Divided We Stand – Unified We Govern? Cohabitation and Regime Voting in the 2002 French Elections

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In this article the impact of voters' regime preferences, i.e. their preferences for either divided or unified government, on their voting behaviour, is analysed. The theory expounded, combining behavioural as well as institutional approaches, predicts that voters weigh their regime against their partisan preferences to derive their vote choice. This theory and its implications are tested on the 2002 French legislative elections using a multinomial logit set-up. The results indicate that regime voting adds to the explanatory power of traditional vote-choice models. Statistical simulations provide further evidence that regime preferences play a decisive role in the voting booth, especially for voters who are not politically 'anchored'.

Since the late 1980s the literature on the electoral origins of divided government has drawn our attention to whether and how voters include considerations about the functioning of their political system and the interrelation between its different political institutions in their voting calculus. However, what could be termed the institutional turn of the electoral behaviour literature has so far only rarely been applied to explain the emergence of unified governments. If voters cast their votes in order to get a divided government, as this literature suggests, why should voters not equally modify their vote choice in order to bring about a unified government? This article, consequently, investigates the more general impact of regime preferences, i.e. voters' preferences either for divided or unified government, on their vote choice.[1] Do voters take the regime implications of their vote choice into account when casting their ballot? How do regime preferences modify a voter's behaviour in general and what types of voters are most likely to deviate from their partisan preferences for regime reasons?

In this article, we first develop a theory about the impact of regime preferences on voting behaviour. We then generate a set of hypotheses that we test with survey data on the 2002 French legislative elections using a multinomial logit set-up. The reason for choosing this particular case is that, in order to test our theory, we needed a political system where at least two branches of government emerge from distinct elections. Additionally, to assume safely that voters form regime preferences, they should have experienced both a unified

[1] We borrowed the term 'regime preferences' from Sartori, who described the French Fifth Republic as a system that oscillates between the two poles of presidential and parliamentary regime characteristics. See Giovanni Sartori, *Comparative Constitutional Engineering: An Inquiry into Structures, Incentives and Outcomes* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), p. 123. The 'presidential' phase here stands for unified government, the 'parliamentary' phase, i.e. cohabitation, for divided government.

and a divided government. The 2002 elections in France clearly fulfil both criteria. The parliamentary elections were held eight weeks after President Jacques Chirac's re-election. Since voters knew who had been elected president, the *législatives* implicitly enabled them to choose between unified government and 'cohabitation', the French version of divided government, this being a regime they had experienced for the nine years following 1986.[2] After testing our hypotheses we provide statistical simulations that facilitate a better understanding of the impact of regime preferences on voting behaviour and illustrate the mechanisms behind regime voting.

REGIME VOTING

No matter whether you believe that voters see the political realm through ideological or partisan lenses or picture voters as manic rationalists, constantly calculating policy distances, i.e. no matter whether you prefer 'Columbia', 'Michigan' or 'Rochester' models, the study of voting behaviour has from its early beginnings been based on the same assumption about the electoral decision-making process: take a hypothetical voter, identify a set of causal factors (for this hypothetical voter) describing how she arrives at her political preferences, arrange them in a theorized sequence (again, for this hypothetical voter), turn the crank – *et voilà:* you get the predicted decision-making behaviour for this hypothetical voter. All traditional models of voting behaviour thus predict that electors vote for the candidate or party they like most.

However, theorists of strategic voting have drawn our attention to voters who, in anticipation of certain features of the electoral contest, such as the viability of certain candidates or parties, decide to cast their vote for a party other than the one they most prefer. Usually, in this strand of the literature the deviation from someone's most preferred party is motivated by incentives provided by the electoral system or expected coalition manœuvres.[3] Similarly, in this article, we argue that there are voters out there who anticipate the outcomes of elections, but this time in terms of their institutional consequences. We hypothesize that if they strongly prefer a divided or a unified government, some voters might even decide to deviate from their most preferred party and cast their vote according to their regime preference. Such regime voters act strategically in anticipating the institutional consequences of an election in order to determine the type of regime.[4]

Although divided and unified government are only two different sides of the same coin,

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[2] In considering cohabitation as divided government, we follow Robert Elgie, 'What is Divided Government?'; and ' "Cohabitation": Divided Government French Style', in Robert Elgie, ed., *Divided Government in Comparative Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 1–20 and 106–26; Matthew Soberg Shugart, 'The Electoral Cycle and Institutional Sources of Divided Presidential Government', *American Political Science Review*, 89 (1995), 327–43; and Alberto Alesina and Howard Rosenthal, *Partisan Politics, Divided Government and the Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 244. For a different view, see Roy Pierce, 'The Executive Divided against Itself: Cohabitation in France, 1986–1988', *Governance*, 4 (1991), 270–94.

[3] Thomas Gschwend, *Strategic Voting in Mixed Electoral Systems* (Reutlingen: SFG–Elsevier, 2004).

[4] What information does a regime voter require? First, a voter must be aware that unified or divided government might result from a particular election outcome. A voter thus has to understand the regime implications of her vote choice. Secondly, a voter must be aware of the outcome of the election for the first branch before voting for the second.

we find that unified government is the less studied aspect of regime voting.[5] In our theory of regime voting, therefore, we include a choice for divided government as well as for unified government. But what do voters generally associate with these regimes?

To us, the performance of regimes can best be evaluated along the four dimensions of efficiency, accountability, control and representation. Divided and unified governments score differently on these dimensions. In a unified government one party or a coalition of parties holds control over the policy-making process across the separated institutions sharing power. The political opposition thus remains essentially without policy influence. Since fewer veto-players are engaged in the policy-making process under unified government, this regime is often considered to be more efficient than divided government.[6] Divided government, by contrast, is often assumed to lead to an increase of policy stability or even gridlock. Thus, a unified government is generally assumed to perform better than a divided government in terms of the system's output. The same holds when it comes to accountability. Democratic theory points out that elections are instruments with which a government is held accountable for its performance. Thus, voters should know who is to blame or to credit for past performance. Divided government, however, obscures what Bingham Powell calls the 'clarity of responsibility'.[7] Since control of the policy-making process is shared between the major electoral alternatives, divided government diffuses democratic accountability and, hence, responsibility becomes unclear.[8]

The US literature cited above on divided government, however, has drawn our attention to the merits of this regime, or at least to the reasons why voters may consider voting for it. To us, the advantages of a divided government are most obvious in the dimensions of control and representation. Divided government accentuates checks and balances. Hence, a different partisan assignment of the separated institutions sharing power can best prevent an abuse of power, or at least, lead to more balanced policies. Since large majorities are generally needed to enact policies during divided government,[9] it could, moreover, be claimed that divided government gives different social groups a stronger influence on the policy-making process. A better level of representation possibly fosters more consensual modes of policy making, which may ultimately strengthen the legitimacy of democratic decisions. For example, in moments of perceived crises some voters might expect a divided government or a grand coalition (that, indeed, in many ways

[5] Exceptions are: Lee Sigelman, Paul J. Wahlbeck and Emmett H. Buell Jr, 'Vote Choice and the Preference for Divided Government: Lessons of 1992', *American Journal of Political Science*, 41 (1997), 879–94; and Dean Lacy, 'A Theory of Nonseparable Preferences in Survey Responses', *American Journal of Political Science*, 45 (2001), 239–58, p. 253. Most other literature has focused on the explanation for divided government, probably because of its prominence in the United States since the Second World War. For a review of this literature, see Charles E. Smith Jr, Robert D. Brown, John M. Bruce and L. Marvin Overby, 'Party Balancing and Voting for Congress in the 1996 National Election', *American Journal of Political Science*, 43 (1999), 737–64, p. 738.

[6] See, for example, Mark N. Franklin and Wolfgang P. Hirczy, 'Separated Powers, Divided Government, and Turnout in U.S. Presidential Elections', *American Journal of Political Science*, 42 (1998), 316–26, pp. 317 and 318.

[7] G. Bingham Powell Jr, *Elections as Instruments of Democracy: Majoritarian and Proportional Visions* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 11.

[8] See again Franklin and Hirczy, 'Separated Powers, Divided Government, and Turnout in U.S. Presidential Elections', p. 318.

