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Winning by priming? Campaign strategies, changing determinants of voting intention, and the outcome of the German federal election 2002<sup>1</sup>

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Although governing coalitions in Germany often win reelection, many observers were surprised by the victory of the red-green coalition in 2002. Earlier that year, the polls had shown strong support for a potential coalition of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Christian Social Union (CSU), together with the Free Democratic Party (FDP). In the summer of 2002, however, the SPD and the Greens began to gain ground; and finally, the red-green coalition won the majority of seats in the election to the German parliament, the Bundestag, on 22 September 2002.

After the election, various explanations were offered for this outcome. Among them, it was suggested that, in the course of the campaign, the voters had changed the criteria they employed to decide which party to vote for. Following a classical line of reasoning, it was argued that throughout the election year many voters had returned to their longstanding party loyalties.<sup>2</sup> Alternatively, it was suggested that the increasing impact of short-term political attitudes on voting behavior had decided the election in favor of the red-green coalition: according to some observers, candidate orientations in favor of Gerhard Schröder had turned the tide;<sup>3</sup> according to others, issue orientations –

attitudes about the government's response to the flooding of the Elbe river and the impending military intervention in Iraq – had been decisive.<sup>4</sup>

This article analyzes whether the relevance of the various factors influencing voting behavior changed over the course of 2002 and whether this change contributed to the reelection of the red-green coalition. First, I will show that, in the 2002 election campaign, governing parties sought to draw the public's attention to different topics than did the opposition parties; additionally, I will address how such strategies can influence the determinants of voting behavior and electoral outcomes. Then, I shall provide an empirical analysis of whether the influence of various determinants changed over time and whether this had an impact on the electoral outcome in 2002. Finally, the results are summed up and discussed.

### **Campaign Strategies and the Potential for Priming Effects in 2002**

One method for parties and candidates to influence voting behavior and electoral outcomes is “priming,” which is an attempt to draw the public's attention to certain themes in order to increase these topics' influence on voting behavior.<sup>5</sup> By this strategy a party can increase its electoral prospects if the public is more in favor of this party on the primed issue than on other topics which might influence voting behavior; a party, for example, which is supported by 20 percent of the electorate, while 50 percent of the public prefer its candidate to his contenders, has a strong incentive to prime candidates. Empirical evidence has shown that such strategies work in Western democracies: in the 1988 Canadian election, for example, the free-trade issue was successfully primed, while in the course of the 1993 and the 1997 campaigns, leader images became more

influential on voting behavior.<sup>6</sup> Thus, priming appears to be a promising strategy in electoral competition.

In the 2002 German federal campaign, parties employed priming strategies. The parties' strategies, however, differed with respect to the themes they tried to prime. These differences become obvious when comparing the campaigns of government and opposition parties, and especially the major parties of both potential governmental coalitions, the SPD and the CDU/CSU. The CDU and CSU and their chancellor candidate, Edmund Stoiber, the *Ministerpräsident* of Bavaria, fought a "competence campaign" (*Kompetenzwahlkampf*): they attempted to make the election a quasi-referendum on the government's management of the economy and its failure to reduce unemployment significantly. They pointed to low rates of economic growth, high unemployment rates, and large public deficits in Germany; additionally, the national situation was contrasted with the relative economic well-being in Bavaria under Stoiber's leadership. In order to emphasize these topics, furthermore, the opposition announced a planned merger of the ministries of economics and labor/social security into a single ministry of economics and labor and the appointment of Lothar Späth, a popular former *Ministerpräsident* and then-manager of a private enterprise in East Germany, as head of the new ministry.<sup>7</sup> The opposition's emphasis on economics, unemployment, and public finance became evident both in the parties' press statements<sup>8</sup> and in the televised debates of Schröder and Stoiber.<sup>9</sup> This strategy seemed reasonable since the public was quite dissatisfied with the economic results of red-green policies (see Figure 1).

- Figure 1 about here -

The governing parties, in contrast, tried to distract the public's attention from the economy and the labor market. From the start of the campaign, they attempted to present the election as a choice between the two candidates for chancellor – “him or me” (“*er oder ich*”), as Chancellor Schröder put it.<sup>10</sup> Hence, they aimed at personalizing the voting decision; this seemed reasonable since Schröder would have easily defeated Stoiber if voters had been asked to vote for the chancellor directly in 2002 (see Figure 2). This personality-oriented strategy was supported by a new campaign element: on August 25th and on September 8th, the incumbent and his challenger faced each other in public debates broadcast on national television stations, as commonly seen in US presidential elections. These media events may have reinforced the voters' impression that they should give considerable weight to candidate orientations in decision-making. In the summer of 2002, political events offered Chancellor Schröder additional opportunities to campaign for a personal vote. First, the flood of the century along the Elbe River enabled Schröder to demonstrate his rigor and determination, to present himself as a “savior” and to draw the voters' attention to the candidate as the most important criterion for electoral decision-making. A similar opportunity emerged when a possible attack by the United States on Iraq entered the public agenda.<sup>11</sup>

