Switzerland where citizens have the power to initiate the proposals. From this perspective, which issues are referred to the electorate and when remains a matter entirely for politicians. The following section examines these in more detail and considers the reasons for the first national referendum on Britain's membership of the Common Market in 1975. Similar considerations underpinned the decision to have a referendum on AV.

Figure 1 illustrates the increasing importance of referendums by displaying the frequency of mentions of referendums in Hansard records. The increasing number of references to referendums displayed in Figure 1 appears, in part, to be the result of social change as the spread of education promoted increased self-belief on the part of younger generations that they could contribute to the government of the country (King, 2007). It may also have been a consequence of increasing disillusionment with the political system and pessimism about the ability of elected representatives to either do the right thing or do what voters wanted them to do. And, finally, it may have also have

represented a response to the failures of government or political scandals such as Watergate, which prompted increasing cynicism about the political elites and a decline in deference (Allen, 2006). The MPs' expenses scandal was used by both the Yes and No side in the AV referendum as a campaign strategy in 2011. The No campaign claimed that the move to AV would cost the taxpayer around £300 million, in order to convince the public that this would represent yet another example of poor management of public funds. The Yes campaign, in contrast, argued that the switch to AV would ensure greater accountability of MP's who would need to win over an absolute majority of the electorate in order to get elected.

3.2.3. Hansard search data

Because the Parliament is supreme, the debate that has taken place within its walls should enable us to provide a useful characterization of the overall debate and attitudes towards the issue.²⁹ Accordingly, this section will briefly illustrate the Hansard record of parliamentary debates in order to determine the frequency that the word 'referendum' has been mentioned in the Parliament. The analysis covers the entire publicly available online archive of Hansard – between 1803 and 2005.³⁰

When the search suggested the use of the word more than once in the same member's speech, it was counted as many times as the word appeared unless it was redundant. This was easy to detect in most cases as the search results are grouped accordingly when the searched word is used more than once in the same proximity.

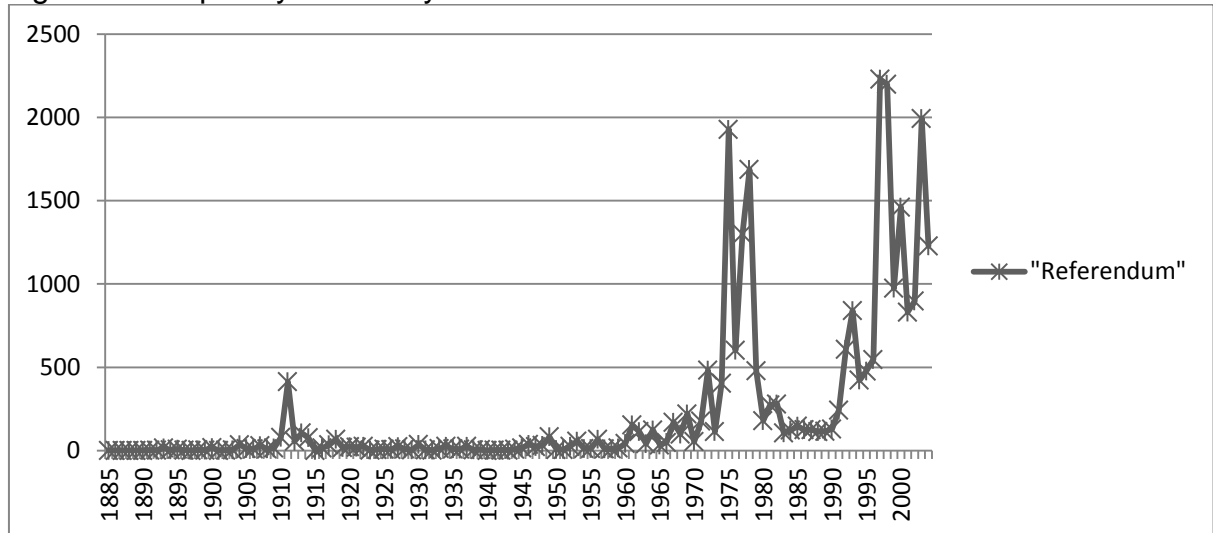
The figure illustrates the upward trend in the frequency in which referendum is talked about in the Houses of Parliament. No referendums were held during Thatcher's

²⁹ It would be informative to consult the documentary record about the discourse of referendum within government. Since these documents are not available in electronic form, it is not possible to conduct an analysis of mentions of referendums among the executive. However, given the executive's influence over Parliament there is likely to be a relationship between the two.

³⁰ Though, it was not until 1885 that the word referendum began to be used in a way so that its meaning corresponded to a plebiscite.

premiership (1979-90), but the frequency of parliamentary deliberation on referendums was also low. The Blair years witnessed an increase in interest towards the topic.

Figure 1. Frequency of the keyword referendum in Hansard



Source: <https://hansard.millbanksystems.com>.

3.2.4. Why did parties increasingly advocate referendums?

Given that there are no written requirements regarding when a referendum should be held, it is necessary to consider why parties, and particularly governing parties, should advocate referendums. According to the Norwegian political scientist Bjorklund, a referendum can either act as 'a weapon of the minority', a 'mediation device' or a 'lightning rod' (Bjorklund, 1982, p. 247). More specifically, he suggests that:

...when a party or a government is divided on an important issue, it can be in danger of breaking up....In such a situation a party may embrace the referendum as a mediating device (Bjorklund, 1982, p. 248).³¹

The mediation device motivation is evident in the case of the 1975 referendum on the Common Market. In this case, the referendum was used to unite the Labour party that was bitterly divided over the issue. Pro-European section of the Labour party,

³¹ Also see Morel (2001, p.48).

led by Roy Jenkins, opposed the idea of holding a referendum on Britain's membership of the Common Market bearing in mind that anti-Europeans would win in such a referendum. The anti-European section of the Labour party largely wanted a referendum because they believed they would win. King argues that:

‘the decision to hold the 1975 referendum, like the decisions to hold all subsequent referendums in Britain, was in no way a deliberate cross-party decision. In this case, the decision was taken entirely by, and within, the Labour party as a straightforward consequence of Labour's intra-party divisions over the European issue’ (King, 2007, p.283)

The case of the 1975 referendum differs from the AV referendum in the sense that the call for the referendum received the support of the coalition partners –Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives as well as the Labour party, albeit indirectly. There was unspoken agreement by all the major parties that referendum would be the right way forward with it considering that referendum has been coupled to reform during the two decades preceding the decision to hold the referendum.

The 1974 Labour manifesto had also promised a referendum on the issue of Europe. However, a special Labour conference voted two-to-one in favour of withdrawal, in defiance of the party's national leadership and broadcasted divisions to the public. An ‘agreement to differ’ was proposed by three members of the Wilson Cabinet – Michael Foot, Tony Benn and Peter Shore – who argued that the differing views within the Cabinet would not make possible an executive decision on the issue.³² This allowed the left of the party, including Michael Foot, Peter Shore, Barbara Castle and Tony Benn, free to advocate British withdrawal. It also allowed the right of the party and party leadership, including Wilson, James Callaghan, Shirley Williams and Roy Jenkins, free

³² House of Commons Library Research Paper (04/82) 15 November 2004. Also see Silkin (1989).

to campaign for continued membership (King, 1975). Harold Wilson and the Labour cabinet seized on the device of the referendum to defuse the issue that threatened to tear Labour apart.³³

The result of the 1975 Common Market referendum has been used by successive governments as a way to settle the argument over Europe. Roy Jenkins, the Home Secretary at the time, said that the Common Market referendum 'puts the uncertainty behind us. It commits Britain to Europe; it commits us to playing an active, constructive and enthusiastic role in it.'³⁴ Tony Benn, as mentioned above, was against the Common Market but was enthusiastic about holding a referendum:

when the British people speak everyone, including members of Parliament, should tremble before their decision and that's certainly the spirit with which I accept the result of the referendum.³⁵

A referendum can also be used as a 'lightning rod' to decouple an issue from electoral choice. A referendum is likely to be used in those cases where voters feel particularly strongly about an issue and may abandon their long-term party loyalties (Butler and Stokes, 1974). If a policy is made conditional on obtaining the consent of the electorate in a referendum, then voters can vote for a party that advocates a position that they disagree with in the knowledge that they can vote against the policy later. This way, the issue can decouple itself from the general election vote.

The lightning rod consideration became stronger in relation to the European issue by the late 1990s as the emergence of the Eurosceptic United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) gave Eurosceptic voters an electoral choice. The

³³ The Norwegian Labour party's demand to hold a referendum on the EEC in 1972, represented a similar attempt to hold the opposing factions of the party together (Bjorklund, 1982).

³⁴ BBC on 6 June 1975:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/june/6/newsid_2499000/2499297.stm

³⁵ Ibid.

Conservative party's decision to advocate referendums in relation to the Treaty of Nice –signed in 2001- appears to have been an attempt to reduce the appeal of the Euro-sceptic party UKIP. A similar consideration may have influenced Labour's decision to promise a referendum on Britain's membership of the European Single Currency and the proposed European Constitution. In the event, neither of these referendums took place. Britain never satisfied the five economic tests for British membership of the single currency laid out by Gordon Brown. Thus, the government never recommended British membership and the issue was never put to the public (Rawnsley, 2001). This lightning rod was not a plausible explanation in 2011. Few people felt strongly about electoral reform. Even fewer felt strongly about AV. After Britain ratified the Treaty of Lisbon in 2008, the legal attempt to compel the Labour government to hold a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty failed.³⁶

The link between the party affiliation of citizens and their vote choice in the AV referendum will be demonstrated in section 4. Although referendums formally pass the decision from the political elite to the public they are often guided by 'their' parties. The BES survey data show that citizens, especially Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, who were united in opposing or supporting AV, appeared to follow their respective parties' stances on the issue. The Yes campaign expressed considerable disappointment with the fact that the terms of the electoral reform debate were determined by the party politicians according to partisan considerations rather than democratic principles (Interviewee A, 2013).

³⁶ Wheeler v. Office of the Prime Minister (2008): <http://lexisweb.co.uk/cases/2008/june/r-on-the-application-of-wheeler-v-office-of-the-prime-minister-and-another>

Another campaign organizer from the Yes side argued that ‘major constitutional change since New Labour got into power is determined through public referendum.’³⁷

However:

referendums aren’t actually a particularly good way of determining the outcome of something as complex as electoral reform, mainly because there is a huge information deficit for the public and there is not a level playing field with the mass weight of the media which is the main information tool in these situations and I think that it’s a very imperfect way of getting people to understand what is essentially to change in the way our democracy works (Interviewee B).

While referendums can be characterized as democratic procedures that transfer the decision making process from the politicians to the people, they can be used by politicians as another type of political tool. Morel groups governments’ motivations for referendum initiation into four categories (Morel, 2001, p.48). These are ‘plebiscitary motivations’; ‘tension resolving motivations’ that aim to resolve internal party divisions or divisions within a coalition government; ‘legislative motivations’ in order to pass legislation that is not possible to pass through normal means; and ‘de facto obligatory legitimization referendums’ that require people’s approval of the policy in order to maintain the legitimacy of the decision. While these four categories can easily overlap with each other, the 1997 referendums in Scotland, Wales and the 1998 referendum on the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland predominantly fall into the categories of ‘de facto obligatory legitimization’ and ‘plebiscitary motivations’. When we look at the AV referendum using Morel’s categories, we can group it under more than one category. The AV referendum included tension resolving motivations so that the policy divergence

³⁷ While this statement may reflect a general understanding of the function of the referendum device, it does not take into consideration major constitutional change like Human Rights Act, Freedom of Information Act and House of Lords Reform, none of which were made conditional on a referendum.

within the coalition would be outsourced to the public. The possible scenario of a parliamentary vote on electoral reform (as opposed to a vote on holding a referendum on the issue) facing rebellions by the Conservative backbenchers had been a constant source of concern for the Conservatives during the hung parliament talks (Laws, 2010; Wilson, 2010). David Cameron was all too well aware that many of his backbenchers blamed him for not winning outright in 2010 and had little love for the Liberal Democrats. Electoral reform legislation that bypassed a referendum would be unlikely to get enough Conservative support in the Commons and could not be offered in order to form the coalition.

3.3. Attitudes of political parties towards the referendum method

The attitudes of main parties towards referendums have fluctuated throughout the twentieth century. This section elaborates on the place of the referendum device for each of the major parties.

3.3.1. The Labour party

The Labour party has consistently included commitment to participation in its party manifestos and linked the issue of electoral reform with referendums. On 15 July 1994, Tony Blair said in BBC Radio 4's Today programme that he believed 'a referendum is right so that people can decide what is the best electoral system for the country'.³⁸

Under Labour's rule, post-legislative referendums preceded devolution to Scotland and Wales, Northern Ireland Assembly/Good Friday Agreement, GLA/London Mayor, directly elected mayors, North East Assembly. The Labour party's manifestos (1997-2010) contained commitments to consider electoral reform or hold a referendum on it. These can be summarized as:

³⁸ Blair articulated these words on BBC Radio 4 Today on 15 July 1994: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/3750847.stm

1997 manifesto – Commitment to a referendum on a more proportional system

2001 manifesto – Monitor

2005 manifesto – Monitor

2010 manifesto – Holding a referendum on AV

Again, we can see that when the Labour party feels electorally less safe, electoral reform becomes more important and the associated issue of a referendum re-emerges. In 1997, Blair did not know that his party would win a huge landslide and that the existing electoral system could be key for Labour's continued success. In 2010, the electorally vulnerable Gordon Brown, went back to the same tactic of courting Liberal Democrats, publicly in his conference speech and in the Guardian article authored by him. In between 2001 and 2005, when Labour felt confident of victory, the issue of reform and referendum was put off the agenda.

3.3.2. The Liberal Democrats

According to Interviewee A, 'Even if the Liberal Democrats had been a majority government, they wouldn't be able to make this change through legislation. People would have challenged it.' (Interviewee A, 2013). Although the Liberal Democrats had proposed STV without a referendum, they saw some virtue in obtaining popular consent in order to entrench the reform and introduce a broader debate. They also realised that neither Labour nor the Conservatives would accept any reform without a referendum because it threatened their electoral prospects. Like all the other parties, moreover, they found it increasingly difficult to argue with the proposition that 'the people' should have a say. The Lib Dems were in favour referendum on EU membership and single currency. The Liberal Democrats, having historically been committed to the STV system, had to settle with a referendum on AV. The inclusion of referendum in previous Lib Dem

manifestos meant that it would not have been appropriate if a referendum was not held on the issue.

3.3.3. The Conservatives

The attitudes of Conservative politicians towards the use of referendums have fluctuated throughout the party's history.

The Conservative party had proposed in 1910 the referendum to be the method to solve disputes between the two Houses (Bogdanor, 1978). After WWII, Winston Churchill suggested to hold a referendum in order to continue the war-time coalition until Japan officially surrendered. As stated previously, Margaret Thatcher was not keen on referendums – even on those issues like hanging where the public sided with her.³⁹

Under Cameron's leadership, the Conservatives began to see the referendum as an opportunity to put issues off the table. This was the case with electoral reform. The Conservatives could be seen to have used the power of the referendum device to kill the debate on electoral reform. Similarly Interviewee A argued that 'a referendum, is kind of a way to kill something as well.' (Interviewee A, 2013).

The Conservative party's 2010 manifesto included a section under the heading 'Restore democratic control' on the use of referendums in relation to the transfer of power to the EU. A 'referendum lock' would serve as a safeguard against the approval of the British people over further transfer of powers from the UK to the EU.

Referendums arguably advantage the status quo (Butler and Ranney, 1978). As a party that is resistant to change, the Conservatives believe that referendums can be used to maintain the status-quo. The AV proposal presented itself to the Conservatives as something they can easily defeat through a referendum and settle the issue which would in turn enhance the unity of the coalition. AV was a system Conservatives could

³⁹ <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/102649>

defeat by reiterating arguments from the past. David Cameron's campaign speeches slightly resembled, Winston Churchill's depiction of the Alternative Vote as a worthless system.

Guy Lodge from the IPPR suggested that:

..it was accepted on the part of political parties that referendum was a quite important precondition for certain constitutional change...constitutional change where parties are divided...the sort of the key party in all of this the Labour party and they've been heavily divided over the issue of electoral reform forever (Lodge, 2013).

Matthew Elliott, the head of the No campaign said:

They [the Conservatives] certainly wouldn't have gone for a parliamentary vote on AV because they would fear that basically Labour and the Lib Dems and an assortment of small parties would cling together to vote in favour of it. Or indeed amend that bill so that it basically became a parliamentary vote on proportional representation. So they wanted to keep it as tight as possible. And by sort of saying, okey we'll give you a referendum on AV, that is actually matching Labour's pledge on that issue (Elliott, 2013).

Denver and Hands (1997) and Whiteley et. al. (1994) argue for the incumbency's advantage in winning newer elections. The Conservative party agreed to a referendum in the belief that they would be able to defeat AV. And if they were wrong, it was by no means certain that they would have been disadvantaged by the new system.

3.4. The 2010 coalition negotiations and the referendum

Bogdanor characterizes the place of referendum in Britain as a safeguard that could be introduced as an added layer of security if need arises (Bogdanor, 1978). The

referendum in this case can be seen as part of a check and balance system for cases in which the Parliament is unable to act or decide on an issue. Referendums provide as an added layer of check on the parliament, especially when it is altering the constitution. The UK constitution does not say anything about how the constitution should be amended. Referendums can, therefore, be seen as a safeguard of the constitution.

The Government, in defence of the Coalition Agreement, justified the introduction of the bill based on the 'importance to give people the chance to choose'.⁴⁰ The coupling of the AV referendum with the equalization of constituency populations under the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 was a tactical move that appealed to Conservative critics of AV in the House of Commons and strengthened the government's position when the bill faced scrutiny in the House of Lords. The bill has been criticized by Labour MP's who argued that it fitted well with the 'ragbag character' of the coalition. Labour's negative reaction to the bill was expected as the boundaries had traditionally favoured the Labour party (Johnston et. al. 2009; Worcester et. al., 2011).

The voting reform bill enacted by the coalition, as opposed to Brown's proposed bill, was a package bill. The Alternative Vote referendum was coupled with a reduction of the constituency boundaries in a single bill. This gave Labour sufficient warrant to vote against it in the House of Commons. The Lords, however, did not vote against the bill. The modification of constituency boundaries was in the Conservative manifesto. The Liberal Democrat manifesto also included a statement about reducing the number of MPs by 150 (though the Constituencies and the Voting system bill would only reduce the number of MP's by 50). Therefore, an argument could be made to defend the bill in

⁴⁰ Government response to the House of Lords Constitution Committee's Report on the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill. Cm8016. February 2011.

the Lords by means of the Salisbury Convention. The House of Lords delayed the bill during the committee stage.

3.5. Conclusion

This paper investigated why electoral reform became 'bundled together' with the referendum pathway. Referendums have moved to centre-stage in British politics. The question 'why hold a referendum on X' has increasingly been replaced by the question of 'why not hold a referendum on X'? (King, 2007). The coalition government justified holding a referendum by accepting that the electoral reform is a constitutional issue which requires a referendum. On the eve of the 2009-2010 MP's expenses scandal, the referendum was seen as a way to bring public back into politics and build up public trust of the political process. It was not only about changing the electoral system but about earning the public's trust. In this way, however, the referendum turned into a second order election.

The paradox is that while tools of direct democracy like the referendum may be good mechanisms to promote the inclusion of the public in important decisions, when looked at it in another way it signals to that the existing political class is so out of touch with public preferences that they actually need a referendum to find out what their preferences are.