[9] For France this is particularly true in the matter of nominations, but also in foreign, security and European policy making. See Dirk Leuffen, 'Europeanisation and the Probabilities of Power during Divided Government in France' (paper presented at ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops, Turin, 2002).

reflects the characteristics of a divided government) to solve substantial problems in a more legitimate way.[10]

Concerning our four dimensions (efficiency, accountability, control and representation), a voter who attributes greater importance to efficiency and accountability should prefer a unified government. Conversely, a voter who attributes greater importance to control and representation should prefer a divided government. In theory, voters weigh these arguments against one another when considering a regime preference. In reality, they might of course also pick up cues from opinion leaders or the media in order to form their regime preference. For our analyses, however, this ultimately boils down to the same thing.[11] The intensity and direction of these preferences can, of course, also vary across different political cultures or even over time.

What is the impact of regime preferences on an individual's decision-making process? In order to assess the impact of regime preferences on voting behaviour we need a reasonable baseline. According to traditional models of voting behaviour the evaluative basis of an individual's decision-making process is determined by preferences about candidates, parties, ideological self-assessment and the like. Voters have to weigh these factors to form an overall preference, which we call an 'anchoring preference', in order to make a vote decision. A clear preference essentially anchors every voter into the political realm. In the case of France, we distinguish between supporters of left or right party blocs, unanchored respondents and extremists. The baseline expectation derived from the traditional electoral behaviour literature is that a politically anchored voter supports a candidate of her preferred party bloc, no matter what implications this has for the type of regime after the election. This implies one of at least two things: either a voter's attitude about cohabitation is essentially a 'non-attitude', or she is fully constrained in a Converseian sense, such that her attitude towards cohabitation can be predicted by her anchoring preference. The observed result in both cases is the same, though. These voters seem to have no regime preferences that can be expected to have an independent impact on their decision-making process. Thus, our baseline prediction is that a French supporter of the left will vote for a left candidate, while a supporter of the right will vote for a right candidate.

However, what happens if voters do not have clear preferences or their partisan and candidate preferences neutralize one another; if, for instance, they prefer a party from one party bloc but at the same time like the candidate of the other bloc better? How do these voters, who are not clearly anchored, solve their cross pressures? The baseline model cannot predict the voting behaviour of these unanchored voters.

Regime voters, conversely, will consider the consequences of their choice on the institutional structure and will vote according to their regime preference, no matter what anchoring preferences they hold. Such a regime voter, to paint a picture of an ideal-type, will resist any counterinfluences arising from ideological predispositions or partisan considerations. She will vote on the basis of her regime preference. As a divided government voter in an off-year election in the United States, she will vote for the party

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[10] Michael Laver and Norman Schofield, *Multiparty Government: The Politics of Coalition in Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 83, give an example of such reasoning.

[11] If this micro-logic about the motivation of first forming regime preferences and then voting accordingly is correct, this should imply that these voters are neither less educated, less interested in politics nor less politically efficacious than the average voter. These observational implications are, indeed, supported by our data: simple *t*-tests show that regime voters are not systematically different from the average voter on our measures of education, political interest and political efficacy.

that does not hold the presidency; in the case of France, she will not vote for the candidate from the president's camp. A unified government voter in these two examples would generally support the president's camp in order to increase the probability of a unified government.

Our argument is that regime preferences reflect the institutional embeddedness of political attitudes and therefore should be added to traditional explanations of voting behaviour.[12] If we find systematic deviations that cannot be explained by the baseline voting model but are at the same time consistent with the predictions of the regime-voting model, we have evidence that regime preferences can modify voting behaviour. Before we discuss these aspects in more detail, we will, however, first introduce the case of regime voting in the 2002 French legislative elections.

REGIME VOTING IN THE ELECTORAL CONTEXT OF 2002

The 2002 French legislative elections provide a particularly interesting case in which to study the impact of regime voting. The sequence of the electoral cycle – presidential elections preceding the *législatives* by only a few weeks – enabled the voters not only to choose their political leaders but also to influence the type of regime: divided or unified government.

The reduction of the French president's term of office from seven to five years, decided by referendum in 2000, in combination with the National Assembly's 2001 decision to reverse the electoral calendar making the presidential precede the legislative elections, can be considered a successful example of 'constitutional engineering'.[13] One objective of this synchronization and re-ordering of presidential and legislative elections was to avoid a future occurrence of cohabitation. It was based on the assumption that French voters were unlikely to engage in split-ticket voting, i.e. to vote for candidates from different parties or at least from different party blocs in the presidential and legislative elections, since the Fifth Republic's previous cohabitations had only emerged in off-year (or mid-term) elections. The 2002 French elections seemed to confirm this assessment:[14] after President Jacques Chirac's re-election, his UMP ('Union pour la Majorité Présidentielle')[15] alliance

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[12] We thus assume that such voters hold 'non-separable' preferences, as introduced into the literature on electoral behaviour by Dean Lacy and Philip Paolino, 'Downsian Voting and the Separation of Powers', *Amercian Journal of Political Science*, 42 (1998), 1180–99. See also Smith *et al.*, 'Party Balancing and Voting for Congress in the 1996 National Election' and Lacy, 'A Theory of Nonseparable Preferences in Survey Responses'. Whereas these authors similarly recognize that voting behaviour can be better understood in a two-dimensional framework, their notion of separable and non-separable preferences remains more general than our term of regime preference. When using regime preferences as a variable (that embraces the two categories of divided and unified government preference), we highlight the micro-mechanisms of vote choice. In contrast to the work cited above, our research design allows us to get around counterfactual reasoning, since in our case the voters already know who the president is.

[13] Sartori, *Comparative Constitutional Engineering*.

[14] The French presidential and parliamentary elections were held on 21 April, 5 May, 9 June and 16 June. The same structure, presidential elections closely preceding legislative elections, brought about a unified government in 1981 and a minority government in 1988. The relevance of a particular sequence of elections again points out the impact of institutions on vote choice, as for example highlighted by Robert Elgie, 'Institutions and Voters: Structuring Electoral Choice', in Michael Lewis-Beck, ed., *The French Voter: Before and After the 2002 Elections* (Basingstoke, Hants.: Macmillan, 2003), pp. 110–25.

[15] The UMP was at first an election alliance combining the RPR (Rassemblement pour la République), parts of the UDF (Union pour la Démocratie Française) and DL (Démocratie Libérale). Not until November 2002 was the alliance transformed into a party under the new label of 'Union pour un mouvement populaire'.

won 369 of 577 seats in the Assemblée Nationale. Hence, unified government was re-installed.

However, some puzzles remain: in the first round of the presidential elections scandal-troubled Chirac obtained the worst result an incumbent president has ever had. He has been called the 'lucky beneficiary of an electoral accident',[16] since the elimination of the major candidate of the left, Lionel Jospin, in the first round, made the second round an easy game against extreme right-wing Jean-Marie Le Pen (Chirac obtained 82.1 per cent of votes). Nonetheless, since Chirac initially was a rather unpopular presidential candidate, coattail effects based on his personal 'pulling power' can satisfactorily explain neither the UMP's success nor the breakdown of the left at the parliamentary elections.[17] Having investigated the impact of regime voting, however, we propose that there is a link between presidential and legislative elections.

The 2002 *législatives* were framed as anti-cohabitation elections, first, ironically, by Jospin's cabinet director Olivier Schrameck, who drew the public's attention to the issue by describing cohabitation as 'the worst situation for our country'.[18] After the presidential elections, the right bloc integrated this discourse into its own campaign, for example, President Chirac called upon the French people to give him 'a clear and coherent majority in the forthcoming parliamentary elections',[19] and interim Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin declared that his main object was to fight cohabitation.[20] It is thus very likely that French voters were well aware of the regime implications of their vote choice. But which regime implications emerged from different voting decisions, given that Chirac was elected president? In this particular situation, a vote for a right party in the legislative elections was also a vote for unified government. Every vote for the left can correspondingly be seen as a vote for divided government.

What predictions would the baseline and the regime-voting models generate in the case of the 2002 French *législatives*? The baseline expectation, of course, is in a sense context-free. Simply put, a supporter of the left will vote for a party candidate of the left and a supporter of the right will vote for a party candidate of the right. A regime voter, however, in 2002 should cast her vote at the legislative elections for the left if she prefers divided government and for the right if she prefers unified government. Figure 1 summarizes both the baseline predictions as well as the expected voting behaviour of regime voters.

[16] David S. Bell and Byron Criddle, 'Presidentialism Restored: The French Elections of April–May and June 2002', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 55 (2002), 643–63, p. 663.