- Figure 2 about here -

The Iraq debate and the flood along the Elbe, however, are not only forces to prime candidate orientations. Rather, attitudes towards these events, it can be assumed,

became powerful determinants of voting behavior in their own right because these topics were covered by the media and emphasized by the governing parties. In the case of the Iraq issue, it is quite clear that the government strategically chose to prime this topic, since Chancellor Schröder refused to send German troops to Iraq at the beginning of August 2002 when Germany had not been asked for troops.<sup>12</sup> The case of the flood is different. To be sure, it was a natural disaster and thus outside the reach or planning of any candidate or party. However, the governing parties, last but not least Schröder himself, chose to make the response to the flood an element of their campaign — an element that could prove useful in distracting the public's attention from economic issues. That it was a strategic choice of politicians becomes quite clear when one takes into account that, at the outset of the flood disaster, towns and cities in Bavaria were concerned – but Stoiber, though *Ministerpräsident* of Bavaria, did not visit victims and did not announce financial aid as Schröder later did in eastern Germany.

Though different in nature, the priming of both issues seemed to increase the electoral support of the governing parties. Since the public strongly approved of the government's management of the flood crisis (see Table 1), the rising importance of attitudes on this topic, it can be expected, improved electoral prospects of the SPD and the Greens. Likewise, the red-green coalition, it can be assumed, gained votes by focusing on the Iraq issue because many Germans, especially in the east, agreed with Schröder's and the governing parties' antiwar stance (see Table 2).<sup>13</sup>

- Tables 1 and 2 about here –

In summary, in the 2002 federal campaign, governing and opposition parties pursued priming strategies. The opposition focused on economics and unemployment, while the governing parties emphasized candidates, the management of the flood crisis, and the Iraq issue. Although, in light of the reasoning presented above, these strategies seem straightforward, it is not really self-evident that priming strategies are successful. An obvious limiting factor is party competition: since different parties try to emphasize different themes, these efforts may cancel out each other – and as a result, the impact of the various determinants remains unchanged throughout a campaign. Hence, issues that no party can easily ignore appear to be especially promising; in the case of the 2002 election, this argument supports the hypothesis that the flood and the impending Iraq intervention were issues likely to influence voters' decisions increasingly.

Additionally, the role of the mass media in political communications has to be taken into account when the likely success of priming strategies is discussed. Mass media create a critical link between political elites and voters; and what is more, they do not simply mirror reality, but they consciously select the contents and the format of their presentation;<sup>14</sup> especially, they prefer to report surprising and negative events, and they favor the personalization of political issues.<sup>15</sup> The implications of this argument for the various priming strategies in 2002 are obvious. Opposition parties tried to distract attention from candidates and to direct it to economics and unemployment, quite well-established and little surprising topics; hence, increasing the influence of these issues on voters' decision-making was not an easy task. The governing parties, in contrast, emphasized candidates, the flood, and a possible war against Iraq; and these are topics the media was likely to cover even without encouragement by the political parties. As a

consequence, the governing parties' priming strategy appears to be comparatively more promising than that of opposition parties.

As campaigns regularly draw the voters' attention to short-term events, it seems plausible that in the 2002 federal election campaign, short-term attitudes, whether related to candidates or issues, increased in importance at the expense of the influence of long-term orientations. Election campaigns, however, can prime long-standing loyalties, too. In campaigns, the debate between parties becomes more polarized,<sup>16</sup> and parties point to the fact that in the party-centered political system in Germany, voters can improve the chances that a certain policy will be enacted and that a certain candidate will become chancellor only by casting their vote for a certain party. Thus, while campaigns focus on short-term factors, the partisan nature of campaigning in Germany may improve the influence of long-standing party attachments on voting behavior.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, parties have an incentive to emphasize long-standing party identifications since this strategy can mobilize party loyalists who otherwise might abstain.

In summary, the discussion reveals that, in the 2002 federal election campaign, parties pursued priming strategies. Comparing the strategies of government and opposition parties, the strategy of the former appears to have been more promising than the "competence campaign" of the opposing parties. Thus, the differing success in influencing the voters' criteria of decision-making may have been critical for the last-minute victory of the red-green coalition in 2002.