In a parliamentary democracy, such as the UK's, the electorate transfers the right to legislate to the representatives. The referendum is a mechanism that may risk pushing a country towards a populist system, something which is somehow foreign to Britain's liberal system which values individualism and has safeguards against the tyranny of the majority.

One can argue that referendum is seen as a natural solution for political parties to solve controversial issues for two reasons: 1) to get rid of the responsibility of making

a decision on highly controversial issues. 2) by exporting the decision-making outside of the parliament, the parties can keep factions united. This logic was evident in David Cameron's acceptance of the Liberal Democrat demands to hold a referendum on AV. Since both parties were free to campaign on either side in relation to AV, this enabled the parties to maintain their positions on AV while keeping the coalition together.

The puzzle has been the reasons why the Conservatives agreed to a referendum on AV. It was a compromise the Conservatives made in return for Liberal Democrat support of the constituency boundaries review. The Conservatives thought that they could defeat the proposal in a referendum. Finally, they might also have reasoned that if they lost the referendum, it would not be too bad for them. AV was not, after all, very different from FPTP. Refusing a referendum on AV would have opened up the possibility for the Lib-Lab coalition. The referendum on AV was a small price to pay.

AV was the alternative given to the people based on different reasons by different parties. The same was true with the referendum. This was accepted by the Conservatives for practical reasons. It was accepted by the Liberal Democrats because it fitted with their 'principles.' Nick Clegg wanted to extend the negotiations in order to secure a better deal from the Conservatives, electoral reform without a referendum. Holding a referendum on AV was crucial to legitimize the policy attempt. The referendum was also a good opportunity to promote the vision of public choice. AV was also promoted based on the justification that it would lead to more choice.

'Choice' was also a key word Clegg used throughout the Yes campaign. The coalition's agreement to hold the referendum gave people the chance to choose between the status quo and the alternative determined during the negotiations. However limited it was, the electorate was given the final choice. Furthermore, if AV was adopted it had the potential to create a multi-layered democratic environment in

which the voters would have the chance to support more than one candidate. The coupling of the choice the referendum offered and the choice AV would have offered (if adopted) created a harmonic tune that rang in the background in the period between the 2010 General Election and May 2011. This tune was not, however, enough to convince a sufficient proportion of the British public. It is to that issue that I turn in the third paper.

4. THE DETERMINANTS OF INDIVIDUAL VOTE DECISIONS IN THE REFERENDUM

4.1. Introduction

This paper examines the factors influencing voting behaviour in the 2011 AV referendum. The British public were not directly involved in determining the choice that was put before them. Nevertheless, the referendum gave the final say on the matter to 'the people'. Electoral reform processes can be characterised as either citizen- or elite-driven. Voting behaviour in a referendum can be conceptualized to reflect either the public's genuine attitudes towards the issues independent of partisan cues or considerations or their response to the cues given by the leaders and/or the parties they support.¹

The analysis in this paper aims to reveal whether individual vote decisions in the 2011 AV Referendum were based on the issues raised by electoral reform itself or by partisan considerations using the best data available. By analysing the voting behaviour of the electorate based on British Election Study (BES) AV Referendum survey data, I will explore whether the referendum should be seen as a celebratory example of direct democracy that reflected 'genuine' opinions or interest on electoral reform, or as an extension of partisan politics and pure electioneering. These are vital questions to address and have wider implications about the suitability of referendums for deciding these issues.² The findings suggest that, while British citizens, for the most part, voted in line with the positions of the leaders they trusted, arguments put forward during the campaign also influenced individual vote preferences and mediated the effect of partisanship.³ Controlling for partisanship and other variables endogenous and

¹ See Reif and Schmitt (1980) for the distinction between first and second order elections in the context of the European Union.

² Instead of alternative methods of public approval such as deliberative polls or citizens' assemblies.

³ Regression model 5 estimates the influence of the positions taken by the political leaders.

exogenous to the model, voters' opinions with respect to a series of campaign arguments – for and against AV or FPTP – proved to be strong indicators of their vote.

4.2. Popular opinion on electoral reform

In the United Kingdom, electoral reform has been the subject of intermittent debate at an elite level. Whenever the issue of electoral reform has gained prominence, it has been driven by developments at this level. The issue has not attracted the same level of attention at the mass level. To be sure, there have been campaigns by organizations that sought to reform the political process. The Electoral Reform Society, for instance, has advocated proportional representation since its founding in 1884. More recently, Charter 88 has campaigned for electoral reform and for broader constitutional reform since 1988.⁴ These campaigns largely escaped the attention of the general public and attracted the attention of a relatively small group of activists.

More recently, the MPs expenses scandal of May 2009 enhanced the visibility of pre-existing demands for political reform (Heath, 2011). Exactly one year after the scandal surfaced in the media, the disproportional result at the 2010 General Election stimulated some media and public interest on the issue.⁵ Whilst coalition negotiations between party leaders were underway, Take Back Parliament, a coalition of groups including Power2010, Unlock Democracy and the Electoral Reform Society, gathered over 3000 people in six simultaneous rallies across the UK to demand reform of the voting system. The campaigners produced pamphlets asking for 'Fair Votes Now' and

⁴ Charter 88 has merged into Unlock Democracy from 2007 onwards. The original Charter 88 declaration called for a new constitutional settlement that would create, among others, 'a fair electoral system of proportional representation'. Although this declaration did not result in a complete constitutional settlement, it has been argued that Charter 88 has had impact on the voting system reform in Britain (Dunleavy, 2009). 'The Original Charter 88' can be accessed at <http://www.unlockdemocracy.org.uk/pages/the-original-charter-88>.

⁵ The most recent hung parliament prior to 2011 was in February 1974. The Labour party, under Harold Wilson, served as a minority government until the follow-up election in October of the same year.

collected 50,000 signatures – rather fewer than the number of people who voted in the contemporaneous Big Brother programme.⁶

For most people, most of the time, however, electoral reform has been of little significance. There is considerable polling evidence suggesting that electoral reform and the broader issues of constitutional reform are not very important to British voters. Ipsos MORI's Issue Index data, for example, enable us to examine the issue priorities of British people over time. The Issue Index is generated by compiling the answers survey respondents gave to the following two questions: 'What would you say is the most important issue facing Britain today?' and 'What do you see as other important issues facing Britain today?' Responses to these questions are coded into general categories. Given that 'Electoral Reform' is not included in this list of categories, one can presume mentions of electoral reform are coded either under the category 'Scottish/Welsh Assembly/ Devolution/ Constitutional Reform' or as 'Other'. Figure 1 displays the average importance of issues from 1974 to 2013, revealing the unimportance of the issue of electoral reform to voters.⁷ Issues like the economy, NHS, unemployment, education, defence or crime – which have the most direct effect on a citizen's life – are invariably rated 'most important'. 'Scottish Parliament/Welsh Assembly/Devolution and Constitutional Reform', have averaged a mere 0.25 per cent, and this category includes a number of other constitutional issues, so we can infer that only a small portion of this is actually concerned about electoral reform. The 'Other' category, which may possibly include some responses pertaining to electoral reform, averages 4.74 per cent, but,

⁶ <http://www.power2010.org.uk/blog/entry/bristol-take-back-parliament-says-yes-to-voting-reform/>

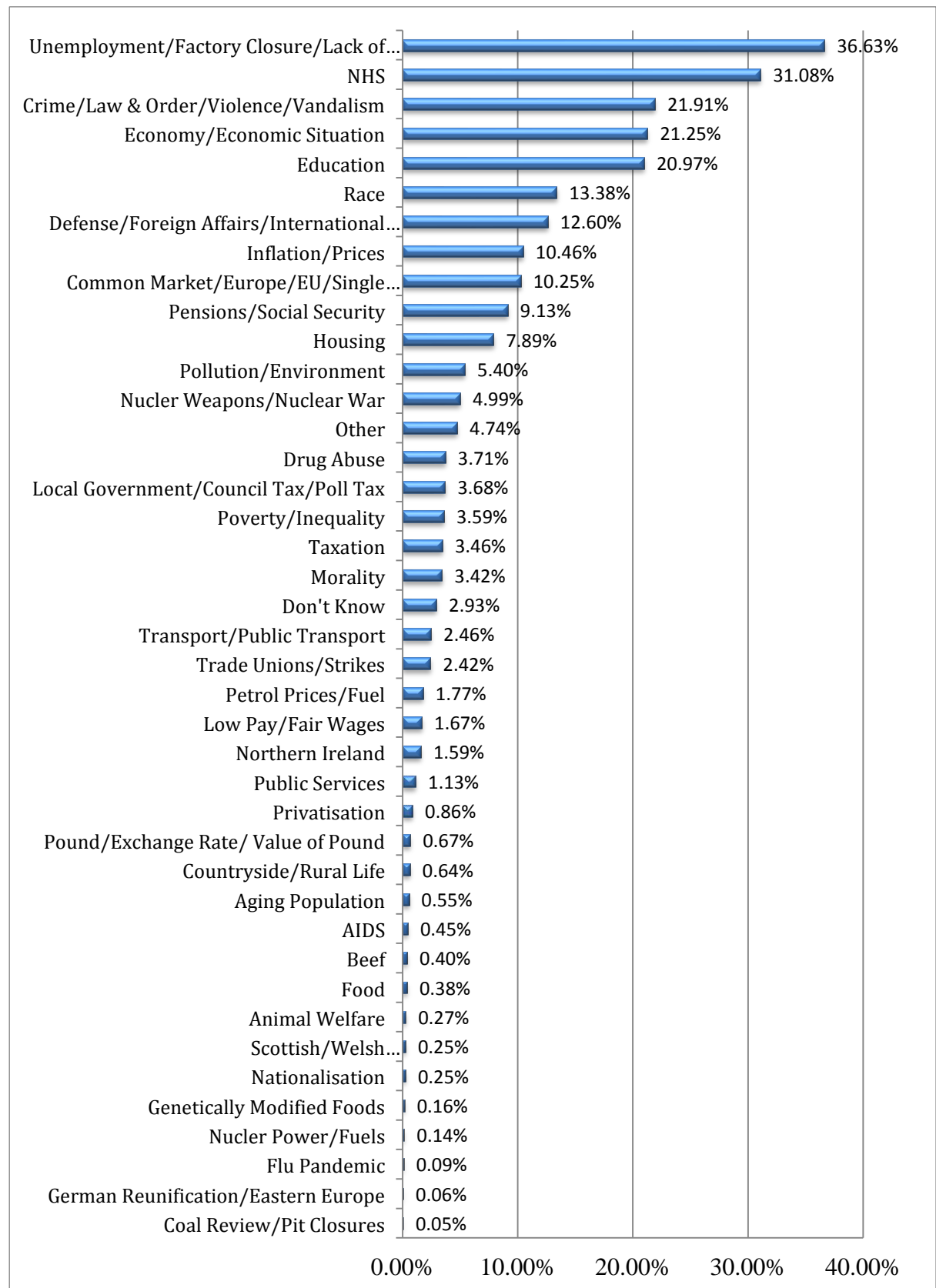
⁷ The item was asked 359 separate times between 1974 and 2013. Since the raw score made available by Ipsos MORI includes both 'most important' and 'other important issues', the original scores sum to more than 100%. This provides an even clearer indication of the relative unimportance of constitutional issues in general and electoral reform in particular.

again, only a tiny portion of these results will be about electoral reform. Based on this evidence electoral reform is off most people's 'political radar'.⁸

The aggregation of the Ipsos-MORI survey data supports the claim that voters do not think about electoral reform as important to themselves or consequential for their fellow citizens. The issue is complex and only remotely related to the things that matter to themselves and their families – such as the economy and public services. A closer look at the responses reveals that there has been no greater interest in the issue even after the hung parliaments of February 1974 or 2010 or those elections that produced landslide majorities on the basis of minority votes in 1983, 1987, 1997 and 2001. The issue of electoral reform has never been anything but peripheral.

⁸ There is evidence that responses to the 'most important issue' question may not reflect importance of an issue to the individual but their perceptions of the extent to which that issue either divides the parties, is prominent in the media or influences other people (Nisbett and Wilson, 1977; Clements and Bartle, 2009; Bartle and Laycock, 2012). Psychological studies suggest that while individuals are less good at identifying what matters to them, they have a better idea of what matters to other people (Nisbett and Wilson, 1977). Perhaps for these reasons, responses to the 'most important issue' are a good indicator of what matters to the electorate as a whole (Soroka and Wlezien, 2010).

Figure 1. Average importance of issues (1974 -2013): most important + secondary importance



Percentage values are calculated by aggregating Ipsos MORI data.

4.3. Campaign Discourse and Public Opinion⁹

Various people have already sought to explain what influenced votes in the 2011 AV referendum. According to some, the unpopularity of the Liberal Democrats as coalition partners was a factor that deterred some elected politicians from supporting reform (Seawright, 2013). Following the AV Referendum and the local elections which were held on the same day, the Campaigns and Communications Committee (CCC) of the Liberal Democrats conducted two separate reviews, one each on the local elections and the referendum. The review on the referendum argued that there were two main reasons for defeat in the referendum. Firstly, the review argued, the Labour leader Ed Miliband had refused to share the same platform with the Leader of the Liberal Democrats Nick Clegg and placed 'local election point-scoring above unity in the Yes campaign' (Liberal Democrats, 2011). The second reason, according to the review, was that the Conservatives united their party against reform.

Others have pointed to differences in the quality of the two campaigns (Renwick and Lamb, 2013). Taking into consideration the potential aversion of the electorate towards pessimistic campaign messages, one might suspect that voters were put off by negative campaign strategies and tactics.¹⁰ The No campaign, assumed the opposite by emphasising the risk and uncertainty that change would bring.¹¹ They used images showing a premature baby or a soldier in their campaign in order to make the argument that there were more vital things on which to spend the money than adopting a new electoral system.¹² The No campaign appealed to the 'small c' conservatism of the public by emphasizing that FPTP was traditional. The Yes campaign, by contrast, was

⁹ For a discussion of the difference between popular and public opinion, see Nisbett (1975).

¹⁰ The public's negative opinion of politicians at the time of the campaign led to the low turnout figure of 42 per cent in the referendum (Bowler and Donovan, 2013).

¹¹ The head of the No Campaign said: 'The best thing is to talk about the cost of change. So hence, talking about the cost of changing the electoral system. And of course, with the background of austerity and financial crisis what have you, the cost argument was key' (Elliott, 2013).

¹² See Appendix 2 for an exemplary campaign image.

less confident and was less likely to campaign negatively. It focussed on the hypothetical effect that AV might have on the behaviour of MPs. To the disappointment of some, it did relatively little to criticise the FPTP or make the argument for proportionality (Gottfried, 2013). This feature of the Yes campaign, however, can be attributed to the fact that AV would not take the UK closer to the ideal of proportional representation. Not surprisingly, many electoral reformers found it difficult to make a strong/convincing case for the AV system.

LeDuc, by making a comparison between voting in referendums and general elections, usefully emphasizes the distinction between predispositions and the campaign in determining vote decisions (LeDuc, 2002). According to LeDuc, referendums usually concern topics that are new to the voters (if not new to the political elites). The learning process initiated by the campaign can be expected to have more weight on the result than the already existing stable predisposition variables like partisanship or education. The Swiss referendum experience in the last two decades of the twentieth century suggests that uninformed voters tend to vote for the status quo (Christin, et. al., 2002). According to Whiteley (et. al., 2012), this tendency was present in the AV referendum. Voters with higher levels of political knowledge were more likely to vote in support of AV compared to voters with lower levels of political knowledge (Whiteley, et. al., 2012). Evidence on EU referendums indicate that the general level of cueing is a function of the 'informational context' in which the referendum takes place and that voters with higher levels of awareness tend to rely less on partisan cues (Hobolt, 2005). Interviews with campaigners on both sides indicate that there was a general understanding that this was the case. Uninformed voters tend to stick with the status quo.¹³

¹³ This was reflected in interviews with Guy Lodge and Glen Gottfried of IPPR, Matthew Eliot of the No Campaign and two anonymous interviewees.

While predispositions like party identification played a role in conditioning the attitudes towards the two opposing campaigns, statistical controls can help us to isolate the effect of the campaign. This paper examines the influence of five aspects of campaign discourse on the vote in the 2011 referendum: i.) partisanship,¹⁴ ii.) attitudes towards the key arguments on AV and FPTP, iii.) contact by the campaigns, iv.) evaluations of the campaigns and v.) endorsements of the party leaders. The distinction between these ‘types of discourse’, of course, is sometimes difficult to maintain. Some arguments about the merits of AV and FPTP were, for example, made by party politicians. This overlap between argument and party makes it difficult to isolate the unique effect of both with certainty (King et. al., 1994).¹⁵ The only way of doing so, of course, is by conducting a properly controlled experiment (Norris et. al, 1999). In the absence of this evidence, the best we can do is examine the available survey evidence. Nevertheless, in order to give justice to the different features of the referendum campaign, it is necessary to include these indicators with the aim of identifying the unique effect of each.

It is reasonable to presume that the relationship between party ID and specific campaign arguments is unidirectional. The Issue Index evidence from Figure 1 in section 2 suggested that British people are more concerned with political issues that directly influence their livelihood: the ‘bread and butter’ issues of health, economy, education, immigration and security. They do not appear to think and develop rehearsed opinions about constitutional issues. It is unlikely, moreover, that voters will feel so strongly about these issues that it will lead them to think of themselves as being

¹⁴The declared stance of the main British newspapers matched the declared positions of the political parties they had supported in the 2010 General Election, suggesting that the media had crystallised partisan attitudes in its coverage of the referendum (Seawright, 2013). The Financial Times, which sided with the Yes campaign despite supporting the Conservatives in the 2010 General Election, is, however, an exception to this trend.

¹⁵ King (et. al., 1994) emphasizes that uncertainty is an endemic feature of scientific inference.

‘Conservative’ or as being ‘Labour’. Opinions on issues like constitutional reform are likely to be caused by partisanship, but such opinions are unlikely to alter partisanship.

4.3.1. Parties and party identification

Information shortcuts help voters with low information levels to emulate the voting behaviour of well-informed voters (Lupia, 1994). There is considerable evidence that partisans tend to adopt the positions advocated by their parties, especially on those ‘unimportant’ issues that do not cause partisanship (Miller and Shanks, 1996; Clarke et. al, 2009; Denver and Hands, 1996). Accordingly, the following sections examine the stances of the main political parties on the AV referendum.

4.3.1.1. The Conservative Party

The previous papers have established that the Conservative party was strongly opposed to AV. In a cross-party No to AV event in 18 April 2011, David Cameron called on voters to reject AV, arguing that ‘AV is obscure, unfair and expensive’.¹⁶ On 1 May 2011, he argued:

A No vote is the right answer for this country because our current system is simple, it’s well-understood, it’s fair because every vote counts the same and it’s effective – you can get rid of government you don’t like...why swap that for a system only used for Australia, Fiji and Papua New Guinea? It’ll be a huge mistake for this country.¹⁷

Cameron also maintained that the first-past-the-post system was traditional. For Conservatives, this constitutes an argument in its favour, since those institutions that have endured are assumed to have demonstrated their worth (Heywood, 2008). The

¹⁶ David Cameron says AV is ‘obscure, unfair and expensive’ as coalition divisions exposed. Available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/av-referendum/8458260/David-Cameron-says-AV-is-obscure-unfair-and-expensive-as-coalition-divisions-exposed.html>.

¹⁷ ‘David Cameron on Marr and No2AV campaign’: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_hN9xpMB2wI

Conservative party almost unanimously opposed AV and campaigned in favour of the FPTP system. To be sure, some Conservatives did campaign for AV.¹⁸ This group was small and the 'signal' the Conservative party gave their followers was clear.