[17] John A. Ferejohn and Randall L. Calvert, 'Presidential Coattails in Historical Perspective', *American Journal of Political Science*, 28 (1984), 127–46; Robert S. Erikson, 'The Puzzle of Midterm Loss', *Journal of Politics*, 50 (1988), 1011–29, p. 1023; Warren E. Miller, 'Presidential Coattails: A Study in Political Myth and Methodology', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 19 (1955), 353–68, p. 353. Usually, one would expect that on-year legislative elections would fall into a president's 'honeymoon' term since the two sets of elections are only separated by about a month. This period could be considered as too short to expect an occurrence of 'negative voting'. See Samuel Kernell, 'Presidential Popularity and Negative Voting: An Alternative Explanation of the Midterm Congressional Decline of the President's Party', *American Political Science Review*, 71 (1977), 44–66. This assessment is confirmed by Shugart, who claimed that 'elections held early after a presidential election are likely to produce a surge in support for the new president's party'; see Shugart, 'The Electoral Cycle and Institutional Sources of Divided Presidential Government', p. 337. However, in our case Chirac had already been in power since 1995 and he therefore cannot really be considered to be a new president.

[18] Olivier Schrameck, *Matignon Rive Gauche 1997–2001* (Paris: Seuil, 2001), p. 23.

[19] Cited in Cole, 'A Strange Affair: The 2002 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in France', p. 335.

[20] *Libération*, 4 June 2002.

Anchoring Preference / Regime Preference	Left	Unanchored	Right
Divided Government	Left / Left	? / Left	Right / Left
Unified Government	Left / Right	? / Right	Right / Right

Fig. 1. Vote-choice predictions based on anchoring or regime preferences

In two cases we cannot distinguish whether a voter follows the regime voting model or our baseline predictions. Both models predict the same voting behaviour as the upper left cell and the lower right cell of Figure 1 show. If a voter is anchored on the political left and prefers divided government then we cannot disentangle anchoring from regime preferences. The same is true for supporters of the right who prefer a unified government. Given that Chirac is president, voting for a candidate of the political left can be a consequence of preferring divided government or simply being anchored on the left (or both, of course). At the same time, voting for a candidate of the political right can be a consequence of preferring unified government or being anchored on the right (or both).

What happens, though, when anchoring and regime preferences are not in line with one another? In these cases regime and partisan preferences pull in different directions, which means that voters find themselves in a cross-pressure situation. Voters have to weigh their anchoring preferences against their regime preferences in order to come up with a vote choice. In our case, someone who has a clear preference for a party of the political left but favours a unified government thus faces a dilemma. The same, of course, holds for someone of the political right favouring cohabitation. Since partisan and regime preferences pull in opposite directions, our general expectation is that these voters become at least less likely to vote according to their partisan yardstick.

The weighing of anchoring against regime preferences, however, should work differently for unanchored voters. Since these voters have no clear partisan preferences they can base their vote choice on the regime preferences they hold. Thus, for such voters regime preferences should play a decisive role in the voting booth. To sum up, we formulate the following hypotheses:

HYPOTHESIS 1: *Anchored voters are less likely to vote for a candidate of their preferred party bloc if they hold regime preferences that contrast with their partisan preferences, i.e., in the case of the 2002 French legislative elections supporters of the left (right) are less likely to vote for their most preferred bloc if they favour unified (divided) government.*

HYPOTHESIS 2: *Unanchored voters are more likely to vote in accordance with their regime preferences, i.e., in the case of the 2002 French legislative elections they are more likely to vote for the right (left) if they favour unified (divided) government.*

DATA AND MEASUREMENT

We conducted a survey representative of French voters that was administered after the second round of the presidential elections and before the first round of the legislative elections.[21] Thus, every respondent knew the outcome of the presidential election. In order to investigate the impact of regime preferences on voting behaviour we use the following item to measure a voter's attitude towards cohabitation:

'*S'agissant d'une éventuelle future cohabitation, de quelle opinion vous sentez-vous le plus proche?*'[22]

Then, respondents were presented the following alternatives:

(a) '*une cohabitation serait une bonne chose pour la France*', or

(b) '*une cohabitation serait une mauvaise chose pour la France*'.[23]

How do people generate an answer to this question? We argued that the issue of cohabitation was neither at the fringes of French politics nor of interest to only a small issue public but instead played a prominent role in the campaign discourse.[24] At the same time, it remains nevertheless rather unlikely that everyone has made up her mind on that issue in such a clear way that she could quickly provide an answer to this question in an interview situation. Voters during this election cycle, however, should have formed a broad and general outlook about the political realm. We, additionally, assume that voters have formed preferences about parties. These preferences are based on long-term factors such as party identification that can be modified by ideological considerations and, finally, updated by

[21] We used the French Inter-election Survey 2002 – The French CSES II Study, administered by CSA-TMO, Paris. As is usual in France, the survey (CATI) takes a large national sample of respondents randomly selected from national telephone numbers until quotas based on gender, age, occupation, size of city and region are fulfilled. Up to five contacts were made with every selected household. The response rate is 42 per cent. The main part of the survey is comprised of the common CSES II module of public opinion questions, which can be downloaded from the CSES homepage. We also analysed additional items about the electoral system and the nature of party competition that we built into this survey. These items will also be included in a replication dataset. The use of quota sampling is unfortunately a common practice among French polling organizations, see Michael Lewis-Beck, 'Editorial: An Introduction', *French Politics*, 1 (2003), 135–6. Using the standard panoply of significance tests on data generated by any sampling method demands among other things that the achieved sample behaves as if it were generated by a simple random selection process, as emphasized by Michael Oakes, *Statistical Inference: A Commentary for the Social and Behavioural Sciences* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1986), p. 156. So we have to evaluate this assumption empirically. In order to see whether our sample represents the population, following a strategy suggested in Thomas Gschwend, 'Analyzing Quota Sample Data and the Peer-Review Process', *French Politics*, 3 (2005), 88–91, we relied on additional data sources (i.e., other surveys and administrative statistics). We found that the marginal distributions of our sample in terms of attitudinal variables correspond rather well to the ones of the most prominent French election study conducted around the same time, the *Panel électoral français*, 2002. Moreover, our sample is representative (by design) in terms of occupation and, furthermore, the distribution of the remaining socio-demographic characteristics (religion and trade-union membership) recorded in our sample is consistent with administrative data sources. Thus we are confident that our sample does not systematically differ from the population of eligible French voters.

[22] Considering a possible future cohabitation, which of these opinions do you feel closer to?

[23] (a) Cohabitation would be a good thing for France; (b) Cohabitation would be a bad thing for France.

[24] In fact, only 5 per cent of all respondents of our survey were unable to provide an answer to this question.

short-term factors like the popularity of certain party candidates and issues. Partisan preferences anchor voters politically. From research on survey response we know that if voters cannot provide a ready-made answer about their attitudes towards issues such as cohabitation, they simply make one up based on 'top-of-the-head' considerations that happen to be salient at the moment.[25] Accordingly, our cohabitation question runs the risk of being encoded in a purely partisan manner. Encoded as such, leftists should, of course, favour cohabitation because, given that Chirac had already been elected president, cohabitation stands for a left majority in the National Assembly. The opposite, of course, holds for voters on the right.

In a telephone interview situation we cannot disentangle whether respondents actually think about cohabitation as a regime issue or purely encode it in a partisan way. However, there are several strategies that may come to the rescue. One way to deal with this problem is simply to exclude those respondents for whom we cannot reliably disentangle constitutional from partisan interpretations of the cohabitation question (because both interpretations have observationally equivalent consequences). This strategy, although very clear, remains problematic, because we would have to drop many cases from the analysis. At best, we would lose efficiency. In the worst case, however, if the exclusions are non-random, we introduce selection bias.

A second solution would be to control for partisanship and ideology in order to purge the impact of cohabitation on vote choice. Although we would not have to drop any cases, this strategy is plagued by the validity of our cohabitation measure. For those who only think of cohabitation in partisan terms, the item simply does not measure what it is supposed to measure. Their reported attitude is reducible to a predictive implication of their anchoring preferences. Since for a large number of respondents we cannot observationally disentangle anchoring and regime preferences, causal inferences purely based on this item are highly suspicious.

We therefore opt for a third strategy. For the reasons detailed above, we regard only those voters as potential regime voters whose partisan and regime preferences conflict. At the same time, we still account for all other voters in our analysis in the following way: for respondents whose partisan and regime preferences are coherent, such that we are in doubt whether these voters really interpret our cohabitation question as a regime issue, we assume that their reported stand on the cohabitation item is a result of 'top-of-the-head' answers based on their salient anchoring preferences. Our prediction is that such electors cast their votes based on their anchoring preferences, according to our baseline model. The difference from the first strategy is that we do not exclude these respondents from the analysis. Thus, we only consider supporters of the left opposing cohabitation (i.e. favouring unified government), as well as supporters of the right favouring cohabitation (i.e. opposing unified government), as potential regime voters, thereby – if at all – erring on the conservative side. This strategy assures that we do not falsely overestimate the importance of regime concerns on vote choice, since, first, we do not have to drop any observations thereby biasing our estimates and, secondly, we preserve the validity of the cohabitation item by making sure that it is only relevant to respondents who are likely to have encoded this issue in a partisan-free way.[26]

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[25] John Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); John Zaller and Stanley Feldman, 'A Simple Theory of the Survey Response: Answering Questions Versus Revealing Preferences', *American Journal of Political Science*, 36 (1992), 579–616.

[26] For the cohabitation item we purposely did not offer an 'I-do-not-really-have-an-opinion' category in order to get respondents to take a stand on this issue. This does not, however, bias our results in any way since we control for partisan encodings of this issue.

Our theory predicts that attitudes towards cohabitation should have an impact under certain circumstances on casting a vote for a party of the political right or left. Since within these two blocs the elites often co-ordinate which party of that bloc actually fields a candidate on the district level, it seems legitimate to simplify a voter's decision problem to a choice between a party candidate of the left versus the right. Additionally, we create a residual category comprising non-voters and voters for extreme party candidates. Our theory does not generate any hypotheses about the behaviour at the polls of voters who fall into this residual category. Including those respondents in a vote-choice model, though, helps to overcome selection bias issues. Thus our dependent variable, in line with the common assumptions about the ideological structure of French politics, reflects our theoretical predictions for three categories representing three political blocs: left, right and others.[27]

Since we argue that the impact of regime preferences on vote choice is conditional on particular partisan preferences, *a priori* we distinguish four partisan groups in the electorate for which we construct dummy variables: right, left, extreme (right and left), as well as respondents without clear partisan preference in the following way: first, we derived every respondent's partisan preference order from standard 10-point party likes/dislikes scales and identified her most preferred party. In order to construct a dummy variable for supporters of the political right, respondents are coded 1 if they most prefer a party of the political right, such as 'Union pour la Démocratie Française' (UDF), 'Rassemblement Pour la République' (RPR) or 'Démocratie Liberale' (DL).[28] Analogously, we construct a dummy for supporters of the political left: a respondent is coded 1 as a supporter of the political left if she most prefers a party of the left, such as 'Parti Socialiste' (PS), the Greens, 'Parti Communiste Français' (PCF) or 'Mouvement Des Citoyens' (MDC). Respondents might, of course, prefer a party of the left and of the right at the same time. Hence, to construct a dummy for the group with unanchored partisan preferences, i.e. without a clear preference for either party bloc, respondents are coded 1 if they have placed both, a party of the left and of the right, in first place. The excluded category consists of respondents who most prefer extremist parties.[29] We have items for nine parties, including all the parties mentioned above as well as for 'Front National' (FN – extreme right) and 'Lutte Ouvrière' (LO – extreme left). Besides partisan preferences we also control for respondents' self-placement on a 10-point left–right ideology scale ranging from 0 (extreme left) to 1

[27] Comparing the distribution of vote intentions in our sample with the actual results of the first round that are published by the Assemblée Nationale (http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/elections/resultats.asp), we get the following: 36 per cent report an intention to vote for a candidate of the right (actual: 39 per cent), 49 per cent report an intention to vote for a candidate of the left (actual: 37 per cent) and 15 per cent report an intention to vote for an extremist candidate (actual: 24 per cent). Thus, based on our sample we get an over-report of the intention to vote for a candidate of the left while we get an under-report of the intention to vote for an extremist candidate. This is consistent with prior research and, unfortunately, seems to be a tradition of election studies in France. Since we include non-voters in our analysis, the distribution of the dependent variable in our sample is as follows: 47 per cent intend to vote for a candidate of the left, 32 per cent report an intention to vote for a candidate of the right and 19 per cent report no vote or a vote for an extremist candidate. Since we are interested in estimating causal effects on the individual-level a slightly skewed distribution of the dependent variable in the aggregate is not problematic.

[28] When the survey was designed the development of the UMP was not evident and we expected that voters would still use well-known party labels as their political referents.

[29] Even if a respondent most prefers a moderate (left or right) and an extreme party at the same time, she is coded as an extremist. Based on respondents' placement of parties on the 10-point likes/dislikes scale, we divide up the electorate into 50 per cent supporters of the left, 32 per cent supporters of the right, 7 per cent extremists and 11 per cent respondents with no clear, i.e., unanchored, preferences.

(extreme right) in order to determine the impact of anchoring preferences.[30] Thus both party preferences as well as ideological self-placement determine the baseline vote-choice model.

According to our theory, regime preferences should matter in an individual's decision-making process above and beyond those variables specifying a baseline vote-choice model. Regime considerations play a different role in an individual's decision-making process for voters with anchored preferences – for the right and the left – as well as for voters with unanchored preferences. Again, if for anchored voters their preferences stay in contrast to their attitudes towards cohabitation, we are able to disentangle regime and partisan considerations. If, however, partisan and regime preferences pull in the same direction, for example in the case of a supporter of the right favouring unified government, we cannot disentangle them. Therefore, we can only test our first hypothesis by studying supporters of the political right who favour cohabitation or, analogously, for supporters of the political left who favour unified government. This is the reason why we construct two dummy variables accordingly. The 'Regime-Right dummy' scores 1 if someone most prefers a party of the political right and favours cohabitation and the 'Regime-Left dummy' scores 1 if someone most prefers a party of the political left and opposes cohabitation.[31]

Our second hypothesis predicts that respondents with unanchored partisan preferences should vote according to their attitudes towards cohabitation. Accordingly, we constructed a 'Regime-Unanchored dummy' that scores 1 if respondents with unanchored partisan preferences oppose cohabitation, hence favouring a unified government strategy.[32] If our second hypothesis is supported, we should find, *ceteris paribus*, that voters opposing cohabitation are less likely to vote for the left than for the right while, at the same time, voters favouring cohabitation are more likely to vote for the left than for the right.

Finally, there are conceivable alternative causal mechanisms for voters deviating from the camp of their most preferred party while holding conflicting regime preferences and voting for a candidate of the other political camp. From theories of electoral behaviour we know that a voter might, of course, vote for a candidate of the other political camp simply because she likes its presidential candidate best. While the observational pattern is the same as for regime voting, the causal mechanism is different. In order to control for this alternative explanation based solely on candidate preferences, we construct a comparative candidate evaluation score in the following manner: we have candidate evaluation measures on a 10-point scale for both major presidential candidates, Chirac or Jospin

[30] We will not engage in the debate about whether left–right ideological attachment or party identification weigh more heavily with the French voter, see Christopher J. Fleury and Michael S. Lewis-Beck, 'Anchoring the French Voter: Ideology versus Party', *Journal of Politics*, 55 (1993), 1100–9; Christopher J. Fleury and Michael S. Lewis-Beck, 'Déjà Vu All Over Again: A Comment on the Comment of Converse and Pierce', *Journal of Politics*, 55 (1993), 1118–26; Philip E. Converse and Roy Pierce, 'Comment on Fleury and Lewis-Beck: "Anchoring the French Voter: Ideology versus Party"', *Journal of Politics*, 55 (1993), 1110–17; Philip E. Converse and Roy Pierce, *Political Representation in France* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1986). Instead, we use party preferences as well as ideological self-placement to determine an anchoring preference.

[31] We find that 16 per cent of all supporters of the right have conflicting regime and partisan preferences, i.e., 5 per cent of all respondents despite most preferring a party on the political right favour cohabitation. Moreover, we find that 37 per cent of all supporters of the left have conflicting regime and partisan preferences, i.e., 19 per cent of all respondents despite most preferring a party on the political left oppose cohabitation.

[32] This is the case for 61 per cent of all unanchored respondents, i.e., 7 per cent of all respondents are both politically unanchored and oppose cohabitation.

respectively. After subtracting the Jospin scores from the Chirac scores we rescale this variable to range from 0 to 1.

Similarly, if voters base their vote choice decisions solely on their opinion about the performance of the Jospin government on certain issues, we might observe a pattern that mirrors the one of regime voting, although these vote-choice decisions clearly have nothing to do with regime voting. Based on the analysis of an open-ended question about the most important problem facing the country today, we, like other survey studies of the 2002 elections, identified the two most relevant issues as the economy[33] and security.[34] After mentioning what they considered to be the most important issue, as a follow-up question, respondents were asked to judge how well Jospin's government performed on this particular issue. On the basis of these items we created two issue variables: a respondent scores $+1$ (or -1) on the economy or the security variable if her most important problem is either the economy or the security issue and she thinks that the Jospin government did handle this problem well (or badly). Otherwise she scores 0 on these variables. If the economy or the security issues have an independent influence on a respondent's decision-making process, we expect these variables to be significant predictors in the vote-choice model. Relevant descriptive statistics of all the independent variables are presented in the appendix table.