4.3.1.2. The Labour party

Labour had advocated a referendum on AV in its 2010 manifesto, but had not promised to support AV, because the party was deeply divided on the issue. Some senior figures, including Ed Miliband, the newly elected leader of the party, supported the Yes campaign.¹⁹ In the *Guardian* on 16 February 2011, Miliband said: 'The very fact of having to gain the majority support of the voters will increase political accountability.'²⁰ Ironically, although he declined to share a campaign platform with Nick Clegg, Miliband still attempted to revive the idea of a 'progressive coalition':

AV will also force parties to admit where there is agreement between them, prising open our confrontational system so that similarities sometimes become as important as differences. It could be the beginning of a transformation in political debate.²¹

The persuasiveness of Miliband's message to Labour supporters must be doubted. He had only been leader for one year after winning a tightly fought election against his own brother. A small group in the party thought him illegitimate because he had won with the support of trade union affiliates and lost among both MPs and ordinary party members (Interviewee A, 2013). Many more knew little of him. Many other senior

¹⁸ John Strafford the blogger for 'The Campaign for Conservative Democracy' founded The Conservative Yes Campaign (CAER), see <http://copov.blogspot.co.uk/p/archive-2011.html>

¹⁹ Ed Miliband had won the Labour party's 2010 leadership election under the Alternative Vote. Had the party leadership race been held under the First Past the Post system instead, Ed Miliband's brother David Miliband would have won the leadership. David Miliband had received 37.78% of the first preference votes while Ed Miliband received only 34.33%.

²⁰ <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/feb/16/alternative-vote-disconnect-politicians-people#start-of-comments>

²¹ Ibid.

Labour figures such as John Prescott, John Reid²² and Margaret Beckett, campaigned actively for a No vote.²³ Given their trade union background and seniority in the party, these figures might collectively be thought to better represent the 'Labour tradition' than the young new leader. These 'mixed messages' presumably reduced the Labour leader's influence. Angry Labour identifiers, moreover, may have felt that voting 'No' was the best way of damaging the Liberal Democrats and the coalition. The significance of anti-Liberal Democrat feeling in AV voting preference was expressed in interviews with the campaigners. According to Guy Lodge of the progressive think-tank IPPR:

The politics were toxic and stacked massively against those advocating Yes.....In 2011, there was a real sense in the Labour party that they were not prepared to do anything to help the Liberal Democrats. The Liberal Democrats had betrayed the cause of progressive politics by [collaborating] with the Tories in an unholy coalition in 2010, pushing these horrific economic policies and all the rest of it. The sense in the Labour party was 'if Clegg goes down on AV, the Lib Dems go down with him.....why should we do anything whatsoever to stop that?' The view was firmly that Labour should seize this opportunity to exact revenge on the Liberal Democrats.....The Labour backbenchers were just consumed with anger about the Liberal Democrats (Lodge, 2013).

The mixed messages that Labour sent to its supporters made it difficult to predict how Labour partisans would vote in the AV referendum. While the Conservatives' and, to some extent, Liberal Democrats' vote decisions can be based on partisanship, it

²² John Reid even shared the same platform with David Cameron in a No to AV campaign event held on 18 April 2011. <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2011/apr/18/voting-for-av-backward-step-warns-cameron>

²³ The Labour campaigner for AV noted that advocates of a Yes vote were looked on with suspicion by traditional Labour voters and members of the bureaucracy (Interviewee B, 2013).

would be reasonable to think that Labour voters were more unpredictable than the followers of the other two parties.

4.3.1.3. The Liberal Democrats

The Liberal Democrats unambiguously supported AV, although AV was not the Liberal Democrats' preferred system. Indeed, the party had long advocated the Single Transferrable Vote (STV) for Westminster elections. Nick Clegg, the Liberal Democrat leader, had characterized AV as 'a miserable little compromise' during the 2010 election campaign – a comment that was thrown back at the Yes campaign numerous times.²⁴ Later he argued that the adoption of AV would be a vital win for progressive politics, in an attempt to reach beyond party politics and attract Labour voters.²⁵ On 1 May 2011, he defended AV on Andrew Marr Show:

It's not a bad thing in a democracy to get politicians to try to get a majority of people in their constituencies on their side and that's of course what AV will do.²⁶

Clegg's argument was half-hearted. Describing a system as 'not a bad thing' hardly constitutes a strong endorsement. Although the Liberal Democrats would have gained extra seats had the 2010 General Election been held under AV (Sanders et. al., 2010), there was also some resentment about the fact that AV was not proportional and a fear that, if adopted, AV would kill moves towards proportional representation.²⁷ By the time of the referendum, moreover, public enthusiasm for the Liberal Democrats had declined. The coalition compromises, such as accepting increases in undergraduate

²⁴ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/i-want-to-push-this-all-the-way-declares-clegg-1950668.html>

²⁵ <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2011/may/02/nick-clegg-alternative-vote-interview>

²⁶ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WePnN6LGh_M

²⁷ This point came across in the interview conducted with Interviewee A.

tuition fees, led to disillusionment among some supporters.²⁸ Even had Clegg's endorsement been stronger, it is unlikely to have much impact on individuals or sway many voters. The post-election BES survey indicated that 14 per cent 'thought of themselves' as Liberal Democrats in June/July 2010. By the time of the AV referendum, this figure had fallen to 8 per cent.²⁹ By 2011, Clegg was addressing a much smaller band of Liberal Democrat supporters or sympathisers.

4.3.1.4. The minor parties

The Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP) supported the Yes campaign. It was largely unenthusiastic about reform for elections to Westminster since the party was focussed on the Scottish Parliament elections. It strongly opposed holding the referendum on the same day as elections to the Scottish Parliament (Interviewee A, 2013). Alex Salmond said that '[t]here really hasn't been an AV campaign in Scotland because, understandably, Scottish politicians are wholly occupied with the Scottish election'. He went on: 'We warned Nick Clegg right at the very start of this, a year ago, not to have them on the same day. He seemed to think it was a smart manoeuvre'.³⁰ Clegg had insisted on holding the referendum on the same day as regional and council elections in order to enhance turnout and, as a result, boost the Yes vote. In response to the criticisms on the timing of the referendum, in line with their austerity goals, the government stated that holding separate polls on the same day would save the government £30 million.³¹ Although the turnout in the referendum naturally rose due to the concurrence of the elections and the referendum, this boosted the No vote instead, as individuals who did not like Nick Clegg were more mobilized to go to the polls to

²⁸ Nigel Wilmot, 'Lib Dems are to blame if AV is rejected', *Guardian*, 5 May 2011: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/may/05/lib-dems-av-coalition>

²⁹ Source: British Election Studies

³⁰ <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2011/may/03/salmond-attacks-decision-av-referendum>

³¹ Government response to the House of Lords Constitution Committee's Report on the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill. Cm 8016. February 2011.

punish the Lib Dems than the small section of the electorate who supported him (Stevens and Banducci, 2013).

The Welsh Nationalists, Plaid Cymru, were also unhappy about the referendum taking place on the same day as the elections to the Welsh Assembly. Even though the Party supported a Yes vote, they did not actively campaign for it, as their members were preoccupied with the regional elections at the time.³² The Green Party, on the other hand, emerged as one of the most vociferous supporters of AV. Emphasizing the incremental nature of political reform, the deputy leader Adrian Ramsay argued:

A Yes vote would bring a step in the right direction and demonstrate an appetite for change. Greens and others who want a fair, inclusive proportional way of voting will then continue to campaign for further reform.³³

The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) also supported a Yes vote in the referendum. Its leader, Nigel Farage, said at a Yes campaign event that:

...FPTP is seen to be by a younger generation to be completely bankrupt and democracy is losing the younger generation in this country....I see voting Yes as a very important first step [towards proportionality].³⁴

Farage argued that AV would enable people to vote for their first choice and reduce 'tactical' voting. He also warned supporters not to be confused by the No leaflets that had a design very similar to the UKIP's leaflets for the 2009 European Parliament elections.³⁵ Although this can be considered a clever move by the No campaign to grab the attention of UKIP sympathisers, there is not enough data to enable us to quantify the effect of this specific strategy on the outcome of the referendum. The negative

³² <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-11609887>

³³ <http://www.greenparty.org.uk/news/conference-av-campaign-adrian-ramsay.html>

³⁴ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cMZ5_U04W-A

³⁵ Ibid.

coefficient in Model 1 (see Table 4) indicates that UKIP supporters overall were inclined to vote against the official recommendation of their party. The frequency figures are in accordance with this effect indicator.

In contrast, the British National Party (BNP) opposed AV on the grounds that it would be even more unfair to small parties than the existing system and supported a proportional system that they believed would enable them to send representatives to Westminster.³⁶

4.3.2. Attitudes towards the campaign arguments

The second type of discourse concerns the survey respondents' evaluations of various arguments that have been uttered during the campaign period. The BES survey includes ten agree-disagree questions which ask respondents' opinions on statements concerning the nature of the FPTP and AV systems.³⁷

The official Yes Campaign made various key arguments in favour of AV. They maintained that the system was fairer at the constituency level, because it guaranteed that the MP would be able to claim the support of a real majority (50 per cent plus one of the electorate). They also claimed that this would make MPs work harder, because they would no longer be able to depend on gaining a plurality and would instead need to attract broader support. The comedian and film actor Eddie Izzard, a visible advocate for a Yes vote, claimed: 'It will mean MPs will have to work harder to get your vote because not only do they have to talk to their core support, but also to other people to get them down as a second choice'.³⁸

³⁶ <http://www.bnp.org.uk/news/why-bnp-will-urge-%E2%80%9Cno%E2%80%9D-vote-av-referendum>

³⁷ All agree-disagree questions suffer from acquiescence bias – the tendency of respondents to agree with any statement put to them (Schuman and Presser, 1996). This bias may reduce the validity of the question and the strength of its statistical association with vote. See appendix 5 for the list of these questions.

³⁸ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/av-referendum/8491901/AV-The-Yes-Campaign-in-quotes.html>

The No campaign, on the other hand, claimed that first-past-the-post produced efficient and stable single party governments that could be held to account by the electorate. They further argued that AV would give too much power to small parties (particularly the Liberal Democrats) and would be too complicated. Labour party MP Margaret Beckett described AV as an 'expensive and complicated' system.³⁹ Similarly, Matthew Elliott, the director of the 'No to AV' campaign, said, in defence of the FPTP:

Our current system, which gives one person one vote, is easy to explain, understand and is fair. Even the independent Electoral Commission, who are overseeing this referendum, struggle to explain the Alternative Vote. The message for May 5 is simple: vote no to keep our simple, fair system of one person, one vote.⁴⁰

Matthew Elliott maintained that the No side's most effective argument against reform was linked to a strategy of communicating to the voters the monetary costs of updating the voting system (Elliott, 2013). This was a simple argument and appealed to the innate conservatism of some voters. The No campaign claimed that first-past-the-post was traditional, had served Britain well and there was no reason to change. This was an argument that Cameron continuously made throughout the campaign period. He claimed that the FPTP 'is enshrined in our constitution and integral to our history – and AV flies in the face of all that because it destroys one person, one vote'.⁴¹ He also drew an analogy with the Olympic athlete Usain Bolt losing a running race even when he

³⁹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-13191009>

⁴⁰ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1372414/AV-David-Cameron-attacks-AV-complicated-undemocratic.html>

⁴¹ David Cameron, 'Why keeping first past the post is vital for democracy', Daily Telegraph, 30 April 2011.

crosses the line first, in order to make the case that under AV who comes first does not necessarily win the election.⁴²

Some arguments used by the two sides in the campaign seemed more contentious – and presumably weaker – than others.⁴³ The Yes Campaign's claim that AV would result in a House of Commons which better reflected public opinion, for example, was debateable. For some people, taking into account voters' second or third preferences was not their idea of democracy.⁴⁴ Naturally, on the other side of this argument was the claim that AV would remove the possibility of electing candidates that a majority of the electorate opposed. Similarly, the No Campaign's claim that AV would make hung parliaments and coalitions more likely can be considered questionable, given that the 2010 Conservative-Liberal Democrats coalition was formed via the existing FPTP system.⁴⁵

4.3.3. Contact by the campaigns

The third type of explanatory variable the paper looks at is simply whether the respondent was contacted by the Yes or No campaigns. If individuals have positive attitudes towards people, arguments or positions and are then being personally exposed to a campaign or to its message, this may have positive effect towards that campaign.⁴⁶ Following this logic, someone who is contacted by one side or another can be expected to be more likely to vote for it, *ceteris paribus*, than someone who is not contacted. Several studies have stressed the effectiveness of personal appeals in

⁴² This analogy was misleading in the sense that the winning post in an AV election race is rather fixed; it is not the case with FPTP.

⁴³ It must be stressed that it is not possible to judge the 'strength' of the arguments without further research, e.g. experimental work.

⁴⁴ In other leaflets the No campaign also claimed that AV would benefit extreme candidates, would give 'more votes' to some voters and that AV re-invents tactical voting. See

<http://www.leftfootforward.org/2011/03/ten-reasons-why-the-labour-no-campaign-are-wrong-on-av/>

⁴⁵ Yet, the fact that there was a hung parliament under FPTP does not directly rule out the possibility that AV would bring about hung parliaments more often. It was, one can argue, the chaos of a hung parliament being fresh in people's minds that led to this argument being quite strong.

⁴⁶ The assumption made here is that the effect of recognition is, for the most part, positive.

stimulating participation and mobilising potential voters (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 2006; Denver and Hands, 1996; Schier, 2000; Jemal, 2007).⁴⁷ Local campaigning has a positive effect on electoral success (Seyd and Whiteley, 1992; Denver and Hands, 1992; Johnston and Pattie, 1995). One can expect that exposure to the simplest campaign message 'Please vote Yes or No' influenced behaviour on the day of the referendum and that, other things being equal, people were more likely to vote for one side or another simply because they were asked.

The No Campaign thought carefully about its use of leaflets:

Now what we did I think quite cleverly, was, of course, in a household of let's say three people, you can do three address labels. And rather than sending the same leaflet three times to the household, we did one big mailing where the first person in the electoral register in the household, got our main leaflet. And in the final week of the campaign, we did a mailing to the second person listed in the household. And that was more of a sort of get out the vote leaflet (Elliott, 2013).

The No campaign was able to make use of the free of charge mailings of campaign material more so than the Yes campaign. While the Yes campaign's free mailings had a total of £1,459,894.07, No to AV sent free mail equivalent to £6,687,686.15 in postage fees.⁴⁸

Since most of the political parties took a position on the AV referendum, it is necessary to examine whether contact by both the Yes and No campaigns and the parties had an effect. It is reasonable to distinguish between the nonpartisan campaign

⁴⁷ British parties used phone canvassing in a systematic manner for the first time during the UK's 1997 General Election campaign. In that election, however, phone contacts did not have a statistically significant effect on the outcome of the election while the effect of face-to-face canvassing was significant (Pattie and Johnston, 2003).

⁴⁸ More detailed figures about campaign funding and spending can be found in the Electoral Commission's 'May 2011 polls: Campaign spending report': http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/146668/May-2011-Campaign-spending-report.pdf

teams and the parties for two reasons. The Yes and No campaigns were the 'official' campaigns and were supposed to be 'above' party. Their appeals had a different quality to the party appeals. The political parties, moreover, were fighting local elections on the same day as the AV referendum. Interviews with the Yes campaigners suggested that the parties were more focused on local election campaigns than the referendum. The Labour party and the Liberal Democrats were competing against each other in the elections, while at the same time, in theory, trying to campaign for a Yes vote, though Labour in particular, was split and not all local branches were supportive of AV. Thus, the local and regional elections caused both relative neglect of the referendum campaign by the parties and a contradiction between party competition and campaign coalition, especially within the Yes campaign, that had to perform the more challenging task of convincing the public of the necessity of a change to the system as opposed to guarding the status quo. Contact by the parties is likely to have had a different effect compared to the effect of the 'official' Yes and No campaigns.

It is necessary to say at this point that like-mindedness is not necessary for cueing effect to take place (Lupia and McCubbins, 1998). Vote choice can be based on cues coming from both the elites voters favour and those they disapprove (Carmines and Kuklinski, 1990). Voters can distinguish between the two types of cue sources (Kuklinski and Hurley, 1994). The analysis section will consider the possibility of negative campaign effects.

4.3.4. Evaluations of the campaign

Another factor that might have influenced voters is the conduct of the campaign itself. Just as some jurors may make up their minds by judging the strength of the lawyer's argument rather than the facts of the case, so it is reasonable to suggest that some

people may have made up their mind on how to vote in the referendum on the basis of their evaluations of the campaigns themselves: how well each side made their case.

Respondents to the BES surveys were asked to choose as many words from the following list as they wished to describe the two campaigns:

Strong
Weak
Informative
Not informative
Positive
Negative
Interesting
Boring

One might expect that those who found the Yes Campaign, 'strong', 'informative', 'positive' and 'interesting' are more likely to vote Yes than those who found it 'weak', 'not informative', 'negative' and 'boring'. Conversely, those who found the No Campaign 'strong', 'informative', 'positive' and 'interesting' are more likely to vote No than those who found it 'weak', 'not informative', 'negative' and 'boring'. By extension, those who found everything about the Yes Campaign appealing and everything about the No Campaign unappealing should be the most likely to vote Yes. Likewise, someone who found everything about the No Campaign appealing and everything about the Yes Campaign unappealing should be the most likely to vote No.

For some respondents 'negativity' may have signified merit. A strongly articulated 'negative' message may itself be received positively and contribute to the success of a campaign. The AV campaign, as expected, depicted the status quo negatively while focussing on the positive traits of AV. The No side made use of negative messages to express their disapproval of the proposed voting system, as well as focusing on the positive characteristics of the existing system. As mentioned in chapter 3, however, the

Yes side was less likely to campaign negatively in comparison to the No campaign. The BES data confirms that the difference between the two campaigns in terms of the 'magnitude' of disseminated negative messages was reproduced in the respondents' evaluations of the two campaigns. 5024 people corresponding to 23.5 per cent of survey respondents characterized the No campaign as 'negative', while 3025 people corresponding to 13.7 per cent of the entire sample size characterized the Yes campaign as 'negative'. Although the words yes and no intrinsically carry positive and negative connotations respectively and may have contributed to a wider gap between these two sets of figures, the figures nevertheless imply that the UK public was at least moderately aware of the distinctions between the narratives of the two camps.

4.3.5. Trust in the party leaders

Since opinions on electoral reform and the AV issue were not crystallised for most people, it makes some sense to suggest that they followed the lead provided not just by the parties but also the party leaders, who are usually the most visible and recognised party politicians.⁴⁹

The suggestion that people act on signals from party leaders is not new. It has been claimed that voters in the 1975 referendum on membership of the European Economic Community (EEC) were influenced by the popularity of politicians on both 'sides' (King, 1975). More recent studies of voting behaviour have suggested that voters may use their evaluations of party leaders as a 'heuristic', helping them to decide how to vote (Clarke et. al., 2004, 2009, 2013). Accordingly, the final two models include controls for trust in the three party leaders. Those who trust Cameron should be less likely, *ceteris paribus*, to vote Yes. Those who trust either Clegg or Miliband should be more likely to vote Yes. One can, however, expect that Miliband has less effect

⁴⁹ Figure A.1 demonstrates the variability in referendum vote intentions over the nine month period from June 2010 to April 2011. The high percentage of undecided voters throughout this period also hints at this.

considering the mixed signals about AV coming from other Labour figures and the fact that he was an inexperienced leader at the time of the referendum.