REGIME PREFERENCES AND VOTE CHOICE

Is it not simply asking too much of French voters to expect them to entertain ideas about whether the regime they prefer is a divided or a unified government? And in doing this, how can we be sure that they really do take off the political glasses that they otherwise use to make sense of the political realm? In general, we find a slight majority (56:44 per cent) of the respondents in our subsequent analysis in favour of unified government.[35] If the French voters' regime preferences were simply to follow their anchoring preferences, then, based on that, we should systematically be able to predict their attitudes towards cohabitation. Whether we use ideology, candidate evaluation or their partisan preferences alone or combine these factors into a single logit model (not reported here) to predict respondents' reported stands on the cohabitation question, 30 per cent of all respondents are still falsely classified. Thus, it is not the case that voters' attitudes towards cohabitation can be systematically predicted from their anchoring preferences. Apparently, there is more going on.

Moreover, descriptive analysis of the distributions of the 'Regime-Left' and 'Regime-Right' dummies makes it clear that, for almost every fourth respondent in our sample, partisan and regime preferences conflict. We get a similar picture if we analyse the

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[33] The literature on economic voting clearly suggests, though, that the attribution of credit or blame for the state of the economy gets diluted in times of cohabitation; see Michael Lewis-Beck, 'Who's the Chief? Economic Voting Under a Dual Executive', *European Journal of Political Research*, 31 (1997), 315–25; as well as Michael Lewis-Beck and Richard Nadeau, 'French Electoral Institutions and the Economic Vote', *Electoral Studies*, 19 (2000), 171–82.

[34] See also Nonna Mayer and Vincent Tiberj, 'Do Issues Matter? Law and Order in the 2002 French Presidential Elections', in Michael Lewis-Beck, ed., *The French Voter: Before and After the 2002 Elections* (Basingstoke, Hants.: Macmillan, 2003), pp. 33–46.

[35] Only twenty-three respondents were lost from subsequent analysis in that they could not provide an answer to the cohabitation question and at the same time had no missing data on all the other variables of our analysis. Thus the cohabitation issue was not a 'hard' one in the sense that respondents could not provide an answer to it.

TABLE 1   *Disentangling Regime from Anchoring Preferences: A MNL Vote Choice Model of the French Parliamentary Election, 2002*

Independent variables	Others vs. Right			Left vs. Right		
	Coef.	Std. err.	*p*	Coef.	Std. err.	*p*
Ideology	− 0.580	0.797	0.466	− 2.775	0.823	0.001
Candidate Evaluation	− 2.253	1.033	0.029	− 4.260	1.160	0.000
Right Preference	− 4.463	0.767	0.000	− 3.607	0.963	0.000
Left Preference	− 2.039	0.886	0.021	1.860	0.933	0.046
Unanchored Preference	− 3.174	0.853	0.000	− 1.342	0.931	0.150
Regime-Right	0.318	0.523	0.542	1.962	0.777	0.012
Regime-Left	− 0.812	0.648	0.210	− 1.466	0.591	0.013
Regime-Unanchored	− 0.286	0.622	0.646	− 0.026	0.632	0.968
Economy	0.218	0.359	0.544	− 0.210	0.356	0.554
Security	− 0.255	0.326	0.435	− 0.256	0.415	0.537
Constant	4.571	0.907	0.000	4.678	0.976	0.000

Dependent Variable: Vote Choice

Note: *p*-values are for two-tailed tests based on robust (White–Huber) standard errors. $N = 670$, and 80 per cent have been correctly classified.

respondents' stands on ideology. Here over 16 per cent of all respondents have conflicting ideological and regime preferences, i.e., they either place themselves on the ideological left (scale values 0 to 0.3) and favour unified government or place themselves on the ideological right (scale values 0.7 to 1) and favour divided government.[36]

Most interestingly, these bivariate results show that ideological moderates (scale values 0.4 to 0.6) are more inclined to favour unified over divided government. While only 17 per cent of all respondents are moderates preferring divided government, 24 per cent are moderates favouring unified government. Thus, Fiorina's idea of a balancing strategy that motivates ideologically moderate voters seems to be only one part of the regime-voting story in the case of France.[37] In 2002 ideological moderates of the left might also have been motivated to cast a vote for the right against their partisan preferences to make a unified government more likely. To sum up, these descriptive results are quite comforting in that besides respondents' anchoring preferences, their regime preferences, i.e. their attitudes towards cohabitation, also bring something distinct to the table. Using all the explanatory variables in one single model lets us finally answer our research question: what is the impact of cohabitation as a regime issue on voting behaviour? Since our dependent variable has three categories we use a multinomial logit (MNL) model to estimate it.[38] In Table 1 we present two sets of estimates with a vote choice for a candidate of the right as a baseline category.

Overall, the fit of our vote-choice model is excellent. Based on this model we correctly

[36] Ideology and partisan preferences generally do not simply measure the same thing, particularly for partisans of the political left. Less than two out of three supporters of a left party place themselves on the left ideological spectrum. Furthermore, one out of five respondents most preferring a party of the political right do not actually place themselves on the ideological right.

[37] Morris Fiorina, 'An Era of Divided Government', *Political Science Quarterly*, 107 (1992), 387–410.

[38] Hausman tests show that independence of irrelevant alternatives (IIA) is not a problem in our data.

classify eight out of ten respondents. Not surprisingly, ideology, candidate evaluations and partisan preferences are the main determinants of vote choice in France. The right set of estimates shows the estimated coefficients predicting a vote decision between a candidate on the left vs. the right. The left set of estimates shows the estimated coefficients predicting a vote decision between non-voting or voting for an extreme candidate vs. voting for a candidate on the right. As the baseline model would predict if a respondent most prefers a party on the right, she is more likely to cast her vote according to her partisan preferences than for any alternative. Similarly, most preferring a party on the left makes a respondent more likely to cast her vote for a candidate on the left, as the positive 'Left Preference' coefficient of the right set of estimates indicates. At the same time such a voter is less likely to cast a vote for an extremist candidate or to abstain as opposed to voting for the right, as the negative coefficient on the left set of estimates makes clear.

If we focus on a vote choice between a party candidate of the left and the right, what happens when anchoring preferences contrast with voters' regime preferences? As expected, the 'Regime-Right' coefficient is significantly positive, implying that supporters of the political right are seven times ($= \exp(1.962)$) more likely to vote for a candidate of the left in the first round of the parliamentary elections if they favour divided over unified government. Since the 'Regime-Left' coefficient is significantly negative, we get the reverse picture for supporters of the political left. Supporters of the political left favouring unified government as opposed to divided government are more than four times ($= 1/\exp(-1.466)$) less likely to vote for a candidate of the left. This supports our first hypothesis about the impact of regime preferences on the vote choice of anchored voters. Thus, regime preferences are neither an esoteric idiosyncrasy of the electoral cycle in 2002 nor simply partisan, candidate, ideological or issue preferences in drag. Regime preferences have predictable implications for a voter's decision-making process. They matter substantively above and beyond the baseline vote-choice model consisting of ideology, candidate evaluations and partisan preferences that anchor each voter.[39]

Since a MNL model is non-linear and non-additive, the substantive interpretation of these coefficients is not straightforward. The effects of estimated coefficients depend upon values of the other variables and coefficients. To take full advantage of the information available in these estimation results and to interpret and present them in a reader-friendly manner, we therefore run some statistical simulations to compute quantities of substantive interest based on these coefficients.[40]

How strong is the impact of regime preferences on a voter's decision-making process? One way to assess the substantive impact is through 'first differences'.[41] The idea behind

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[39] Our main interest is to model the cross-pressure mechanisms for voters with conflicting anchoring and regime preferences. With our design it is not possible to estimate directly the number of voters who would have voted differently were it not for their regime preference because for many respondents anchoring preference and regime preference are observationally equivalent. Comparing the model predictions with the ones of a model where all variables based on the cohabitation items are excluded is a way to estimate at least a lower bound for this number. Applying this technique, as a lower bound we predict that at least 7.4 per cent of all extremist or non-voters would have voted differently, mainly for a party of the left, while only minor differences (at most 1.2 per cent as a lower bound) can be observed for the total vote share of the right and the left. Here we nevertheless detect a clear tendency that the likelihood of voting for one's own camp is weakened if one holds a conflicting regime preference.

[40] We use CLARIFY, a set of Stata ado-files, to carry out these simulations; see Michael Tomz, Jason Wittenberg and Gary King, *CLARIFY: Software for Interpreting and Presenting Statistical Results*, Version 2.1 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 5 January 2003 (http://gking.harvard.edu/)).

[41] Gary King, Michael Tomz and Jason Wittenberg, 'Making the Most of Statistical Analyses: Improving Interpretation and Presentation', *American Journal of Political Science*, 44 (2000), 347–61.

TABLE 2   *Estimated Causal Effect of Regime Preferences: Predicted Probability of Voting for a Candidate of the Preferred Party Bloc Depending on Regime Preferences*

Partisan Preference	Regime Preference		Estimated causal effect (absolute value)
	Oppose Cohabitation	Favour Cohabitation	
Right	0.72	0.48	0.24*
Left	0.66	0.83	0.17*

Note: All four scenarios assume that voters' candidate evaluation, ideology and their scores on the economy-issue and security-issue scales are at their mean values.
*$p < 0.05$ based on two-tailed tests.

this is to compare the expected voting behaviour of two hypothetical voters who differ only in one characteristic of interest. The difference of the model predictions between these two hypothetical voters represents the substantive impact of this characteristic, in our case their attitude towards cohabitation. Take two hypothetical voters with a mean value on the ideology scale, on both issue scales and on the comparative candidate-evaluation scale.

Suppose such a voter has a clear preference for a party of the political right. The first row of Table 2 shows that our model predicts with a probability of 0.72 that a voter will cast a vote for a candidate of the political right if she opposes cohabitation. She becomes less likely – namely with a probability of 0.48 – to vote for a candidate of her preferred party bloc if she favours cohabitation. Thus we find that supporters of the political right are less likely to vote for a candidate of the right if they favour instead of oppose cohabitation. Conversely, as is shown in the second row, our model predicts that a voter with a preference for the political left will cast a ballot for a party candidate of the political left with a probability of 0.83 if she favours cohabitation. This probability, however, decreases to 0.66 if she opposes cohabitation. Again, we also find for supporters of the political left that the probability of voting for their camp diminishes if they oppose cohabitation. Summing up, consistent with our first hypothesis we find a similar pattern among supporters of very different parties: if voters' attitudes towards cohabitation, i.e. their regime preferences, contrast with their partisan preferences, they become less likely to vote for a candidate of their preferred party bloc. The estimated causal effect of holding regime preferences that cross-pressure one's partisan preferences is statistically significant, has about the same size and is considerable for supporters of the political right (0.24) and the political left (0.17), respectively. These simulations show that regime preferences do have a strong independent impact on a voter's decision-making process above and beyond factors that anchor a voter within the political realm.

As another way of illustrating the effect of regime preferences, we simulate actual voting decisions to see whether conflicting regime preferences alone are sufficient to make a voter deviate from her political camp. In order to visualize these simulations based on the actual data we employ a 'ternary plot'.[42] Since we model the decision in the voting booth as a vote-choice situation between three political options, every voter has a predicted

[42] William L. Miller, *Electoral Dynamics in Britain since 1918* (London: Macmillan, 1977); Jonathan Katz and Gary King, 'A Statistical Model for Multiparty Electoral Data', *American Political Science Review*, 93 (1999), 15–32; King *et al.*, 'Making the Most of Statistical Analyses'.

probability of choosing one of these options: vote for the left, the right and abstain or vote for an extremist candidate. The probabilities have to sum to 1, of course. Suppose a voter is predicted with probability 1 of casting her vote for the right, then the probabilities of voting for the left or the other option have to be both 0. Thus in a ternary plot this voter would be located at the right vertex. Analogously, if a voter is predicted with probability 1 to cast her vote for the left, she is plotted at the left vertex. We add spokes to this triangle in order to ease the interpretation of what these predicted probabilities substantively imply for vote choice. Each spoke connects the midpoint of each side to the midpoint of the triangle and, thereby, effectively divides the triangle into regions in which each vote-choice option is predicted. Thus every dot in the upper region represents a voter who is predicted to cast her vote for an extremist candidate or chooses to abstain. Analogously, every dot in the left (right) region of the triangle represents a voter of the left (right).[43]
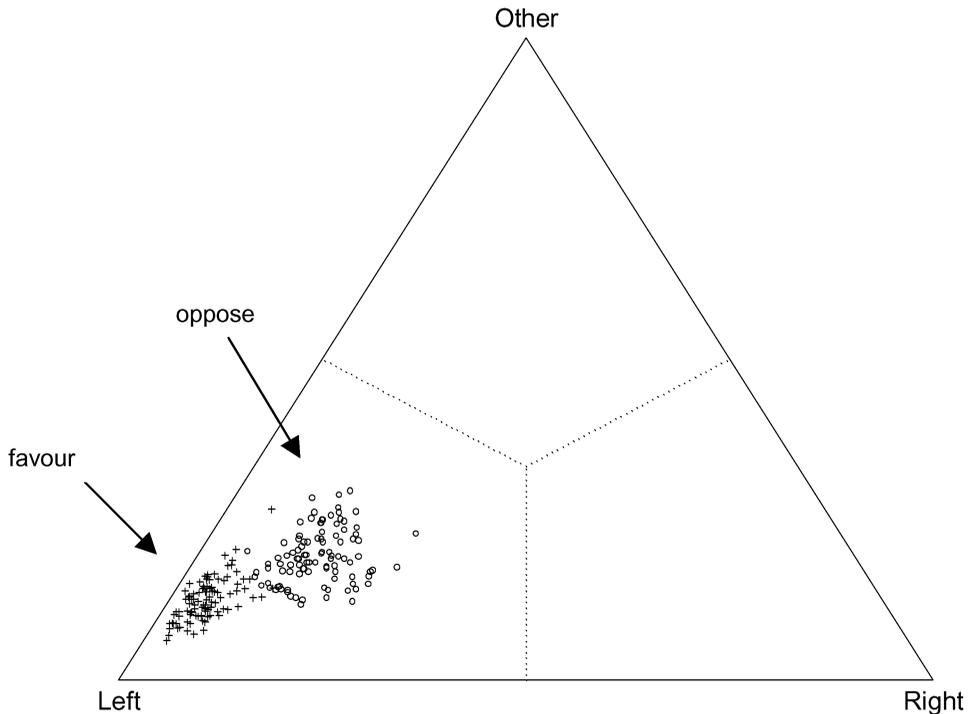

Fig. 2. Simulated influence of attitudes towards cohabitation on vote choice for supporters of the left

Since the impact of regime preferences according to our hypotheses should be different for different groups of the electorate, we define three different scenarios and simulate predicted probabilities for such voters. First, we simulate a hundred vote-choice decisions of supporters of the left with a mean value on the ideology scale, on both issue scales and on the comparative candidate-evaluation scale. Would their vote choice be different if they opposed instead of favoured cohabitation? In the first run we assume that they favour cohabitation (these votes are indicated in Figure 2 by a plus sign) while in the second

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[43] Nicholas J. Cox of the University of Durham has written a very helpful Stata module (-triplot.ado-) to draw such ternary plots.

run we hypothetically change their attitudes towards cohabitation such that they oppose cohabitation (these votes are indicated in Figure 2 by a hollow dot). The predicted voting behaviour is presented in Figure 2.