4.4. Methods

This paper applies an ‘improved prediction’ strategy in order to estimate the apparent effect of various styles of discourse on the ‘typical’ or ‘average’ respondent to the BES survey (Miller and Shanks, 1996, Crewe and King, 1994; Bartle, 2003).⁵⁰ It makes use of survey data specially designed and well-suited to assess the forces shaping individual vote decisions.

4.4.1. Data

The BES Alternative Vote Referendum Study is based on an online survey conducted by YouGov on a large and representative sample of the British population. Respondents were surveyed in two waves –before and after the referendum. This pre-post design enables us to measure changes in vote intentions during the campaign, make assumptions on causal order and, thus, estimate the effect of the campaign controlling for pre-campaign vote intentions.

The pre-campaign wave of the survey was administered over the 30 day period preceding 5 May 2011, the day of the actual referendum. In each of the 30 days, a random sub-sample of respondents was surveyed. The average daily sub-sample size is 792. The total size of the pre-campaign wave is N=22,124. The post-referendum wave data was collected from the day after the referendum. The post-referendum wave had a total of N=18,556 respondents. The pre/post retention rate is, thus, 83.9 per cent.

The study contains a large number of questions, ranging from the respondents’ long-term social and political characteristics, through to their evaluations of the

⁵⁰ The raw version of the British Election Studies data are available on <http://bes2009-10.org/bes-data.php>

campaign and whether or not they were contacted by the Yes and/or No campaigns. This makes it possible to control for a number of socio-economic and other types of variables that may have influenced vote decisions. Such controls give us the ability to focus on the effect of the campaign on the referendum result in a precise manner.

4.4.2. Causal assumptions underlying the vote models

In order to establish the effect of discourse in an ideal research design, we would have to carry out a controlled experiment. We would measure vote intentions (Y) before the experiment, expose the subjects to campaign discourse (X), and then measure vote intentions again. Since every other factor would be 'controlled' in this experimental design, any change in the dependent variable can be conclusively demonstrated to be the result of the stimulus (X), which can be manipulated by the researcher (Norris et. al., 1999).

Experiments have been conducted for the 2011 referendum (Vowles, 2013). The Vowles study provides evidence on the considerations that influenced voters in the 2011 referendum based on three waves of a panel survey from a sample which is not closely representative of British voters. Yet, it is not certain that such findings can be generalised from the laboratory to the 'real world'. First of all, in real campaigns some messages make some people more inclined to say 'Yes' and others to say 'No. These effects presumably offset each other and the extent of that offset will depend on the net balance of messages. The effects uncovered in experiments are likely to be larger than those in the real world, where messages have a net impact.

The approach in this paper makes use of survey data. This, by definition, cannot provide direct evidence about the effect of particular messages or discourse, but it can provide clues. If we know that party X advocated a Yes or No vote, for example, we might expect people who 'think of themselves' as X to follow the lead of their party.

Similarly, people's opinions on the issues may have been influenced by their exposure to elite discourse (Converse, 1964; Zaller, 1992). Someone who agreed that AV was too difficult to understand, for example, or that it would result in permanent coalition government may have picked this up from the campaign debates. To be sure, they may also have picked up this argument from conversations with friends, neighbours and workmates. Yet these individuals are, in turn, may have picked up the argument from the political elite. The original source of the opinion is, therefore, uncertain.

In order to examine the factors that may have influenced vote in the referendum, this paper imposes certain assumptions and applies statistical rather than experimental 'controls' (Davis, 1985). It is, however, useful to keep the experimental ideal in mind when assessing the plausibility of the inferences drawn from the models. It is also useful to recognise that the plausibility of the estimates depend on the plausibility of the underlying assumptions (Bartle, 2003). Accordingly, we must attach some uncertainty to estimates of causal effect (King et. al., 1994).

In order to estimate the impact of variables on the vote decision this paper assumes that there is a causal order among the explanatory ($X_1 \dots_n$) variables. Some assumptions are not problematic (Davis, 1985). It is, for example, safe to assume that sex (male or female) is a potential cause of both vote in the referendum and other potential causes of behaviour – but is not caused by referendum vote or those other variables. Education may be influenced by age (older people will have likely had less opportunity to pursue tertiary education), race (non-white people on average have statistically lower levels of education) and sex (in some cultures women are discouraged from pursuing education). It may also be influenced by other variables that are not measured in the BES survey – such as parental education. Similarly, education

causes (and is not caused by) political interest, personal income and partisanship – variables that might, in turn, influence referendum vote.⁵¹

As we turn attention to psychological characteristics, such as partisanship or attitudes towards issues raised by the campaigns, the situation becomes more complex. In studies of voting behaviour, there is a concern that reported preferences and evaluations might represent rationalisations of decisions taken for possibly ‘other’ reasons and that the causal arrows flow from the dependent to the independent variables. It might be supposed, for example, that someone who has voted for X (or reported voting for X earlier in an interview) might bring their evaluations into line with their behaviour and report that X is the most competent, most caring party or that it has the best leader.

There have been various responses to this possibility.⁵² This paper follows the approach taken in *The New American Voter*, which applies ‘the funnel of causality heuristic’ used to analyse votes in US presidential elections (Shanks and Miller, 1990; Miller and Shanks, 1996). Applying controls for a large number of variables reduces the effects of ‘feedback’ from the vote decision (see Figure 2). The ‘funnel of causality’ recognises that there are many influences on behaviour, ranging from social characteristics (which change slowly as a result of social changes), to long-term predispositions (which change slowly in response to political developments) and short-term preferences and evaluations (which are, by definition, variable). It assumes that the more stable variables precede the less stable variables (Davis, 1985; Bartle, 1998, 2003). Having sorted the variables into the most plausible causal order, an ‘improved prediction approach’ is used to estimate the impact of those variables (Crewe and King,

⁵¹ One can, however, argue that the higher one’s income is the less risky it would be to leave work and pursue further education. Parental income may also be a factor (positive or negative) determining the level of education a child achieves.

⁵² Some scholars have tried to model the ‘feedback’ from vote using non-recursive causal models (Jackson, 1975; Markus and Converse, 1979).

1994). This assesses whether knowledge of a particular variable adds to the ability to predict the vote of a ‘typical’ individual.

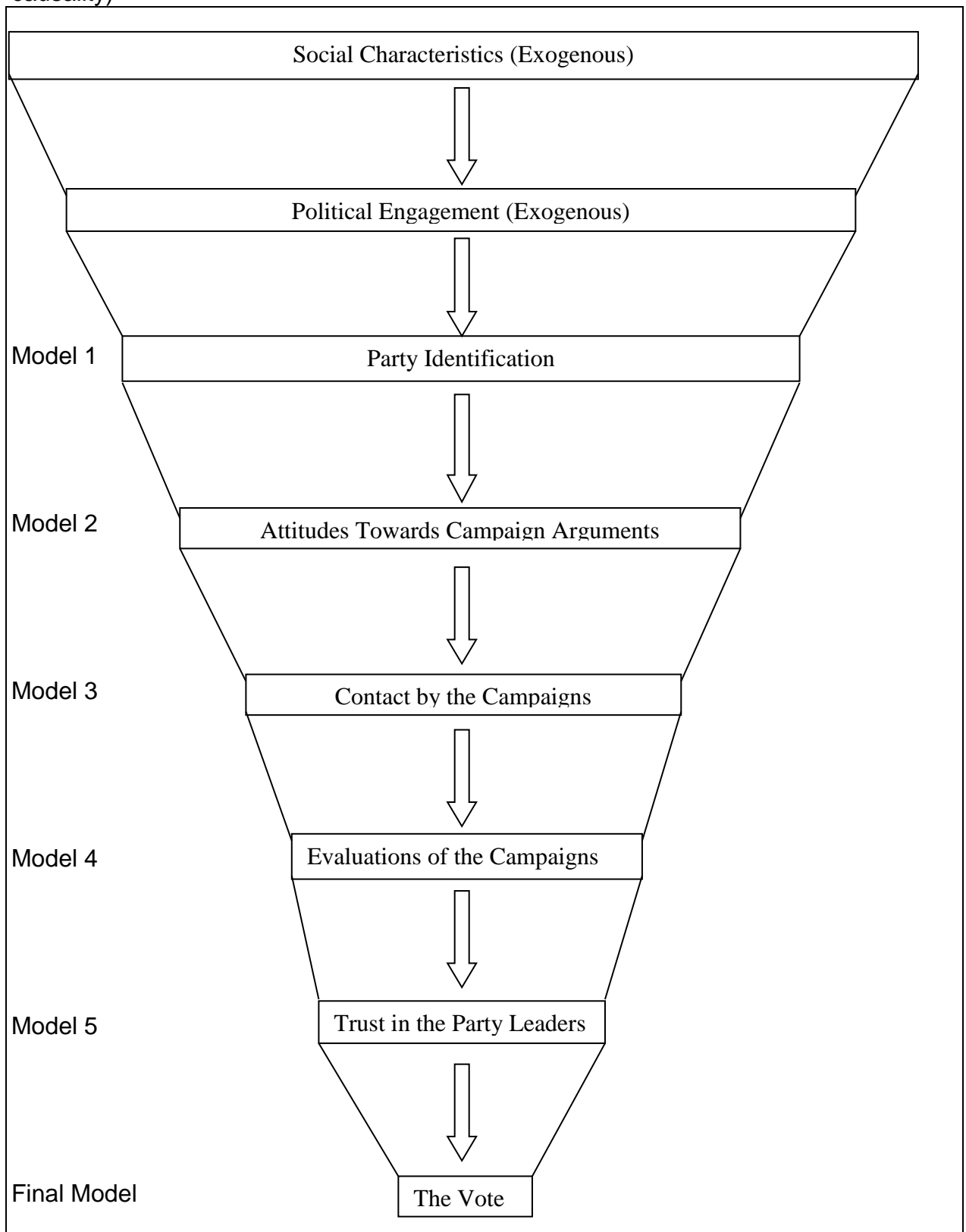
Miller and Shanks make a whole series of assumptions that can be challenged (Bartels, 2002). In particular, they assume that party identification is stable and is not altered, either by current preferences and evaluations, or by the vote itself. On the other hand, it has been argued by the revisionists that party identification at the individual level is not stable and that it is updated continuously (Fiorina, 1981). It has been also suggested that party identification at the aggregate level (‘macropartisanship’) varies as a function of the evaluations of the incumbent president (MacKuen et. al., 1989). There is less concern here. Someone’s vote decision in the AV referendum, or their opinions on electoral reform, is unlikely to alter their enduring sense of partisanship. Few people are likely to have had strong attitudes towards these issues of the sort that might be supposed to shape enduring partisanship. The model created in this paper follows Miller and Shanks’ assumed casual order (Figure 2).

Since evaluations of the Yes and No campaigns were recorded after the referendum result was known, there is the danger that recorded evaluations will represent ‘rationalisations’ of the outcome rather than the genuine evaluations that they held before the result became known. Someone, for example, who knew that the Yes campaign had lost might infer that it must have been ‘weak’, ‘not informative’, ‘negative’ and/or ‘boring’. This risk is reduced by controlling for pre-campaign party identification and pre-campaign vote intentions.⁵³ These controls reduce the effect of rationalisations and produce more plausible estimates of the effect the two campaigns had on the ‘typical’ voter.

⁵³ The application of controls for prior vote intention represents the only significant departure from the Miller and Shanks type model.

Although this model imposes assumptions about causal order, other models may make different assumptions. Accordingly, the estimates from a series of other models are also reported so that the implications of different assumptions are uncovered. It should be noted that the final model does not impose any assumptions about the causal order and represents the ‘direct’ or ‘unmediated’ influences of variables (Shanks and Miller, 1990). Analysts who are uninterested in strong causal assumptions— or who doubt whether strong causal assumptions are useful – focus on these kinds of models. Reliance on such models, however, risks ‘biased’ estimates of causal impact that fail to capture the indirect effects of variables located earlier in the causal order. The changes in the causal impact can be roughly estimated by taking into consideration the changes in coefficients as we move from one model to the next (Table 4).

Figure 2. Assumed casual order of variables in referendum vote model (funnel of causality)



4.4.3. Statistical assumptions

The statistical models developed in this paper do not attempt to model turnout – the decision of whether to vote or not – in the referendum. Instead, they focus on vote choice in the referendum. This is a dichotomous dependent variable (scored 1 if someone voted Yes in the referendum and 0 if they voted No). OLS models are inappropriate in such cases because; (1) they can lead to problems of data admissibility (predicting probabilities less than 0 or greater than 1); (2) linear relationships are implausible; and (3) the standard errors are unreliable. The models are estimated using logistic regression techniques that constrain probabilities within their natural bounds (between 0 and 1), are inherently non-linear and produce reliable standard errors (Aldrich and Nelson, 1984).

Logistic regression coefficients are slightly more difficult to interpret than OLS coefficients. The sign and significance of the coefficient has the same meaning as in OLS. However, the logistic regression model is both non-linear and non-additive and this makes it somewhat more difficult to estimate the effect of explanatory variables on the dependent variable (Liao, 1994). Where appropriate, therefore, estimates of the effect of variables on the probability of voting Yes for the ‘typical’ individual will be produced.⁵⁴

4.5. Analysis

Before estimating the models outlined above, the distribution of the independent variables in the models and their association with vote in the referendum are examined. The analysis incorporates the interpretation of the coefficients and their signs as they move down the models. Probability distribution charts demonstrate the likelihood of a

⁵⁴ This is done by fixing categorical variables at their most frequently occurring (modal) category and continuous variables at their mean.

typical individual voting Yes or No as a function of a variable of interest (e.g., campaign statements s/he agrees with or the campaigns the individual is contacted by).

4.5.1. Partisanship

The first hypotheses relate to the influence of partisanship. I assume that those people who generally think of themselves as Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat and so on, are likely to follow the cues provided by those parties. More specifically, Conservative and BNP identifiers are more likely to vote No than non-identifiers, while Liberal Democrat, Green, SNP, Plaid Cymru and UKIP voters are more likely to vote Yes compared with the same base category. Given the mixed signals produced by Labour, there are no clear expectations about how identifiers with that party should behave.

Table 1 displays recorded party identification at the time of the AV campaign. By March/May 2011, there were an almost equal number of Conservative and Labour identifiers. As previously noted, the Liberal Democrats lost a great deal of support during the twelve months between the general election and referendum. Thus, by May 2011, only 20.6 per cent of electorate identified with parties that advocated a Yes vote (Liberal Democrats, Greens, SNP, Plaid Cymru and UKIP), compared with 32 per cent that identified with parties that advocated a No vote (Conservatives and BNP).

Moreover, this statistic may understate the extent of the Yes campaign's disadvantage. 5.7 per cent of respondents 'thought of themselves as' UKIP and this party's recommendation of a Yes vote is at odds with the assumed conservative political mind-set of its supporters. Labour identifiers by this stage were 31 per cent of the electorate, but were not given clear signals by their party.⁵⁵ A further 16 per cent expressed no partisan identity and must be presumed uninfluenced by party cues.

⁵⁵ This discussion assumes that responses to the relevant BES question do indeed measure long-term loyalties. There are reasons to doubt this proposition. See Bartle and Bellucci (2009).

Table 1 also displays the relationship between party identification and vote in the AV referendum. The differences in the row percentages suggest that the parties differed in their ability to get their supporters to toe the party line. Fully 89 per cent of Conservative identifiers followed their party and voted No. Similarly, 80 per cent of Liberal Democrat and 83 per cent of Green identifiers lined up with their party and voted Yes.⁵⁶ Among the Nationalist party identifiers the position was very different. A small majority of SNP identifiers supported AV, while the position was reversed among those who considered themselves to be Plaid Cymru, with a small majority voting No. Fully, 66 per cent of BNP supporters voted No, in line with their party's official position. Among UKIP identifiers, roughly two-thirds voted No in contrast with 'their' party's position. This may reflect the assumed conservative attitudes of UKIP voters despite Farage's advocacy of AV. As mentioned above, this may also be due to the success of the No campaign's tactic to model the campaign fliers on the yellow and purple coloured brand of UKIP.

Labour identifiers divided roughly half and half between Yes and No. The Yes vote among Labour respondents, however, was higher than non-identifiers suggesting that they may have been more likely to vote Yes. Whether any effect is statistically significant is something assessed in the multivariate analyses.

The evidence in Table 1 can be used to gauge the aggregate impact of partisanship by simulating the outcome of the referendum if every party had been just as successful as the Conservatives in getting 'their' people to support the party's policy. If the partisans of all the parties had lined up with their party to the same extent as the Conservatives and the non-identifiers' behaviour remained unaltered, simulation 1 suggests that the outcome of the referendum would have changed: with 56.9 per cent

⁵⁶ The lower portion of Liberal Democrats following their party may reflect the lack of enthusiasm for AV of the sort expressed by Clegg.

voting Yes and 43.1 per cent No. Moreover, simulation 2 suggests that the outcome of the referendum would have also changed if only Labour identifiers had voted equally strongly in favour of AV as the Conservative identifiers voted against. Even in this second scenario, Yes narrowly wins by 51.5 per cent.

These simulations must be treated with a degree of caution. The BES sample contains a higher proportion of Yes voters compared with the actual referendum results and it assumes a very strong partisan ‘Labour effect’.⁵⁷ Nevertheless this provides an indication of the impact of partisanship in the AV referendum.

4.5.2. Respondents’ attitudes towards campaign arguments

Before examining the relationship between the discourse variables and the vote, it is useful to examine the marginal distribution of responses to the issues. Table 2 displays the responses to the ten issues examined in the models. The statement that attracted the most agreement (a net score of +34 points) was the proposition that first-past-the post made it easier for voters to know who to credit for policy success, or to blame for failures. This was followed by the proposition that coalitions are a good thing, which was strongly rejected (a net score of -17 points). Yet, the proposition that AV would make MPs work harder also gained net support (+14 points). There was also net agreement for the proposition that AV would give small parties too much power (+9). All the other statements divided opinion with no clear leads for either ‘side’. The electorate were divided on whether AV was an important part of the political tradition, whether AV was ‘fairer’ and whether it would better represent public opinion.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Interview with the anonymous officer from the Yes side concluded with the following words: ‘You need a big political party on your side to win a referendum. You need other players as well and that comes with the political party. The circumstances, it was unwinnable.’ (Interviewee A, 2013).

⁵⁸ Future research could possibly examine whether opinions on each of these statements were affected by prior partisanship. If opinions are regressed on prior variables (including partisanship) it is possible to calculate the difference between the predicted score on that variable and the actual score for each individual and, by aggregating the differences, for the sample as a whole (Miller and Shanks, 1996; Bartels, 2002).

Overall, the pattern of responses provides evidence to the fundamental ambivalence of the electorate on the substantive issues (Zaller, 1992; Zaller and Feldman, 1992). Neither side fully won the argument. The electorate as a whole were ambivalent about the issue.

Table 3 displays the relationship between responses to the opinion questions and vote in the referendum. The size of the association can be simply gauged by comparing the size of the Yes vote in the strongly agree and strongly disagree categories. All the differences are correctly signed. Nevertheless, the size of the differences (in absolute terms, ignoring the signs) varies, suggesting that the variables differ in their association with the vote. The largest differences relate to agreement or disagreement with the proposition that FPTP is an important tradition, whether AV better reflects public opinion and whether AV is fairer. All of these questions are associated with differences of around 90 points in the Yes vote.⁵⁹ By contrast, variations in response to the proposition that AV would lead to permanent Liberal Democrat participation in government is associated with a 48 point difference in the Yes vote. It remains to be seen whether these differences are statistically significant once controls are added to prior variables.

⁵⁹ As Table 3 shows, the tradition argument scores 90 in the negative direction while the other two statements score positively confirming a consistent aggregate association between the corresponding campaigns each statement favours and the vote. In this respect, the signs are also consistent for all of the remaining 7 statements.

Table 1. Party identification and AV referendum vote, real and simulated

	Actual vote					Simulated			
	N			Per cent		N			
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Simulation 1		Simulation 2	
						Yes	No	Yes	No
Labour	2232	2399	4631	48.2	51.8	4135	496	4135	496
Conservative	502	4181	4683	10.7	89.3	502	4181	502	4181
Lib Dem	1110	273	1383	80.3	19.7	1235	148	1110	273
SNP	267	213	480	55.6	44.4	429	51	267	213
Plaid Cymru	32	34	66	48.5	51.5	59	7	32	34
Green	268	54	322	83.2	16.8	288	34	268	54
UKIP	250	610	860	29.1	70.9	768	92	250	610
BNP	53	103	156	34.0	66.0	17	139	53	103
Other	98	94	192	51.0	49.0	98	94	98	94
None	867	971	1838	47.2	52.8	867	971	867	971
Don't know	210	316	526	39.9	60.1	210	316	210	316
Total N	5889	9248	15137			8608	6529	7792	7345
Total per cent	38.9	61.1	100			56.9	43.1	51.5	48.5

Simulation 1: Supporters of every party votes as strongly in the cued direction as the Conservative supporters voted against AV.

Simulation 2: Only Labour supporters vote in favour of AV as strongly as the Conservative supporters voted against it.

Table 2. Responses to various statements concerning the issue, 2011

	SA	A	N	D	SD	DK	Net
First past the post good for responsibility*	14	38	19	14	4	10	34
AV makes MPs work harder	9	33	22	17	11	8	14
AV gives power to small parties*	14	26	20	23	8	9	9
FPTP is an important part of political tradition*	21	20	17	19	17	5	5
If AV adopted Lib Democrats in power all time*	3	27	27	21	4	18	5
AV means no majority*	9	24	22	24	8	13	1
AV is fairer	8	28	17	21	19	8	-4
AV better reflects public opinion	10	27	15	22	18	7	-3
AV is too hard to understand*	6	28	20	27	13	5	-6
Coalitions are a good thing	3	20	34	26	14	4	-17

Key: SA= Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N= Neither Agree nor Disagree, D=Disagree, SD= Strongly disagree

* Statements that are in favour of retaining the status quo.

Percentages are rounded to their nearest whole numbers and may not add up to exactly 100 in every row. The 'Net' column displays the differences between the percentage that the agreed (SA+A) and the percentage that disagreed (D+SD) with each statement. This table displays the aggregate picture of where the respondents from the sample stand in relation to the argument items.

Table 3. Relationship between opinions and Yes vote in the 2011 AV referendum

	SA	A	N	D	SD	Differ
First past the post good for responsibility*	6	28	55	75	71	-67
AV makes MPs work harder	83	63	28	12	5	+78
AV gives power to small parties*	4	13	41	76	80	-76
FPTP is an important part of political tradition*	2	9	28	74	92	-90
If AV adopted Lib Democrats in power all time*	10	23	41	61	58	-48
AV means no majority*	7	16	40	66	71	-64
AV is fairer	92	76	33	9	3	+89
AV better reflects public opinion	92	76	31	8	3	+89
AV is too hard to understand*	9	19	30	53	77	-68
Coalitions are a good thing	70	56	43	23	26	+44

Key: SA= Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N= Neither Agree nor Disagree, D=Disagree, SD= Strongly disagree

* Statements that are indirectly in favour of retaining the status quo.

For each opinion item cell entries represent the percentage that voted Yes in the referendum. The 'Net' column displays the differences between the percentage of Yes voters among that strongly agreed with a particular statement and the percentage of Yes voters among that strongly disagreed with that same statement.

4.5.3. Contact by the campaigns

The frequency distributions for contact by the campaigns suggest that the No campaign contacted more people than the Yes campaign (70 versus 56 per cent). This may have given them an aggregate advantage. Nevertheless, those who were contacted by the No campaign were only slightly more likely to vote No than those who were contacted by the Yes campaign (57 to 55 per cent). The very large sample size and influence of prior variables may mean that this difference is statistically significant and larger once appropriate controls are added. An important difference between the campaign strategies of the two camps was that the No campaign worked actively to deliver its message to as many potential voters as possible while the Yes campaign had a micro-targeting strategy which focused on key geographical areas with residents projected prone to voting Yes. This micro-targeting strategy involved opening regional offices and spending £100,000 pounds on the conduct of a customized ICM survey to identify these target areas where get out the vote campaigns could potentially be conducted efficiently (Elliott, 2013; Interviewee A, 2013; Interviewee B, 2013).

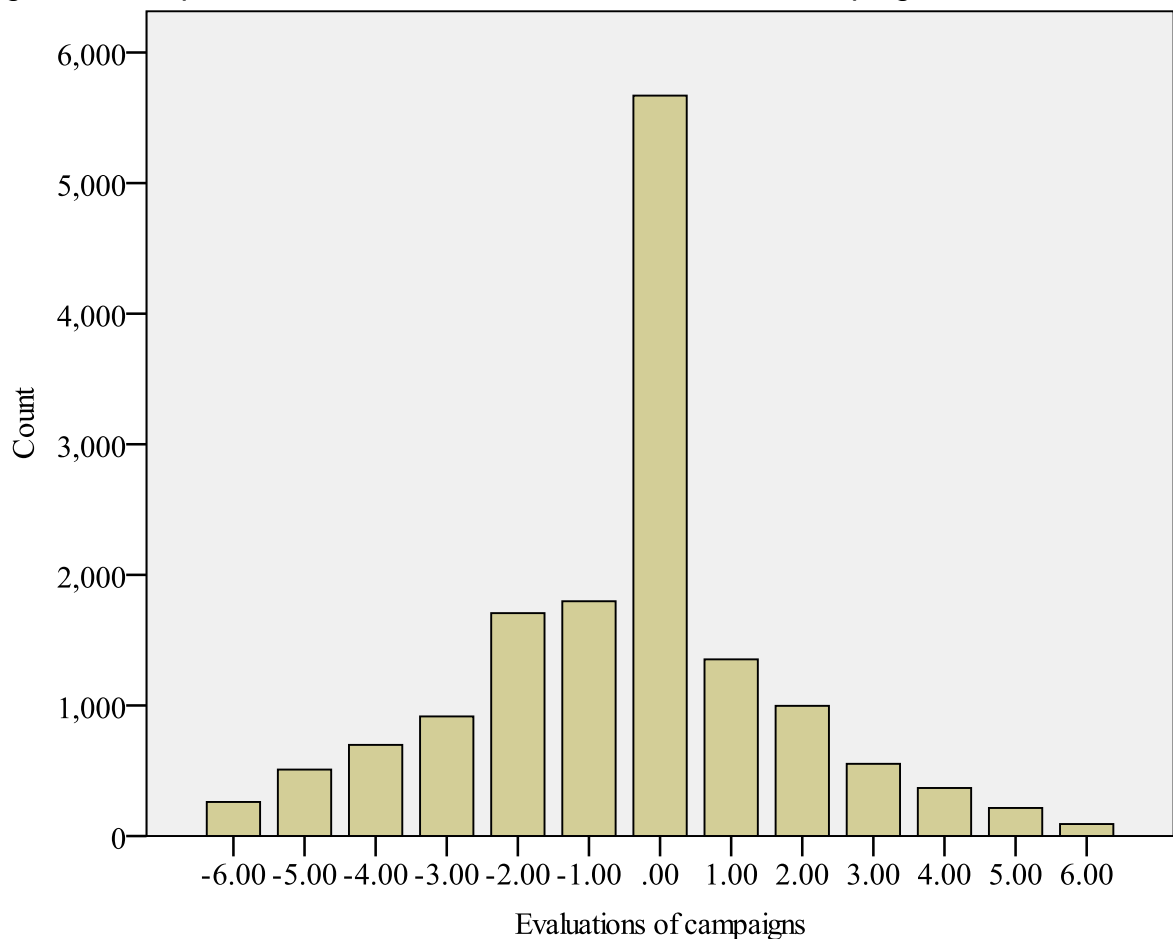
4.5.4. Evaluations of the campaigns

Respondents' evaluations can be simply tallied to summarise evaluations of the two campaigns overall. Figure 3, which displays this index, shows that most respondents viewed the campaigns equally positively and are clustered around the neutral 0 point on the scale.¹ Nevertheless, the distribution is slightly skewed towards the negative (left) scores, showing that respondents on average evaluated the No campaign more highly than the Yes campaign.

¹ This is due in no small part to the large number of respondents who provided no evaluations of the campaigns. The BES practice of allowing respondents to respond 'don't know' to such questions reduces the reliability and validity of survey instruments. See Krosnick et. al. (2002).

Individual scores on the index range between -6 and +6. Among those who evaluated the No campaign comparatively the highest (i.e., scored -6) only 1 per cent voted Yes. Among those who evaluated the Yes campaign the highest, 88 per cent voted Yes. This provides an indication that evaluations of the campaign had an effect on individual vote. These two polar groups, however, are quite small (N=261 and N=91, respectively). It remains to be seen, whether these effects persist once controls are added for prior variables – this is addressed in the multivariate models.

Figure 3. Comparative evaluations of the Yes and No AV campaigns, 2011



4.5.5. Trust in the party leaders

It has been suggested that voters will follow the advice of leaders they trust (Miller et. al., 1986; Pillai et. al. 2003) Political trust is highly variable over time and responsive to political 'shocks'. It can be built up over many years and disappear very quickly. Trust

has been characterized as a key mediating variable between leadership perceptions and voting behaviour (Pillai et. al). For these reasons, it is assumed that the variable is located very 'near' to the vote decision.

The fickleness of public trust in their politicians is illustrated by comparing the findings of the 2010 post-election BES survey with the AV survey one year later. When BES respondents were asked to evaluate the trustworthiness of the three party leaders on a ten-point scale in the post-election survey, Cameron scored 4.9, Clegg 4.6 and Brown 4.3. One year later, Cameron's rating rose to 5.4, perhaps reflecting his increased prominence as prime minister. Yet, although Clegg was more prominent as deputy prime minister, his personal trust rating fell to 4.4. This may reflect disappointment with some former supporters about his decision to form a coalition with the Conservatives and/or reflect coalition actions that were 'a betrayal' of Liberal Democrat promises, such as the decision to increase tuition fees.

Miliband, the new Labour leader, scored 4.5 on trust in May 2011. This was higher than Brown's score but still low compared with the prime minister. It is fair to suggest that, as a new character, Miliband's recommendation may have carried less weight than either the prime minister or deputy prime minister, even after controlling for prior partisanship. In Table 4, looking at the coefficients for trust in Cameron, we can deduce that his high rating also transformed into a higher effect on the vote in comparison to the other two leaders.

4.5.6. The Vote models

This section estimates the impact of the explanatory variables. It is possible that the effect of variables differs from individual to individual or group to group (Bartle, 2005). There are grounds for thinking that the effects of discourse will be particularly strong among the voters with medium levels of awareness, since they are more likely to

receive elite messages than the less aware, but do not have such strong predispositions when these messages are screened out. These issues are not explored here since they are not central to the question of the impact of campaign discourse on the 'typical voter' in the 2011 referendum.

4.5.6.1. Control variables

Before considering the association between the discourse-related variables and vote in the 2011 referendum, the relation between vote and control variables should briefly be mentioned. Controlling for prior variables but none of the discourse-related variables, the analyses suggest that:

- Men were more likely to support AV than women ($p < 0.05$).²
- Those with higher levels of education were more likely to support AV than those with lower levels of education ($p < 0.05$).
- Londoners were more likely to support AV than people in the south east ($p < 0.05$). People living in the south west and Yorkshire and Humberside were also more likely to support AV than the rest of the country.³
- More knowledgeable voters, those who expressed interest in the AV campaign and those who thought they had some influence on politics were all more likely to support AV than less knowledgeable ($p < 0.05$).
- Those who expressed trust in parties and politicians and paid attention to politics were less likely to support AV ($p < 0.05$).

It should be noted that those who expressed a preparedness to take risks were no more or less likely to support AV than those who were less risk-prone.⁴ Nor were

² All tests are two-tailed.

³ Sex and region are exogenous variables that may cause behaviour. These two variables are included in the model so that we can test whether or not they have any influence. Including these variables does not do any harm to the model as there is no missing data.

there any significant differences between those who did and those who did not pay attention to the referendum campaign.

4.5.6.2. Discourse-related variables

Adding the discourse-related variables to the model suggests that campaign discourse did have an effect on individual vote decisions. The first column of coefficients in Table 4 reports the ‘apparent effect’ of party identifications on vote choice in the referendum. The base or reference category in each case is non-identifiers. The results suggest that partisanship exerted a considerable influence on vote in the referendum. Those who thought of themselves as Conservative were, as expected, less likely to vote Yes than non-partisans (as shown by the negative coefficient, $b=-2.04$); while Liberal Democrats ($b=1.46$), Greens ($b=1.59$) and Scottish Nationalists ($b=0.48$) were more likely to vote Yes than non-identifiers (as indicated by the positive coefficients).

According to the estimates in Table 4, Labour partisans were more likely to vote Yes than non-partisans ($b=0.18$), controlling for prior variables. The effect of Labour partisanship is significant, but it is smaller than those for the other parties. This reflects the party’s mixed signals and its internal division concerning electoral reform. It may also reflect a determination by some to punish the Liberal Democrats for their part in the coalition. UKIP partisans were significantly less likely to vote Yes than non-partisans ($b=-0.76$), even though Nigel Farage had advocated a Yes vote. Again, this may reflect ignorance about that party’s position among its partisans, Farage’s surprising support for AV, or the generally right-wing conservative attitudes of their identifiers that predispose them to prefer the status-quo.

For supporters of the Labour party, Conservatives and the Green party, the effects of partisanship are considerable and persist even when further controls are

⁴ The motivation for testing this is the expectation that risk-prone people would be more likely to vote No as risk often accompanies prospect for change.

added for all other variables (in columns 2 through to 6). In Model 6, the direct effect of the Liberal Democrats loses significance as pre-campaign vote intention is added into the equation. However, taken as a whole, these findings suggest that – as expected given the remoteness of the issue to most people – party discourse influenced individual votes in the referendum. In short, when the public were given a chance to make a direct policy decision on electoral reform, they tended to follow the lead of those parties that they identified with.

Evaluative responses to specific campaign arguments are the next variables added to the improved prediction model. Nine of these variables are significant, controlling for prior partisanship. Eight of the nine variables, moreover, remain significant once controls are added for all remaining blocks of variables. Although partisanship influenced votes in the referendum, attitudes towards the statements uttered during the campaign period mattered, too. As a result, the votes in the referendum have reflected personal beliefs on the topic, though some of these beliefs were undoubtedly based on misunderstandings about both systems. Voters with lower awareness levels may have drawn erroneous cognitive links between the vote and the cues implicated by each statement. However, the coefficient signs imply that respondents, as a whole, voted in harmony with the vote hint entrenched in each statement.⁵

This pattern of results also implies that vote decisions reflected personal opinions in relation to various statements made throughout the campaign. Agreement with the proposition that FPTP is an important part of the British political tradition was associated with a reduced probability of a Yes vote ($b=-2.87$). Those with conservative beliefs

⁵ Significance levels stay intact for 8 campaign statements through all models. The statement 'AV makes MPs work harder' loses significance only in the last model due to pre-campaign vote intention control. The statement 'AV favours Liberal Democrats' is insignificant in all 5 models. Signs stay intact for all statements across the models 2-6.

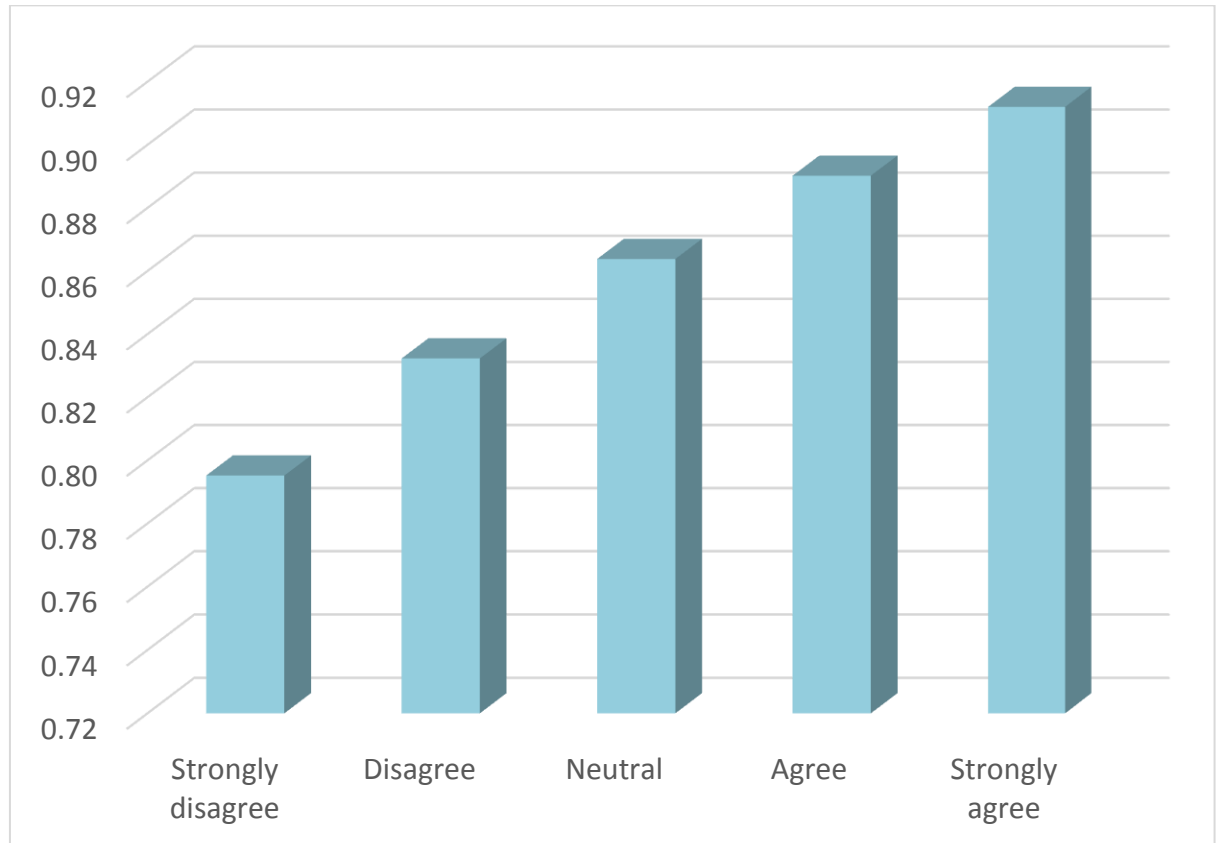
appeared to respond to such discourse even controlling for prior partisanship. On the other side, agreement with the proposition that AV was fair was associated with an increased probability of a Yes vote ($b=2.03$). And agreement with the more complex assertion that AV better reflected public opinion was also associated with a higher probability of a Yes vote ($b=1.87$). Other issues, such as whether AV would make MPs work harder, appeared to have less effect on the typical voter.⁶ Nevertheless, the statistical significance of most of the argument-driven variables suggests that decisions were characterised by a fair degree of engagement with the issues and rationality.