Compared to leftists who favour cohabitation, we find, as expected, that if these voters could be persuaded to oppose cohabitation this would draw them away from the left vertex. We observe a substantial rightward and smaller upward movements indicating that all of these hypothetical voters are substantially more likely to vote for the right and, at the same time are more likely to abstain or to vote for an extremist candidate.[44] Comparing the two scenarios in Figure 2 it can be seen that the predicted probabilities spread wider for supporters of the left opposing cohabitation. Substantively, this means that if anchoring preferences get cross-pressured by regime preferences, the resulting voting behaviour is more uncertain than for the case where anchoring and regime preferences are in line with one another. Nevertheless all dots still remain in the left region. We thus clearly show that changing attitudes about cohabitation is not sufficient on its own to change the voting behaviour of supporters of the left substantially.
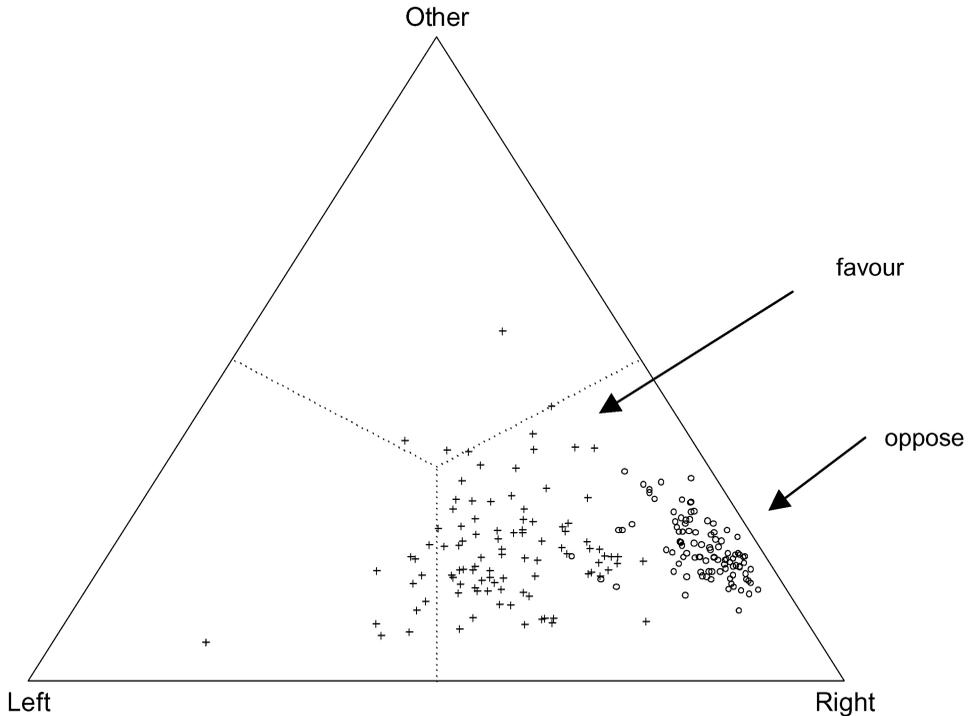

Fig. 3. Simulated influence of attitudes towards cohabitation on vote choice for supporters of the right

Similarly, we would like to find out in a second scenario whether or to what degree a hundred hypothetical supporters of the right with a mean ideology value and a mean value

[44] Even if left supporters were brought to abstain from the election because they had been persuaded that cohabitation was a bad idea, this had an indirect effect on the election outcome because it would have weakened the political left. See Thomas Gschwend and Dirk Leuffen, 'Stuck between a Rock and a Hard Place: Electoral Dilemmas and Turnout in the 2002 French Legislative Elections', in Michael Lewis-Beck, ed., *The French Voter: Before and After the 2002 Elections* (Basingstoke, Hants.: Palgrave, 2003), pp. 155–77.

on both issue scales as well as on the comparative candidate evaluation scale are likely to change their vote choice according to their regime preferences. The results of this counterfactual analysis are presented in Figure 3.

Again, we observe a substantial movement away from the (right) vertex of the triangle and greater variance of the predicted probabilities if partisan and regime preferences conflict. In general, supporters of the right with conflicting partisan and regime preferences are less likely to vote according to their partisan preferences. Here we see a stronger movement to the left than to the top of the plot. This implies that there is a stronger tendency to become more likely to vote for a candidate of the left if supporters of the right change their attitude towards favouring cohabitation. Moreover, counting up the pluses in the left region, our simulations show that about 12 per cent of all average supporters of the right would vote for a candidate of the left instead when anchoring and regime preferences conflict. We can thus clearly show that for quite a number of supporters of the right, changing attitudes towards cohabitation would already be enough to modify their vote choice. Interestingly, the figure at the same time makes it clear that about 4 per cent of all supporters of the right who initially planned to abstain from the election might be mobilized to vote for the right if they are persuaded during the campaign to oppose cohabitation.

In order to concentrate on our second hypothesis, we now focus on voters with unanchored partisan preferences, i.e. respondents who prefer a party on the right as well as a party on the left. The results of hypothetically changing their attitudes towards cohabitation are presented in Figure 4. Again a plus sign indicates voters favouring, and a hollow dot those opposing, cohabitation.

Here, we clearly see how strong the substantive impact of regime preferences becomes when a voter is not clearly anchored politically. Again, we simulate the vote-choice decisions of a hundred unanchored respondents with a mean ideology value as well as a mean value on both issue scales and on the comparative candidate evaluation scale. If these respondents can be persuaded to oppose cohabitation instead of favouring it, something that the campaign of the right actually emphasized, a close inspection of our simulation results shows that the political right will almost double its vote share – from 37 to 57 per cent – within this voter segment. Consistent with our reasoning, the largest gains are thus made within the subgroup of unanchored voters. They changed their vote intention from left to right after we simulated a change in their regime preferences from favouring towards opposing cohabitation, holding everything else constant. Moreover, Figure 4 makes it clear that a considerable share of voters who tended towards abstention or an extremist vote now become likely to switch to a candidate of the political right if they were to change their regime preferences towards opposing cohabitation. Thus, for voters with unanchored partisan preferences we clearly see the strongest substantive impact of campaigning on the issue of cohabitation. This result does support our second hypothesis. Although the predicted rightward movement does not seem significant – as the non-significant 'Regime-Unanchored' coefficients in Table 1 formally show – the movement never-theless has a strong substantive effect: changing these voters' attitudes from favouring towards opposing cohabitation does motivate them to cross the line from the left or the 'other region' into the right region. This clearly illustrates that voters who have not formed clear partisan preferences can be motivated, for example, by an election campaign, eventually to vote according to their regime preference. In our case of the 2002 French legislative elections this means that voters without predispositions that anchor them politically would have been activated and finally converted to vote for a candidate of the
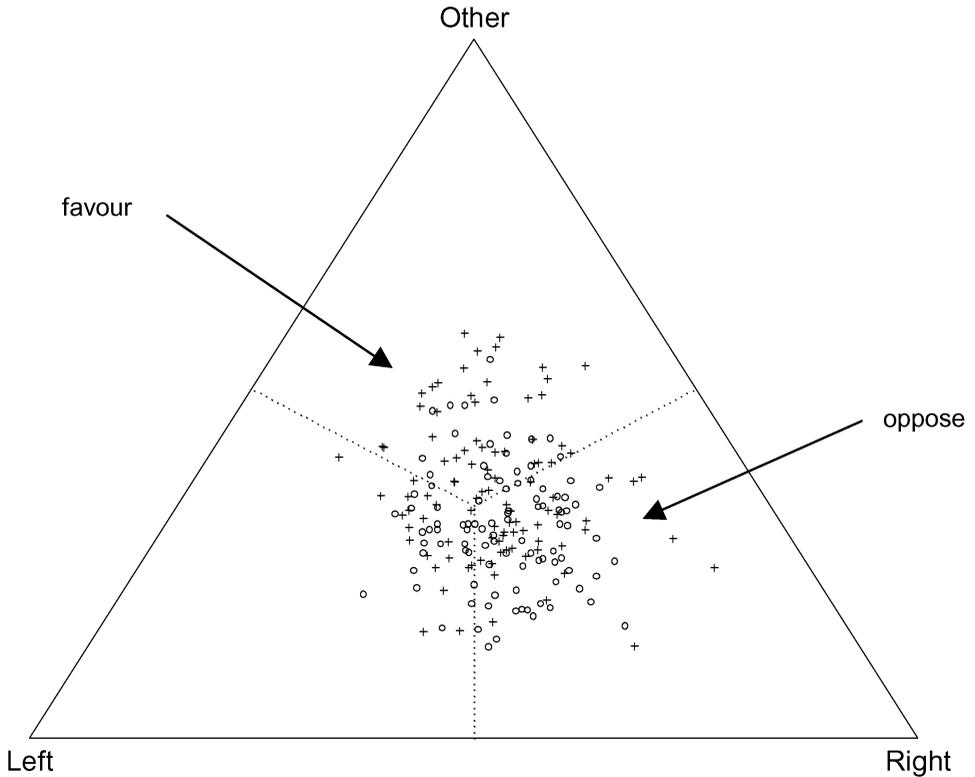
Fig. 4. Simulated influence of attitudes towards cohabitation for respondents with unanchored preferences

right if they had been persuaded that a unified government would have served France better.[45]

Who are potential regime voters? Looking solely at the case of the United States, Fiorina argues that ideological moderates should prefer divided government and vote accordingly.[46] Does this evidence from the United States help in any way to explain divided government in comparative perspective? In order to answer this important question we simulate two sets of scenarios in order to assess the impact of ideological self-placement on regime voting. In the first scenario we are interested in divided government voting. Thus, we simulate the probability of supporters of the political right voting for a candidate of the left. We distinguish four cases depending on whether respondents are ideological moderates (scoring 0.5 on the ideology scale) or hardliners (scoring 1 on the ideology scale) on the right and whether they favour or oppose cohabitation. In the second scenario we are interested in unified government voting. Thus, we simulate the probability of supporters of the political left voting for a candidate of the right. We again distinguish four cases depending on whether respondents are ideological moderates (scoring 0.5 on the ideology

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[45] That, indeed, can become politically relevant. In 2002, public opinion towards cohabitation strongly declined in just a few weeks. Compare the Louis Harris polling results about cohabitation published in *Libération* on 29 March 2002 with the ones published on 7 March 2002.