Logistic regression coefficients are fairly easy to interpret in terms of their sign and statistical significance (Liao, 1994). It is more difficult to interpret the substantive effect of variables since the probability of voting yes depends on where on the logit function a voter is and the value of other variables. The inherently non-linear and non-additive nature of the models means that it is difficult to convey the impact of any given variable. For this reason, it is conventional to calculate the impact of a variable for a 'typical individual' who has 'average' characteristics (modal social characteristics and average opinions and evaluations). Figure 3, for example, displays the impact of agreement with the statement that AV is fairer for a fairly typical respondent (a Labour identifier with average opinions and evaluations). This suggests that someone who strongly agreed with the proposition that AV is fairer had a probability of voting yes of over 0.90. By contrast, someone who strongly disagreed with the proposition had a probability of voting yes of about 0.78. Similarly, Figure 4 displays the impact of agreement with the statement that FPTP is traditional. If the representative individual strongly agreed with the proposition they had a probability of voting yes of about 0.28.

⁶ These findings raise interesting questions such as how 'fairness' was defined in the minds of the respondents. Was it fairness at the constituency level or national level? This difference is left out of the analysis as there was no BES item on this.

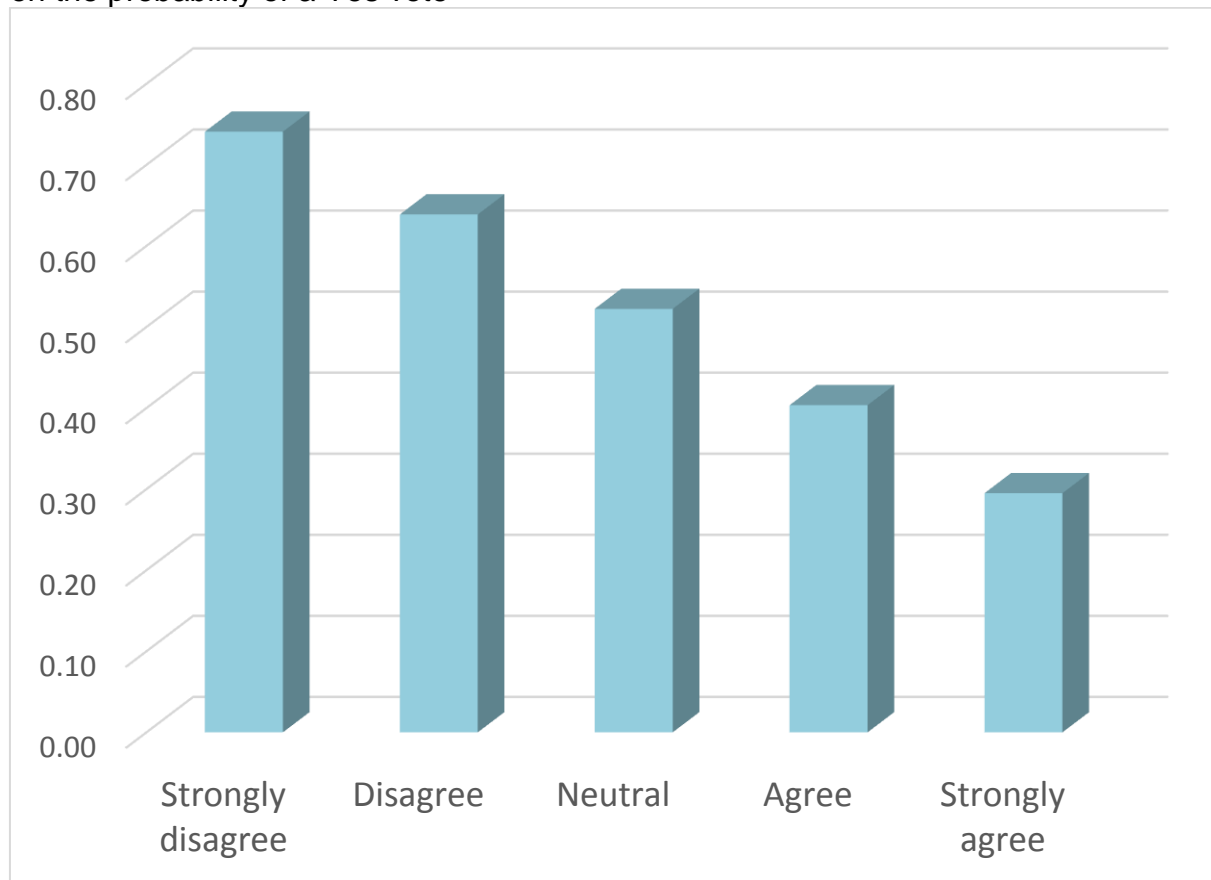
By contrast, someone who strongly disagreed with the proposition had a probability of voting yes of about 0.70.

Figure 4. Impact of agreement with the proposition that AV is fairer on probability of a Yes vote



It is worth stressing that these figures provide an indication of the impact of opinions on vote in the AV referendum. It is possible to produce other figures for different types of voter. Some would suggest a stronger impact. Others would suggest a weaker impact. Figures 4 and 5 are illustrative of the fairly typical respondent.

Figure 5. Impact of agreement with the proposition that first past the vote is traditional on the probability of a Yes vote



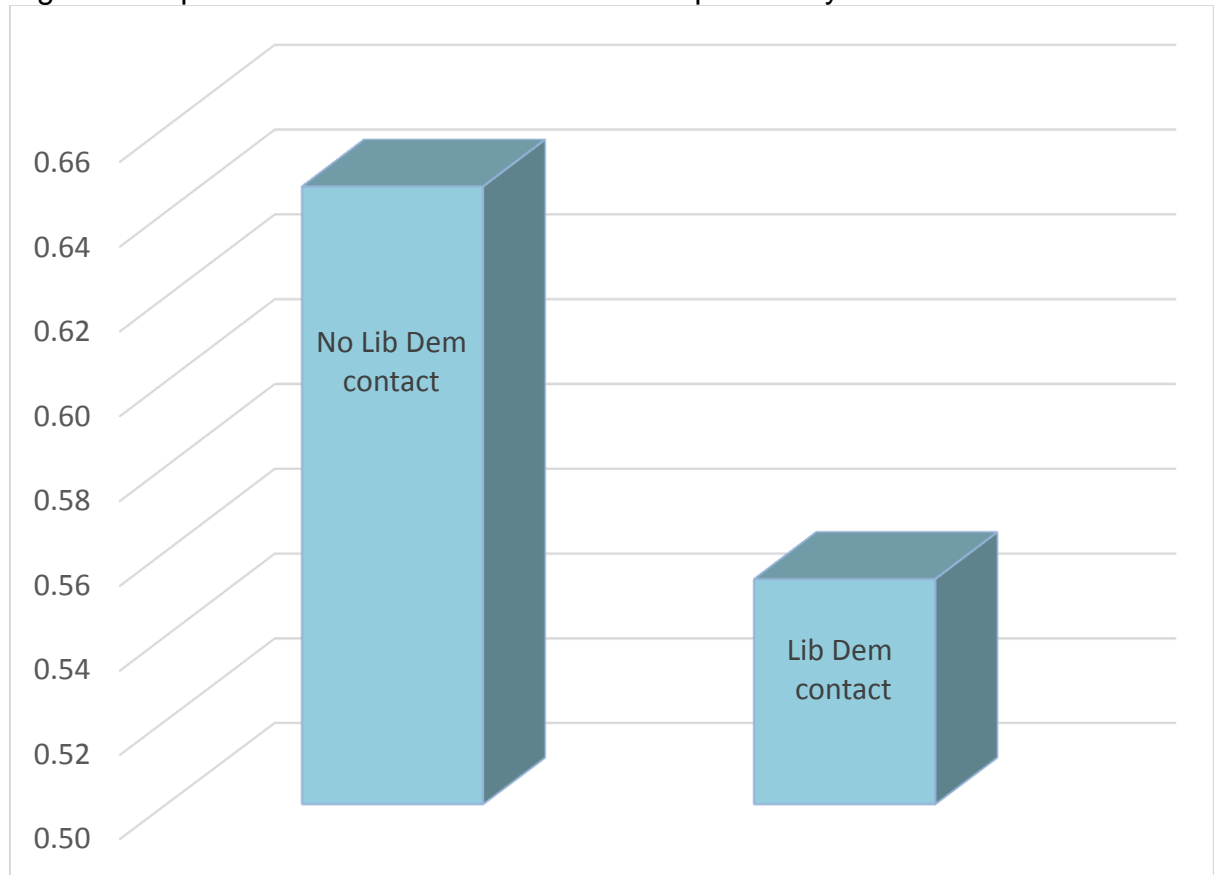
The next set of variables relates to contact by the Yes and No campaigns and the political parties. Column 3 shows that contact by both the Yes and No campaign had an effect on the typical voter compared with the base category, those who were not contacted by either 'side'. Those who were contacted by the Yes campaign were more likely to vote Yes than those who were not contacted by the Yes campaign ($b=0.33$). Similarly, those who were contacted by the No campaign were more likely to vote no than those who were not contacted by the No campaign ($b=-0.28$). It may, of course, be possible that the ones who already had a leaning towards voting No were contacted by the No campaign and the ones who already had a leaning towards Yes were contacted by the Yes campaign.⁷

⁷ This can be the topic of another research project. The aim of this research is to determine effects on the vote. As mentioned in 4.5.3., a main element of the Yes campaign involved identifying regions more

Party contacts, on the other hand, had little apparent effect on the typical individual in the referendum. Indeed, only one of the party contact variables is statistically significant and it is incorrectly signed. Contact by the Liberal Democrats, controlling for prior variables, reduced the probability of a Yes vote. It appears that this party's campaign efforts may have boomeranged. This may be the result of their unpopularity, though the effect persists when controls are added for trust in Clegg. As a campaign official from the Yes side has expressed in relation to campaign funding, 'there was Liberal Democrat activity, but frankly at that time they were so unpopular that Liberal Democrats funding the campaign wasn't a good idea.' (Interviewee B, 2013).

Figure 6 again displays the impact of Liberal Democrat canvassing for the typical respondent (again a Labour identifier with typical characteristics). This suggests that this individual had a probability of about 0.65 of voting yes if not contacted by the Liberal Democrats. The same individual had a probability of voting yes of about 0.55 if contacted by the party. It should be stressed, however, that few people were canvassed by the Liberal Democrats and this probably had little impact on the outcome of the referendum.

Figure 6. Impact of Liberal Democrat contact on probability of a Yes vote



The next variable in the equation is comparative evaluations of the Yes and No campaigns. This kind of variable carries with it a risk of retrospective rationalisation of the cast vote. Accordingly, the individual's pre-campaign vote intention, measured in the first wave of the survey, is also controlled for. Pre-campaign vote intention as expected, has a strong association with final vote ($b=1.18$), even after controlling for this variable – so do evaluations of the qualities of the campaign ($b=0.37$). This coefficient does not decrease once controls are added for trust in the party leaders. This again provides reassurance that the effects are plausible.

The final variables added into the equation measure trust in the party leaders, as measured in wave 2. These appear to be associated with vote in the referendum, even after controlling for pre-campaign vote. Those who trusted Cameron were less likely to vote Yes ($b=-1.15$), while those who trusted Clegg ($b=0.60$) and Miliband ($b=0.50$) were

more likely to vote Yes. The figures indicate that trust in the prime minister and the deputy prime minister has a larger impact than trust in the leader of the opposition. The Labour leader was both young and inexperienced and may not have had time to build enough personal following or credibility to influence the typical voter in 2011. Accordingly, his recommendation appears to have counted for less.

These analyses indicate that campaign discourse had an influence on individual vote decisions in the AV referendum. The conclusions hold even if we only focus on the direct effect of variables in the final column of Table 4. This provides support for the adoption of a multivariate and multi-stage causal model and support for the contention that all five types of campaign discourse had an influence on vote decisions. Indeed, the only real threat to the models arises from the survey data and the possibility of omitted variable bias — this is not something that secondary users of the data can do anything about.

4.6 Conclusion

The results suggest that even when the issue of electoral reform was finally put to the people they were powerfully influenced by their party loyalties. When people were given the chance to practice direct democracy, they seem to have deferred to their representatives. This seems to contain a lesson for electoral reformers. Not only must they secure the support of the government to achieve another referendum, they must also obtain their support for a Yes vote. In present circumstances, this means that they must continue to target Labour and hope that this party, once converted, can try to lead its partisans to support reform.

Despite the effect of partisanship, the outcome of the referendum was also influenced by voters' agreement with issue-related propositions points towards the campaign arguments that were a powerful influence on vote decisions. Again this

contains a lesson for electoral reformers: they must be able to make a case for reform to the wider public, many of whom have little interest in the issue. These findings also suggest that simple arguments work. If they are to counter conservative arguments about tradition they must find a way of connecting the issue electoral reform to things that people value, in particular the economy and public services. As Guy Lodge put it:

‘No one really knew what the Alternative Vote was the answer to and what’s the problem it was addressing. That was a fundamental problem’ (Lodge, 2013).

The Yes campaign was not able to demonstrate to the voters that the AV was the next step for democratic advancement, rather than a simple technical change. If the alternative on offer is a genuinely proportional system this may make the case more powerful, though this may also be offset by the public’s experience of coalition between 2010 and 2015. In addition, electoral reformers must find some way of contacting more voters and produce a more engaging campaign. Of course, if Labour unites around reform, this will provide electoral reform with greater organisation. It may well be that reformers will feel more enthused if the alternative is a genuinely proportional system.

Table 4. Vote models						
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Party identification (Model 1)						
Labour	0.18	0.52	0.52	0.52	0.27	0.28
Conservative	-2.04	-1.10	-1.10	-1.05	-0.80	-0.82
Liberal Democrats	1.46	0.45	0.47	0.37	0.31	0.25
SNP	0.48	0.02	0.01	0.00	0.07	-0.24
Plaid Cymru	0.12	-0.38	-0.45	-0.42	-0.54	-0.83
Green	1.59	1.07	1.07	1.02	0.89	0.95
UKIP	-0.76	-0.20	-0.22	-0.24	-0.20	-0.27
BNP	-0.12	-0.43	-0.46	-0.48	-0.46	-0.25
Opinions on campaign arguments (2)						
AV produces no majority		-0.63	-0.66	-0.58	-0.58	-0.42
FPTP is traditional		-2.87	-2.88	-2.82	-2.75	-1.92
AV gives small parties power		-1.28	-1.27	-1.17	-1.15	-0.65
AV is fairer		2.03	2.04	1.94	1.94	0.98
AV better reflects opinion		1.87	1.89	1.78	1.78	0.67
AV makes MPs work harder		0.87	0.87	0.86	0.82	0.36
AV favours Liberal Democrats		-0.08	-0.08	-0.15	-0.16	-0.06
FPTP makes party responsible		-1.16	-1.14	-1.08	-1.02	-0.70
AV is too hard		-0.62	-0.62	-0.50	-0.49	-0.45
Coalition is a good thing		0.81	0.83	0.87	1.13	0.84
Contact (Model 3)						
No campaign			-0.28	-0.23	-0.22	-0.22
Yes campaign			0.33	0.21	0.21	0.27
Conservative			0.01	0.05	0.09	0.16
Labour			0.11	0.07	0.03	-0.01
Liberal Democrats			-0.30	-0.32	-0.34	-0.39
UKIP			0.22	0.13	0.11	0.09
BNP			0.12	0.10	0.16	0.27
SNP			0.28	0.42	0.45	0.53
Plaid Cymru			-0.20	-0.12	-0.06	-0.08
Evaluations of campaigns (Model 4)						
Comparison of Yes and No campaigns				0.37	0.36	0.37
Trust in Leaders (Model 5)						
Trust in Cameron					-1.19	-1.15

5. CONCLUSION

Electoral systems are a fundamental component of representative democracies. They influence the character of representation and shape the behaviour of parliamentarians (Norris, 2006; Farrell and Scully, 2007). They may also function as gatekeepers that prevent or moderate the development of new or extreme parties (Golder, 2003). In industrial democracies, the electoral system is a determinant of the level of proportionality, which in turn influences turnout figures (Jackman, 1987). There is a positive relationship between higher turnout and higher government effectiveness in the UK (Whiteley, 2009). Higher levels of citizen satisfaction with democracy are associated with higher turnout figures (Clarke et al., 2004; Birch, 2010). This body of academic literature taken as a whole implies that nations would achieve higher levels of democracy – if not necessarily better quality of government – if their electoral systems produce proportional results.

Although the aim of this thesis is not to come up with normative conclusions on democracy, the nature of the topic necessitates consideration on the practical implications of the results. Just like Britain's dynamic and organic constitution, the electoral system will need continued re-examination and modification to match the democratic demands of the future (Norton, 1982). The process by which this re-examination is carried out is crucial. Even when a reformed electoral system would represent a step towards reaching the democratic ideal, the legitimacy of the reform may be undermined if the process restricts choice and is based on misunderstandings. The 2011 AV referendum has, to some extent, ensured the inclusion of the public in deciding the controversial and fundamental issue of electoral reform. The people were able to express their preference over two systems. Yet, this was the limit of their direct influence over the issue.

The papers in this thesis illustrated the agenda-setting influence of Britain's main political parties. Path-dependencies with roots in mainly in the Labour party structured the terms of debate and the terms of the coalition negotiations following the inconclusive 2010 general election. The coalition leaders saw the referendum, among many things, as an opportunity or a recipe for tackling the issue of public disengagement with politics. Formally, the decision was made by the public. This thesis provides evidence that, within the context of the UK's 2011 AV referendum, the voters followed the lead provided by the leaders they trusted and the political parties they supported. The voters chose from the menu but had little influence over what was on the menu. Moreover, the menu only included two dishes and the choice was a binary one. When the issue of electoral reform was put to the public, it was framed around the Alternative Vote system as a result of choices made by Labour – the opposition party that was widely regarded as having lost the moral right to govern. It was the outgoing government that influenced the outcome of the coalition talks of 2010. As the simulations have shown, Labour party's low-profile stance on the topic during the referendum campaign was also instrumental in the rejection of the proposal by the public.

Paper 1 has looked in detail at both the long-term and short-term past of Britain's electoral reform debate and has outlined the factors which caused Britain's political elites to keep a certain level of interest in AV. When the latent demand for electoral reform was matched by the contingency of the highly disproportionate results of the 2010 general election and the problem of the hung parliament, the way towards a referendum on the issue was paved.

Paper 2 has provided an analysis on the place of referendums in the British constitution especially in relation to matters involving constitutional reform. The reasons why the issue of electoral reform had consistently been coupled with the referendum

pathway was examined in detail. This bundling of the issue of electoral reform with a referendum was far from inevitable. Yet it is difficult to see how a government could now alter the system for election to Westminster without a referendum. If this analysis is correct then new convention seems to have been added to the UK's changing constitution.¹

In addition to the account presented in the first two papers, the polling evidence from paper 3 and the evidence from the interviews conducted with campaign officers revealed the highly partisan nature of the AV referendum campaign. In short, it was party politicians – rather than democratic reformers – that dominated public discourse on the issue. Scaremongering tactics were utilized by both camps and this reduced the quality of the debate in relation to the concepts of representation and democracy. The low quality of the AV referendum debate raises the question of whether referendum is the appropriate method to decide on systemic but technical changes. It might be argued that shifting the decision from a small group to a large group produces a better 'decision' as a result of the 'wisdom of crowds'. There are circumstances, however, where the benefits of aggregation are reduced (Surrowiecki, 2004; Landmore and Elster, 2008). The public debate in relation to the AV referendum was characterized by lack of passion. Reformers were tempted to support the change in the belief that it would pave the way for further reform and the eventual adoption of a genuinely proportional system. In the event, they had to support a system that would not really change politics that much and one that risked hampering further reforms.

Paper 3 has looked at the opinions of the British public on the issue of electoral reform in general and the 2011 AV Referendum in particular mainly based on the British Election Study (BES) data. The quantitative analysis has pointed to the importance of

¹ However, it would be wise to bear in mind that the British constitution is what happens (Griffith, 1979).

discourse and partisanship in explaining the outcome of the referendum. There is little reason to believe that the importance of discourse in politics will change much the future. The importance of discourse is something that campaigners for reform will have to take into account in the future. It is not enough simply to obtain a referendum. They must formulate arguments that persuade voters and the parties that they identify with.

The 2014 Scottish Independence referendum offered, without much doubt, a deeper constitutional reform proposal that would have resulted in a fundamental shift in Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom. The AV Referendum did not receive the same level of attention as the Scottish Independence Referendum where the issue was presented as more salient manner as it involved national identity. The argument that the shift to AV would have solved the more fundamental problems facing the British public (e.g. unemployment or immigration from EU member-states with lower GDP's) was not very strong. The Yes campaign was not able to make a convincing case as to how exactly a new electoral system would have dealt with these fundamental problems. While there was reason to believe that the absolute majority required under AV would have made MP's responsive to a broader audience within their constituencies, this would not necessarily guarantee a more responsive Westminster at the aggregate national level. Both campaigns in the Scottish Independence Referendum, on the other hand, were able to make strong links between the result of the referendum and the future of the region's economy. The higher level of attention the Scottish Independence received in comparison to the AV referendum was also reflected in the turnout figures. The Scottish Independence Referendum had a turnout figure of 84.6 per cent, more than double that of the AV Referendum, which only had 41 per cent.

The recent electoral successes of new 'right-wing' political parties in Britain and elsewhere in Europe necessitates a renewed emphasis on how radical ideologies make

use of existing political structures and are adjusting to the 'rules of the game'.² Although the democratic ideal continues to be a strong anchor for today's political systems, totalitarian sub-elements that exist within liberal democracies are learning how to use the democratic framework to gain real power.³ In the hands of real democrats, referendums are perhaps powerful and efficient tools to reach a higher level of public inclusion and, thus, well-being. Yet, referendums may also turn into dangerous tools at an era in which populist politics can be said to be on the rise again in Britain (King and Stoker, 1996).

A number of studies that look at the 2011 AV referendum case in and of itself have recently been published (Whiteley et. al., 2012; Renwick and Lamb, 2013; Vowles, 2013). This is the first study that ties in the pre-history of the AV referendum, as well as examining how the issue of electoral reform became tied to a referendum. From a more practical perspective, the 2011 AV referendum represents a failed attempt at reform and is a critical case that campaigners may draw practical lessons from. The electoral and political systems need to be made more relevant to the public in order to tackle the problem of public disengagement from politics. The outcome of the referendum of 2011 may have reflected the public will of the time but should, by no means, be considered a binding conclusion about the electoral system.

One could argue that Britain is approaching a convention that reform to electoral rules will require the authority and consent of the British electorate. It is sensible to suggest that the impetus to change electoral rules will be intensified in the years to come. Reformers need to reflect on how they can best present their case to the wider public when they get the chance to do so. To some extent they may be able to draw on

² For an analysis of the rise of these parties: Eatwell and Goodwin, 2010.

³ Such groups may have the tendency to see democracy mainly as a useful tool towards achieving the power to exercise anti-democratic ideologies. The opposite of this is the view that democracy is an intrinsic cultural value in itself, i.e. promoting and practicing democracy for democracy's sake and as an end in itself is what is important.

the unpopularity of the existing major parties (Allen, 2006). Nevertheless, as the polling evidence considered in the final paper suggests, they still have to convince the public of the virtues of electoral reform. In particular, they need to demonstrate some link between the abstract issue of electoral reform and the issues that most people care most about: the ‘bread and butter’ issues of the economy, public services and national security. In 2011, they failed to do so.

The citizens who voted in the referendum largely followed the cues provided by the main parties. This implies that reformers must continue their efforts to persuade one of the ‘major’ parties to support reform. Assuming that the issue of electoral reform will continue to be a partisan one owing to the high stakes involved, proponents of electoral reformer would also need to convey to the politicians the principled, tactical and practical value of their reform proposals. For all practical purposes, the Conservative party seems unlikely to support any change. The best strategy for reformers would appear to be to target the Labour party. Ironically, reform prospects may be best served by the continued electoral defeat for Labour.

Although AV would have been arguably ‘fairer’ at a constituency level, it was less likely to produce a more proportional outcome nationally than the existing plurality electoral system (Sanders et. al., 2010). To the immense frustration of those who advocated electoral reform, they were compelled to advocate an alternative system that few liked very much at all. This may account for the relatively lacklustre campaign fought by the Yes Campaign in the referendum as documented in the final paper. Yet it remains the case that the issue of electoral reform— given the domination of the parties and parliamentary sovereignty —can only return to the agenda if advocated by a major party.

Given the crystallised opinions of the Conservative and Liberal Democrats – in favour and against electoral reform – the Labour party will likely remain the crucial focus of lobbying by electoral reformers. To that extent the future of electoral reform debate is likely to resemble the past. In particular, Labour is only likely to contemplate change if it either is defeated or sees no prospects of winning an election in its own right.

Paradoxically, the existing electoral system may also play a part in this. It, however, unlikely that the pro-FPTP members of the party will be convinced by arguments made based on democratic principles but are unable to demonstrate any prospect of added electoral advantage a new system might bring.

There have been eighteen general elections in post-war Britain, two of which produced hung parliaments. The general election of February 1974 produced a minority Labour government that soldiered on as a minority until the follow-up election in October of that year. The 2010 general election produced another hung parliament but the parliamentary arithmetic was such to make any outcome other than a Conservative-Liberal Democrat implausible. Thus, when a hung parliament occurred it did not allow the Liberal Democrats to bargain for wider electoral reform. They felt obliged to settle with the referendum offered by the Conservatives. This matched Labour's offer and came from a party with a better claim to have 'won' the election. The plurality electoral system may still produce a genuinely balanced parliament in which a third party can form a coalition with either the Conservatives or the Labour party. In such scenario, the third party may be able to extort a promise of electoral reform, presumably from Labour.

Those people who were contacted by either side were more likely to vote for it and those who evaluated the campaigns more highly were similarly influenced by these perceptions. It may well be that if the electoral reform activists campaigned for a system that they preferred, the campaigners would have greater motivation to mobilise the vote.

Of course, it is also the case that supporters of the existing system will also feel more motivated by the greater 'threat' (as they perceive it) of a more proportional system.

During the referendum process, various arguments were put forward regarding the effect of the AV referendum results would have on the prospect for further electoral reform following the refusal or acceptance of the AV system. While some have argued that a Yes victory could settle the debate, there were other political actors who believed that the Yes vote would settle the question of electoral reform for a long time and would prevent more comprehensive future reform. Advocates of greater proportionality will have to think long and hard about how best to achieve their objectives.

The electoral reform was presented by the Liberal Democrats as a solution to the ills of the political system. The referendum was seen as a way to include the public in solving those ills. The choice of the alternative system and the referendum pathway was done in a path-dependent way that also rang the tone for the Labour – Liberal Democrat negotiation principle of the earlier periods.

'If the referendum is held, the people will decide the issue at hand, not because anyone has decided that they have a moral or constitutional right to decide the issue but because the political leaders have decided, in their own interests, to give the final say to the people' (King, 2007, p. 295).

Could electoral reform be seen as 'Turkeys voting for Christmas?' In an atmosphere of public dissatisfaction with politicians and politics in general, the referendum has tried to 'bring the public back' to political decision-making. All parties calculate what would be good for them before taking action on anything, but the changing face of the electorate means that they are not always able to predict what system will be good for them in future elections.

6. APPENDIX


Appendix 1. Mussolini's head looking over Palazzo Braschi in Rome during the campaign period for the 1934 referendum on the National Fascist Party



Appendix 2. No campaign poster



Appendix 3. Australian House of Representatives ballot sample



BALLOT PAPER
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
NEW SOUTH WALES
 ELECTORAL DIVISION OF
LYNE

***Number the boxes
from 1 to 8 in the
order of your choice.***

<input type="checkbox"/>	SIMMS, Terrence Lloyd INDEPENDENT
<input type="checkbox"/>	JACOBI, Carrie THE GREENS
<input type="checkbox"/>	GRIEVES, Vicki AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY
<input type="checkbox"/>	MULDOON, Graeme Robert CITIZENS ELECTORAL COUNCIL
<input type="checkbox"/>	DANTON, Ray PAULINE HANSON'S ONE NATION
<input type="checkbox"/>	VAILE, Mark NATIONAL PARTY
<input type="checkbox"/>	QUARTLY, Allan AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS
<input type="checkbox"/>	WATTS, Barry Joseph CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY (FRED NILE GROUP)

Remember...number every box
to make your vote count

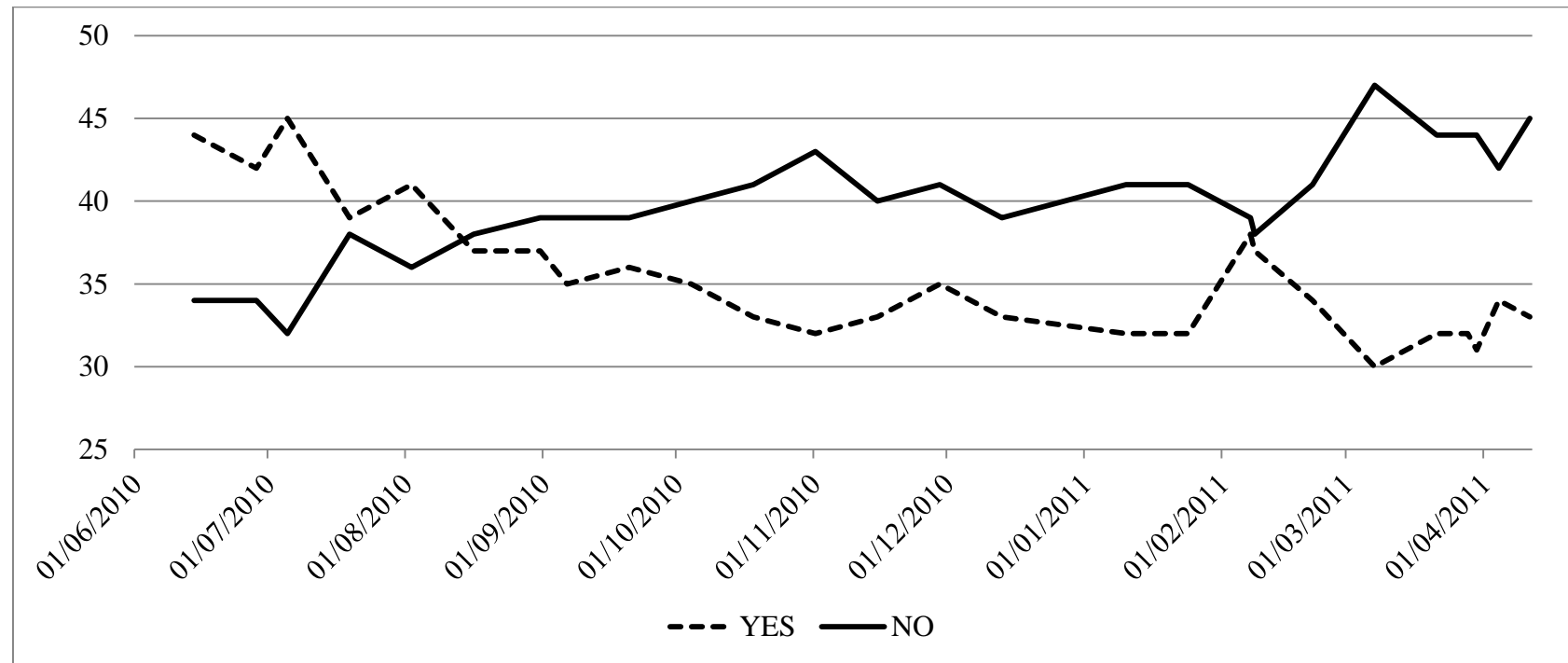
Australian Electoral Commission **AEC**

Appendix 4. Change in support for AV, 2010-11

In the twelve month period between the formation of the coalition and the day of the AV referendum, a number of polling organizations kept track of the public support for AV. Each of the nine separate surveys I have looked at showed an upward trend in public support for the No side. The most comprehensive of them is the survey conducted by YouGov for Sunday Times. For this survey, YouGov asked the following question to random samples of the British public 26 times over the period from 14/6/2010 until 1/4/2011:

The Conservative-Liberal Democrat government are committed to holding a referendum on changing the electoral system from first-past-the-post (FPTP) to the alternative (AV). At the moment, under first-past-the-post (FPTP), voters select ONE candidate, and the candidate with the most votes wins. It has been suggested that this system should be replaced by the Alternative Vote (AV). Voters would RANK a number of candidates from a list. If a candidate wins more than half of the '1st' votes, a winner is declared. If not, the least popular candidates are eliminated from the contest, and their supporters' subsequent preferences counted and shared accordingly between the remaining candidates. This process continues until an outright winner is declared. If a referendum were held tomorrow on whether to stick with first-past-the-post or switch to the Alternative Vote for electing MPs, how would you vote?

Figure A.1. Times/YouGov, vote intentions in AV referendum, 2010-11*



Source: Graph is produced based on the AV referendum voting intention survey data made available by ukpollingreport.co.uk

*The blip in February 2011 may be related to a possible increase in the perceived confidence of the Yes campaign and the positive media coverage it received in that specific period. This blip is not, however, visible in the poll results presented by various other polling companies.

Figure A.1 excludes the voters who responded 'would not vote' or 'I don't know' to the survey questions. The upward trend of the No campaign and the overall downward trend of the Yes campaign is quite visible in this figure. According to the YouGov data, AV had a 10 point lead in June 2010 over FPTP. One day before the referendum the situation was fundamentally modified and the status quo secured a 12 point lead. Over a period of less than a year, the YouGov poll swung 22 points in the direction of FPTP. We can see one major exception to Yes's downward trend and No's upward trend in 8 February 2011, where Yes 37% support, only 1% below No which had 38% support on that day. This was only 6 days before the House of Lords passed the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 and only 8 days before the bill received Royal Assent on 16 February.

The other eight AV surveys, results of which are available through the ukpollingreport.co.uk website, showed a similar upward trend for No. These shorter time series are less informative than the lengthier YouGov series but, together with the eventual result, generally support YouGov's trend.

Appendix 5. Wording of issue opinion agree/disagree items (Pre-Election Survey)

6. If Britain adopts the Alternative Vote system for general elections, then no party could ever get a majority of seats in the House of Commons.

7. The Alternative Vote electoral system is fairer because it produces a closer correspondence between parties' percentage share of votes and the number of seats they get in Parliament.

8. The Alternative Vote electoral system gives too much influence to small political parties.

9. The Alternative Vote system will produce election outcomes that more accurately reflect the political opinions of the British public than the present First-Past-The-Post electoral system does.

10. The Alternative Vote electoral system makes MPs work harder for their constituents because they need the support of a majority of them to get elected.

11. The First-Past-The-Post electoral system should be kept because it is an important part of Britain's political tradition.

70. If Britain adopts the Alternative Vote electoral system, the Liberal Democrats will always be part of the government.

71. The First Past the Post electoral system helps voters to know which party is responsible for policy success or failure.

72. The Alternative Vote electoral system is too hard for the average person to understand.

73. Thinking generally about coalition government, do you think that coalition government is a good thing or a bad thing?

Appendix 6. Coding of data in SPSS file

DATASET ACTIVATE DataSet1.

RECODE dq1 (1=1) (ELSE=0) INTO reg_eastanglia1.

RECODE dq1 (2=1) (ELSE=0) INTO reg_eastmids1.

RECODE dq1 (3=1) (ELSE=0) INTO reg_london1.

RECODE dq1 (4=1) (ELSE=0) INTO reg_north1.

RECODE dq1 (5=1) (ELSE=0) INTO reg_northwest1.

RECODE dq1 (6=1) (ELSE=0) INTO reg_scotland1.

RECODE dq1 (7=1) (ELSE=0) INTO reg_southeast1.

RECODE dq1 (8=1) (ELSE=0) INTO reg_southwest1.

RECODE dq1 (9=1) (ELSE=0) INTO reg_wales1.

RECODE dq1 (10=1) (ELSE=0) INTO reg_westmids1.

RECODE dq1 (11=1) (ELSE=0) INTO reg_yorkshire1.

RECODE dq5 (1=1) (2=0.75) (3=0.25) (4=0) (ELSE=0.5) INTO av_interest1.

RECODE dq6 dq7 dq8 dq9 dq10 dq11 (1=1) (2=0.75) (3=0.5) (4=0.25) (5=0)
(ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO av_nomajav1 av_fairer1 av_smallparty1 av_reflectopinion1
av_makempswor1 av_fptptradition1 .

RECODE dq13 (1=1) (2=0) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO decide_av_vote1.

RECODE dq16 dq17 dq18 (1=1) (2=0.75) (3=0.25) (4=0) (5=0.5) (ELSE=SYSMIS)
INTO trust_cameron1 trust_miliband1 trust_clegg1 .

RECODE dq19 dq20 dq21 (0 thru 10=copy) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO like_miliband1
like_cameron1 like_clegg1 .

RECODE dq14 (1=1) (ELSE=0) INTO av_ref_voteyes1a.

RECODE dq15 (1=1) (ELSE=0) INTO av_ref_voteyes1b .

RECODE dq14 (2=-1) (ELSE=0) INTO av_ref_voteno1a.

RECODE dq15 (2=-1) (ELSE=0) INTO av_ref_voteno1b .

EXECUTE.

COMPUTE scale1 = (av_nomajav1 + av_fptptradition1 + av_smallparty1 + av_fairer1 +
av_reflectopinion1 + av_makempswor1)/6 .

COMPUTE like_miliband1b = (like_miliband1)/10 .

COMPUTE like_cameron1b = (like_cameron1)/10 .

COMPUTE like_clegg1b = (like_clegg1)/10 .

COMPUTE av_vote1a= av_ref_voteyes1a + av_ref_voteyes1b + av_ref_voteno1a+
av_ref_voteno1b .

EXECUTE .

RECODE av_vote1a (1=1) (-1=0) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO av_vote1.

EXECUTE .

RECODE dq24 dq25 dq27 (1=1) (2=0.75) (3=0.5) (4=0.25) (5=0) (ELSE=SYSMIS)
 INTO notvote_neglect_duty1 political_active_benefits1
 political_active_group_benefits1.

RECODE dq26 (1=0) (2=0.25) (3=0.5) (4=0.75) (5=1) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO
 political_active_time1.

RECODE dq28 dq29 dq30 (0 thru 10=Copy) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO like_labour1
 like_conservative1 like_libdem1.

RECODE dq36 dq37 dq38 dq39 (1=0) (2=0.25) (3=0.5) (4=0.75) (5=1) (ELSE=SYSMIS)
 INTO ret_personal_finances1 ret_national_econ1 prosp_personal_finances1
 prosp_national_econ1.