[46] Morris Fiorina, *Divided Government* (New York: Macmillan, 1992).

TABLE 3   *Predicted Probabilities of Regime Voting across Ideology and Regime Preferences*

Scenario 1: Divided Government Voting

	Predicted probability of voting for the left	
	Favour cohabitation	Oppose cohabitation
Supporter of the political right, ideologically moderate	0.32	0.07
Supporter of the political right, ideologically right	0.12	0.02

Scenario 2: Unified Government Voting

	Predicted probability of voting for the right	
	Favour cohabitation	Oppose cohabitation
Supporter of the political left, ideologically moderate	0.04	0.14
Supporter of the political left, ideologically left	0.01	0.05

Note: All scenarios assume that voters' candidate evaluation scores, as well as their scores on the economy-issue and security-issue scales, are at their mean values.

scale) or hardliners (scoring 0 on the ideology scale) of the left and whether they favour or oppose cohabitation. Table 3 summarizes our results.

In either scenario we again find evidence that regime preferences have a predictable impact on a voter's decision-making process. As expected from our previous findings, supporters of the right are more likely to cast their vote for the left if they favour cohabitation than if they oppose cohabitation. Conversely, supporters of the left are more likely to vote for the right if they oppose cohabitation (i.e., they prefer unified government). When we compare their stand on ideology we can see that supporters of the right who favour cohabitation are more likely to vote for the left if they are ideologically moderate (32 per cent) than if they are ideological hardliners (12 per cent). It thus seems easier for moderate supporters of the right party bloc to switch their camp. This finding seems to echo Fiorina's policy-balancing model.[47] In the case of the United States, Fiorina similarly found that divided government voters come from the central, moderate range of the ideological spectrum while ideological hardliners are unified government voters.[48]

Our findings in the second scenario, however, lead us to question the generalizability of Fiorina's policy-balancing argument. According to his theory 'moderate middle-of-the-road citizens' should generally prefer divided government. We, however, find that moderate leftists opposing cohabitation are more likely to vote for the right, i.e. they are more likely to vote for unified government, than ideological hardliners (14 per cent vs. 5

[47] Fiorina, *Divided Government*, pp. 72–81.

[48] Fiorina, *Divided Government*, p. 76. Contrary to the case of France, in the United States electors cast their vote for president and Congress at the same time, at least in presidential election years. Scholars of divided government in the United States, therefore, often focus on ticket-splitting behaviour as an indication of divided government voting.

per cent).[49] These predicted probabilities thus suggest that, at least in the case of France, ideologically moderate voters do not necessarily vote for divided government, as the literature on divided government in the United States (following Fiorina) would predict. Instead, the evidence presented does support the idea that ideological moderates simply are more likely to vote according to their regime preferences, no matter whether they prefer unified or divided government. A possible explanation for this observation could be that their ideological moderation makes it easier for them to cross partisan borders.

CONCLUSION

In this article we have analysed how voters include institutional considerations in their vote choice. We estimate the impact of voters' preferences for divided or unified government on their voting behaviour in the 2002 French legislative elections. For these elections regime voting has been evoked, if only *avant la lettre*. Our theory predicts that voters weigh their partisan against their regime preferences. If voters' regime preferences pull them in the opposite directions to their partisan preferences, we hypothesize that they become less likely to vote for their partisan preferences.

Our research again clearly shows that naïvely applying behavioural theories without reference to the institutional embeddedness of the act of voting can be considered a misconception. In particular, our findings on France make it clear that there are voters out there who prefer a unified government, as well as voters who prefer cohabitation and vote consistently with their regime preferences, albeit holding contrasting partisan preferences. This behaviour, while consistent with our theory of regime voting, cannot be accounted for by traditional vote-choice models. However, for most respondents partisan preferences generally outweigh regime preferences. This finding especially holds true for ideological hardliners. Only a minority of voters with clear anchoring preferences actually change sides in the voting booth. Regime preferences for these segments of the electorate rather tend to affect their willingness to turn out or to vote for extremist parties. In 2002, supporters of the left preferring unified government were more likely to stay at home or vote for an extremist party; supporters of the right preferring unified government, on the other hand, were mobilized to turn out for their camp. For voters who cannot fall back on their partisan yardstick, i.e., those who are not anchored politically, regime preferences seem to exert the strongest substantive influence. In 2002 they generally supported the right when preferring a unified government.

Our study, additionally, provides a new perspective on Fiorina's theory of divided government. Whereas for the United States Fiorina claims that moderate voters should support divided government in order to balance power,[50] we, in the case of France, can show that moderate voters, at least in 2002, supported and voted for a unified government. Thus, moderate voters do not generally apply a policy-balancing strategy. Instead, our results indicate that moderate voters simply are more likely to vote consistently with their regime preferences, no matter whether they prefer a unified or a divided government.

When generalizing our findings, we have to take into account the specificities of our case selection. The 2002 French legislative elections certainly took place in a particular context given the electoral success of Jean-Marie Le Pen in the presidential race. Whereas this might account, first of all, for the surge of preferences for unified government, it in no way

[49] This difference is significant given its 95 per cent confidence interval.
[50] Fiorina, 'An Era of Divided Government'.

precludes the possibility that similar mechanisms of regime voting can occur in different political contexts. Public opinion towards cohabitation clearly deteriorated before and during the 2002 election campaign.[51] Given the way the campaign unfolded, it is also quite likely that the salience of the regime issue increased in the weeks between the time our survey was in the field and the second round of the parliamentary elections. Furthermore, since our analysis centres on the first round of the legislative elections (where voters generally are expected to vote 'with their heart'), we think that we are erring, if at all, on the conservative side. However, future research should, of course, test our theory on other elections as well.

Large parts of our survey have been specially designed to implement our research design for the case of France. While Lewis-Beck and Nadeau point to a similar logic for the United States, a system with a deeply developed checks-and-balances tradition,[52] our study, for the first time, presents substantive evidence from outside the United States that voters systematically act in accordance with their regime preferences. Future comparative research should engage in more systematic analysis of how regime preferences are linked to different political cultures and institutions. Why, for example, do French voters seem to hold a higher degree of confidence in unified government than voters in the United States, and what impact do those attitudes have on their voting behaviour? So far, we have no indication of the stability and strength of voters' regime preferences, how accessible they are or whether these preferences are held with great confidence.

Additionally, in order to improve our understanding of how different institutions facilitate regime voting, other political systems need to be studied as well. For example, the new presidential systems in Eastern Europe or the cycle of Bundestag and state elections in Germany come to mind. Thus, far from concluding *rien ne va plus*, such research would certainly add to the early picture drawn by other scholars of the behavioural foundations of divided government.

APPENDIX: *Descriptive Statistics of All Independent Variables*

Independent variables	Mean	Std. dev.	Range
Ideology (scale)	0.50	0.26	[0,1]
Candidate Evaluation (scale)	0.50	0.22	[0,1]
Right Preference	0.32	0.47	0,1
Left Preference	0.51	0.50	0,1
Unanchored Preference	0.10	0.30	0,1
Regime-Right	0.05	0.22	0,1
Regime-Left	0.19	0.39	0,1
Regime-Unanchored	0.06	0.24	0,1
Economy	0.02	0.37	$-1,0,1$
Security	-0.10	0.43	$-1,0,1$

[51] Compare Gérard Grunberg, 'Du cohabitationnisme de l'opinion', *Pouvoirs: Revue française d'études constitutionelles et politiques*, 91 (1999), 83–95, with the survey data published on 11 June 2002 in *Libération*. There, 26 per cent of the voters declared to have voted to give a coherent majority to the president. However, the validity of this information should be handled with care, since the respondents were able to state three reasons, and right and left supporters were not differentiated.

[52] Michael S. Lewis-Beck and Richard Nadeau, 'Split-Ticket Voting: The Effects of Cognitive Madisonianism', *Journal of Politics*, 66 (2004), 97–112.