RECODE dq41 (1=1) (2 thru 4=0) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO econ_lab_best1.
 RECODE dq41 (1=0) (2=1) (3 thru 4=0) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO econ_con_best1.
 RECODE dq41 (1 thru 2=0) (3=1) (4=0) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO econ_libdem_best1 .
 RECODE dq42 (1=1) (2 thru 4=0) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO econ_miliband_best1.
 RECODE dq42 (1=0) (2=1) (3 thru 4=0) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO econ_cameron_best1.
 RECODE dq42 (1 thru 2=0) (3=1) (4=0) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO econ_clegg_best1 .

RECODE dq43 dq44 dq45 dq46 (1=1) (2=0.75) (3=0.5) (4=0.25) (5=0) (ELSE=SYSMIS)
 INTO govt_treat_me_fairly1 big_gap_expectations1 citizen_vote_duty1
 friends_vote_waste1.

RECODE dq47 dq48 (0 thru 10=Copy) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO people_trusted1
 people_take_advantage1.

RECODE dq49 (1=1) (ELSE=0) INTO pid_lab1.
 RECODE dq49 (2=1) (ELSE=0) INTO pid_con1.
 RECODE dq49 (3=1) (ELSE=0) INTO pid_libdem1.
 RECODE dq49 (4=1) (ELSE=0) INTO pid_snp1.
 RECODE dq49 (5=1) (ELSE=0) INTO pid_pc1.
 RECODE dq49 (6=1) (ELSE=0) INTO pid_green1.
 RECODE dq49 (7=1) (ELSE=0) INTO pid_ukip1.
 RECODE dq49 (8=1) (ELSE=0) INTO pid_bnp1.

RECODE dq54 dq55 dq56 dq57 (1=1) (2=0.75) (3=0.5) (4=0.25) (5=0) (ELSE=SYSMIS)
 INTO feel_satisfaction_vote1 people_too_busy_vote1 most_people_vote1
 feel_guilty_not_vote1.

RECODE dq58 dq60 (1=1) (2=0.75) (3=0.5) (4=0.25) (5=0) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO
 satisfaction_life1 satisfaction_democracy1.

RECODE dq59 dq62 dq63 (0 thru 10=Copy) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO likes_risks1
 attention_politics1 influence_politics1.

RECODE dq61 (1=0) (2=1) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO majority_seats1.
 EXECUTE.

RECODE dq64 (1=0) (2=1) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO group_contact1.
EXECUTE.

RECODE dq65a dq65b dq65c dq65d dq65e dq65f dq65g dq65h dq65i (1=1) (2=0)
(ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO contact_no_to_av1 contact_yes_to_av1 contact_conservative1
contact_labour1 contact_libdem1 contact_ukip1 contact_bnp1 contact_snp1
contact_pc1 .
EXECUTE.

COMPUTE contact_yes =contact_yes_to_av1 + contact_libdem1 + contact_ukip1 +
contact_snp1 + contact_pc1 .
EXECUTE .

RECODE dq67 dq68 dq69 (1=1) (2=0.75) (3=0.25) (4=0) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO
attention_newspapers1 attention_tv1 attention_internet1.

RECODE dq70 dq71 dq72 (1=1) (2=0.75) (3=0.5) (4=0.25) (5=0) (ELSE=SYSMIS)
INTO ifav_libdems1 fptp_responsible1 av_too_hard1 .

RECODE dq73 (1=1) (2=0.75) (3=0.5) (4=0.25) (5=0) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO
coalition_goodthing1.

COMPUTE scale2 = (av_nomajav1 + av_fptptradition1 + av_smallparty1 + av_fairer1 +
av_reflectopinion1 + av_makempswork1 + ifav_libdems1 + fptp_responsible1 +
av_too_hard1 +coalition_goodthing1)/10 .

RECODE dq80 dq81 (0 thru 10=Copy) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO trust_parties1
trust_politicians1.

RECODE dq82 dq83 dq88 dq89 (1=1) (2=0) (ELSE=0.5) INTO know_polls_close1
know_libdems1 know_miliband1 know_postal_vote1.

RECODE dq84 dq85 dq86 dq87 (1=0) (2=1) (ELSE=0.5) INTO know_minage1
know_commonwealth1 know_forty1 know_conservative1.
EXECUTE.

COMPUTE attention1 =(attention_newspapers1 + attention_tv1 + attention_internet1)/3 .
COMPUTE trust1 = (trust_parties1 + trust_politicians1)/20 .

COMPUTE knowledge1 =(know_polls_close1 + know_libdems1 +
know_commonwealth1 + know_miliband1 + know_postal_vote1 + know_minage1 +
know_forty1 +know_conservative1)/8 .

RECODE eq1 (1=1) (ELSE=0) INTO reg_eastanglia2.
RECODE eq1 (2=1) (ELSE=0) INTO reg_eastmids2.
RECODE eq1 (3=1) (ELSE=0) INTO reg_london2.
RECODE eq1 (4=1) (ELSE=0) INTO reg_north2.
RECODE eq1 (5=1) (ELSE=0) INTO reg_northwest2.

```

RECODE eq1 (6=1) (ELSE=0) INTO reg_scotland2.
RECODE eq1 (7=1) (ELSE=0) INTO reg_southeast2.
RECODE eq1 (8=1) (ELSE=0) INTO reg_southwest2.
RECODE eq1 (9=1) (ELSE=0) INTO reg_wales2.
RECODE eq1 (10=1) (ELSE=0) INTO reg_westmids2.
RECODE eq1 (11=1) (ELSE=0) INTO reg_yorkshire2.

```

```

RECODE eq2 (1=1) (2=0.75) (3=0.25) (4=0) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO av_interest2.

```

```

RECODE eq4a eq4b eq4c eq4d eq4e eq4f eq4g eq4h eq4i (1=1) (8=SYSMIS) (ELSE=0)
INTO contact_no_to_av2 contact_yes_to_av2 contact_conservative2 contact_labour2
contact_libdem2 contact_ukip2 contact_bnp2
contact_snp2 contact_pc2 .
EXECUTE.

```

```

COMPUTE contact_yes2 =contact_yes_to_av2 + contact_libdem2 + contact_ukip2 +
contact_snp2 + contact_pc2 .

```

```

COMPUTE contact_no2 = contact_no_to_av2 + contact_conservative2 + contact_bnp2 .
EXECUTE .

```

```

RECODE eq7 (1=1) (2=0) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO av_vote2 .

```

```

RECODE eq8 (1=1) (2=0.8) (3=0.6) (4=0.4) (5=0.2) (6=0) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO
when_decided2 .

```

```

RECODE eq10 eq12 eq11 eq13 eq15 eq14 (1=1) (2=0.75) (3=0.5) (4=0.25) (5=0)
(ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO competent_cameron2 competent_miliband2 competent_clegg2
trust_cameron2 trust_miliband2 trust_clegg2.

```

```

RECODE eq17 (1=1) (2=0.75) (3=0.5) (4=0.25) (5=0) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO
handling_crisis_labour2.

```

```

RECODE eq18 eq19 eq20 eq21 (1=1) (2=0.75) (3=0.5) (4=0.25) (5=0) (ELSE=SYSMIS)
INTO cuts_necessary2 cuts_labour_mismanage2 cuts_personal_difficulties2
cuts_cause_spending2.

```

```

RECODE eq22 (1=0) (2=1) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO cuts_strengthen_econ2.
RECODE eq23 (1=1) (2=0.5) (3=0) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO tax_increases_needed2.
RECODE eq24 (1=0) (2=0.25) (3=0.5) (4=0.75) (5=1) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO
tuition_fees2.

```

```

RECODE eq25 eq32 (0 thru 10=Copy) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO tax_spend2
rights_criminal2.

```

```

RECODE eq26 eq27 eq28 (0 thru 10=Copy) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO tax_spend_con2
tax_spend_lab2 tax_spend_libdem2 .

```

```

RECODE eq33 eq34 eq35 (0 thru 10=Copy) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO
rights_criminal_con2 rights_criminal_lab2 rights_criminal_libdem2 .

```

RECODE eq31 (1=0) (2=1) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO public_services2.

RECODE eq44 eq45 eq47 eq48 eq50 (1=0) (2=0.25) (3=0.75) (4=1) (5=0.5)
(ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO approve_afghan2 moral_case_libya2 libya_ground_troops2
libya_benefits2 libya_approval2.

RECODE eq46 eq49 (1=1) (2=0.75) (3=0.25) (4=0) (5=0.5) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO
libya_cant_afford2 libya_damage_britain2.

COMPUTE scale3 = (approve_afghan2 + libya_approval2)/2.
EXECUTE .

RECODE eq66 eq68 eq69 eq71 eq76 eq79 (1=1) (2=0.75) (3=0.5) (4=0.25) (5=0)
(6=0.5) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO elect_lords2 change_to_pr2 local_govt_more_authority2
abolish_monarchy2 mp_manifesto_resign2 europe_approve2.

RECODE eq67 eq70 eq72 eq73 eq74 eq75 (1=1) (2=0.75) (3=0.5) (4=0.25) (5=0)
(6=0.5) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO reduce_size_commons2 reduce_echr2
church_england_status2 europe_taxpowers_reduced2 more_referendums2
noneed_written_constitution2.

RECODE eq97 eq98 eq99 (1=0) (2=0.25) (3=0.5) (4=0.75) (5=1) (ELSE=SYSMIS)
INTO av_elections_cost2 av_extremist_parties2 libdems_threat_legal2.

RECODE eq100 (1=0) (2=0.25) (3=0.5) (4=0.75) (5=1) (6=0.5) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO
av_mudslinging2.

RECODE eq101a eq101c eq101e eq101g (1=1) (ELSE=0) INTO av_yes_strong2
av_yes_informative2 av_yes_positive2 av_yes_interesting2.

RECODE eq101b eq101d eq101f eq101h (1=-1) (ELSE=0) INTO av_yes_weak2
av_yes_notinformative2 av_yes_negative2 av_yes_boring2.

RECODE eq102a eq102c eq102e eq102g (1=1) (ELSE=0) INTO av_no_strong2
av_no_informative2 av_no_positive2 av_no_interesting2.

RECODE eq102b eq102d eq102f eq102h (1=-1) (ELSE=0) INTO av_no_weak2
av_no_notinformative2 av_no_negative2 av_no_boring2.
EXECUTE .

COMPUTE av_yes_sum2 =av_yes_strong2 + av_yes_informative2 + av_yes_positive2
+ av_yes_interesting2 + av_yes_weak2 + av_yes_notinformative2 + av_yes_negative2
+ av_yes_boring2.

COMPUTE av_no_sum2 =av_no_strong2 + av_no_informative2 + av_no_positive2 +
av_no_interesting2 + av_no_weak2 + av_no_notinformative2 + av_no_negative2 +
av_no_boring2.

```
COMPUTE av_informative = (av_yes_informative2 - av_yes_notinformative2) -
(av_no_informative2 - av_no_notinformative2) .
```

```
COMPUTE av_strength=(av_yes_strong2 - av_yes_weak2) - (av_no_strong2-
av_no_weak2) .
```

```
COMPUTE av_interesting=(av_yes_interesting2-av_yes_boring2) -
(av_no_interesting2-av_no_boring2).
EXECUTE .
```

```
COMPUTE av_camp_sum2 = av_yes_sum2 - av_no_sum2 .
EXECUTE .
```

```
RECODE postgen (1=1) (2=0) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO male .
```

```
RECODE eq107 (1=1) (98 thru 99=SYSMIS) (ELSE=0) INTO school14 .
RECODE eq107 (2=1) (98 thru 99=SYSMIS) (ELSE=0) INTO school15 .
RECODE eq107 (3=1) (98 thru 99=SYSMIS) (ELSE=0) INTO school16 .
RECODE eq107 (4=1) (98 thru 99=SYSMIS) (ELSE=0) INTO school17to18 .
RECODE eq107 (5=1) (98 thru 99=SYSMIS) (ELSE=0) INTO school19to20 .
RECODE eq107 (6=1) (98 thru 99=SYSMIS) (ELSE=0) INTO school21to22 .
RECODE eq107 (7=1) (98 thru 99=SYSMIS) (ELSE=0) INTO school23to24 .
RECODE eq107 (8=1) (98 thru 99=SYSMIS) (ELSE=0) INTO school25plus .
EXECUTE .
```

Appendix 7. Coding of the Regression Models

```
DATASET ACTIVATE DataSet1.
LOGISTIC REGRESSION VARIABLES av_vote2
/METHOD=ENTER
male
school15 school16 school17to18 school19to20 school21to22 school23to24
school25plus
av_vote1a
reg_eastanglia1 reg_eastmids1 reg_london1 reg_north1 reg_northwest1
reg_scotland1 reg_southwest1 reg_wales1 reg_westmids1 reg_yorkshire1 likes_risks1
attention_politics1 influence_politics1 knowledge1 trust1 av_interest1 attention1
pid_lab1 pid_con1 pid_libdem1 pid_snp1 pid_pc1 pid_green1 pid_ukip1 pid_bnp1
av_nomajav1 av_fptptradition1 av_smallparty1 av_fairer1 av_reflectopinion1
av_makempswork1 ifav_libdems1 fptp_responsible1 av_too_hard1
coalition_goodthing1
contact_no2 contact_yes2
/CRITERIA=PIN(.05) POUT(.10) ITERATE(20) CUT(.5).
```

```
LOGISTIC REGRESSION VARIABLES av_vote2
/METHOD=ENTER
male
school15 school16 school17to18 school19to20 school21to22 school23to24
school25plus
/CRITERIA=PIN(.05) POUT(.10) ITERATE(20) CUT(.5).
```

```
LOGISTIC REGRESSION VARIABLES av_vote2
/METHOD=ENTER
male
school15 school16 school17to18 school19to20 school21to22 school23to24
school25plus av_vote1a
reg_eastanglia1 reg_eastmids1 reg_london1 reg_north1 reg_northwest1
reg_scotland1 reg_southwest1 reg_wales1 reg_westmids1 reg_yorkshire1
/CRITERIA=PIN(.05) POUT(.10) ITERATE(20) CUT(.5).
```

```
LOGISTIC REGRESSION VARIABLES av_vote2
/METHOD=ENTER
male
school15 school16 school17to18 school19to20 school21to22 school23to24
school25plus av_vote1a
reg_eastanglia1 reg_eastmids1 reg_london1 reg_north1 reg_northwest1 reg_scotland1
reg_southwest1 reg_wales1 reg_westmids1 reg_yorkshire1 likes_risks1
attention_politics1 influence_politics1 knowledge1 trust1 av_interest1 attention1
/CRITERIA=PIN(.05) POUT(.10) ITERATE(20) CUT(.5).
```

```
LOGISTIC REGRESSION VARIABLES av_vote2
/METHOD=ENTER
```

```

male
school15 school16 school17to18 school19to20 school21to22 school23to24
school25plus
av_vote1a
reg_eastanglia1 reg_eastmids1 reg_london1 reg_north1 reg_northwest1 reg_scotland1
reg_southwest1 reg_wales1 reg_westmids1 reg_yorkshire1 likes_risks1
attention_politics1 influence_politics1 knowledge1 trust1 av_interest1 attention1
pid_lab1 pid_con1 pid_libdem1 pid_snp1 pid_pc1 pid_green1 pid_ukip1 pid_bnp1
/CRITERIA=PIN(.05) POUT(.10) ITERATE(20) CUT(.5).

```

```

LOGISTIC REGRESSION VARIABLES av_vote2

```

```

/METHOD=ENTER

```

```

male
school15 school16 school17to18 school19to20 school21to22 school23to24
school25plus
av_vote1a
reg_eastanglia1 reg_eastmids1 reg_london1 reg_north1 reg_northwest1 reg_scotland1
reg_southwest1 reg_wales1 reg_westmids1 reg_yorkshire1 likes_risks1
attention_politics1 influence_politics1 knowledge1 trust1 av_interest1 attention1
pid_lab1 pid_con1 pid_libdem1 pid_snp1 pid_pc1 pid_green1 pid_ukip1 pid_bnp1
av_nomajav1 av_fptptradition1 av_smallparty1 av_fairer1 av_reflectopinion1
av_makempswork1 ifav_libdems1 fptp_responsible1 av_too_hard1
coalition_goodthing1
/CRITERIA=PIN(.05) POUT(.10) ITERATE(20) CUT(.5).

```

```

LOGISTIC REGRESSION VARIABLES av_vote2

```

```

/METHOD=ENTER

```

```

male
school15 school16 school17to18 school19to20 school21to22 school23to24
school25plus
av_vote1a
reg_eastanglia1 reg_eastmids1 reg_london1 reg_north1 reg_northwest1 reg_scotland1
reg_southwest1 reg_wales1 reg_westmids1 reg_yorkshire1 likes_risks1
attention_politics1 influence_politics1 knowledge1 trust1 av_interest1 attention1
pid_lab1 pid_con1 pid_libdem1 pid_snp1 pid_pc1 pid_green1 pid_ukip1 pid_bnp1
av_nomajav1 av_fptptradition1 av_smallparty1 av_fairer1 av_reflectopinion1
av_makempswork1 ifav_libdems1 fptp_responsible1 av_too_hard1
coalition_goodthing1
contact_no_to_av2 contact_yes_to_av2 contact_conservative2 contact_labour2
contact_libdem2 contact_ukip2 contact_bnp2 contact_snp2 contact_pc2
/CRITERIA=PIN(.05) POUT(.10) ITERATE(20) CUT(.5).

```

```

LOGISTIC REGRESSION VARIABLES av_vote2

```

```

/METHOD=ENTER

```

```

male
school15 school16 school17to18 school19to20 school21to22 school23to24
school25plus
av_vote1a
reg_eastanglia1 reg_eastmids1 reg_london1 reg_north1 reg_northwest1

```

reg_scotland1 reg_southwest1 reg_wales1 reg_westmids1 reg_yorkshire1 likes_risks1
 attention_politics1 influence_politics1 knowledge1 trust1 av_interest1 attention1
 pid_lab1 pid_con1 pid_libdem1 pid_snp1 pid_pc1 pid_green1 pid_ukip1 pid_bnp1
 av_nomajav1 av_fptptradition1 av_smallparty1 av_fairer1 av_reflectopinion1
 av_makempswork1 ifav_libdems1 fptp_responsible1 av_too_hard1
 coalition_goodthing1
 contact_no_to_av2 contact_yes_to_av2 contact_conservative2 contact_labour2
 contact_libdem2 contact_ukip2 contact_bnp2 contact_snp2 contact_pc2
 trust_cameron1 trust_miliband1 trust_clegg1
 /CRITERIA=PIN(.05) POUT(.10) ITERATE(20) CUT(.5).

LOGISTIC REGRESSION VARIABLES av_vote2

/METHOD=ENTER

male

school15 school16 school17to18 school19to20 school21to22 school23to24

school25plus

av_vote1a

reg_eastanglia1 reg_eastmids1 reg_london1 reg_north1 reg_northwest1
 reg_scotland1 reg_southwest1 reg_wales1 reg_westmids1 reg_yorkshire1 likes_risks1
 attention_politics1 influence_politics1 knowledge1 trust1 av_interest1 attention1
 pid_lab1 pid_con1 pid_libdem1 pid_snp1 pid_pc1 pid_green1 pid_ukip1 pid_bnp1
 av_nomajav1 av_fptptradition1 av_smallparty1 av_fairer1 av_reflectopinion1
 av_makempswork1 ifav_libdems1 fptp_responsible1 av_too_hard1
 coalition_goodthing1
 contact_no_to_av2 contact_yes_to_av2 contact_conservative2 contact_labour2
 contact_libdem2 contact_ukip2 contact_bnp2 contact_snp2 contact_pc2
 trust_cameron1 trust_miliband1 trust_clegg1
 av_camp_sum2
 /CRITERIA=PIN(.05) POUT(.10) ITERATE(20) CUT(.5).

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