## **Empirical Analysis**

The question of whether priming effects did influence the outcome of the 2002 German federal election will be discussed in two steps. First, I will analyze whether the importance of the various determinants of voting behavior changed significantly in the course of the campaign. Then, I will ask whether these changes influenced the electoral outcome on 22 September 2002.

Empirical analyses are based on cross-sectional survey data gathered by the Forschungsgruppe Wahlen. They cover the year 2002 from the second week of January, when the CDU/CSU nominated Edmund Stoiber as their chancellor candidate, to the week immediately before the federal election. In order to keep the number of cases from becoming too small, analyses are not conducted separately for western and eastern Germany, but for Germany as a whole. Voting intention is operationalized by two dummy variables, one capturing voting for the SPD and Greens, one measuring voting for CDU/CSU and FDP; in both cases, undecided voters and persons without any intention to vote are included, since an important campaign effect consists in mobilizing or persuading undecided persons. Voting intention is regressed on five predictors: party identification, attitudes towards the parties' competence to improve the economy, candidate preference, attitudes towards the government's management of the flood crisis, and its position with respect to the Iraq issue (see the appendix for details). The five predictors are entered simultaneously into logistic regression, since only a multivariate analysis can preclude a substantive interpretation of spurious correlations.<sup>18</sup>

#### *The Determinants of Voting Intention in the Course of the 2002 Campaign*

As figures 3 and 4 show, the effects of party identification on voting intention for both the red-green coalition and the opposition are remarkably stable throughout the year



2002: though at first glance the effect coefficients seem to decrease slightly, when taking sampling error into account one sees no variation over time.<sup>19</sup> Hence, the classical notion that in the course of a campaign long-standing party loyalties become more important determinants of voting behavior is not supported in the case of the German federal election in 2002.<sup>20</sup> This finding fits in nicely with empirical evidence from former German and Canadian federal elections, while in the United States the effect of party identification appears to increase in the course of a campaign.<sup>21</sup> These differing findings may be accounted for as follows: due to the candidate-centered nature of the US political system, the effect of party identification can be strengthened by partisan campaign strategies; in party-centered systems, in contrast, no such effects can be detected since party identification is a comparatively powerful predictor of voting intention even before the start of an election campaign.

- Figures 3 and 4 about here –

Throughout the whole period under investigation, attitudes about the parties' economic competence considerably influence the intention to vote for the red-green coalition. However, there are only minor variations over time. Only from week 34 to week 35, the effect temporarily increases to a statistically significant degree. Since this change coincides with the first televised debate, it is plausible that the increase resulted from the event. However, results reveal, too, that this effect vanishes after only one week. Turning to the vote for CDU/CSU and FDP, the effect of the attribution of economic competence clearly changes over time. From week 26 to week 28, the effect rises significantly, but thereafter it declines until week 34 again; this may be the result of the

intensive media coverage of the flood. Parallel to the first televised debate, and probably because of Stoiber's emphasis on unemployment and economics in this debate, the effect increases once again to a statistically significant degree from about 0.9 to more than 1.5. But, again, the increase is a temporary phenomenon: the effect does not decline as rapidly as for the governing parties, but even the slight decline causes the coefficient in the week before the election to be undistinguishable from the economic effects measured at any other time in the election year. Thus, the results suggest that the first televised debate and the subsequent media coverage temporarily strengthened the effect of economic attitudes on party preferences. On September 22nd, however, the impact of these attitudes on voting behavior was not stronger than throughout the 2002 campaign. Hence, the strategy to prime economics and to make the election a quasi-referendum on the government's handling of the economy and unemployment failed.

The Iraq-related effects on voting behavior for the governing parties and the opposition follow different paths. Voting intention for SPD/Greens is influenced by the Iraq issue in week 36: opponents of a military intervention in Iraq refuse to vote for the governing parties. However, this effect vanishes by week 38. In contrast, the Iraq effect on voting intention for CDU/CSU and FDP increases from week 36 to week 38 steadily; as a result, in the week immediately before the election, opposition to a military intervention in Iraq lowers the probability to vote for CDU/CSU and FDP. Hence, the Iraq issue was successfully primed in the 2002 campaign.

As far as the electoral effect of attitudes about the management of the Elbe flood is concerned, the analysis reveals different developments for the governing and opposition parties. In week 34, when the issue is included in the interviews for the first time, the flood attitudes have no impact on voting intention for the governing parties; in

contrast, the CDU/CSU and FDP benefit from a positive evaluation of the government's management of this crisis. This result may seem astonishing at first glance, but it can be attributed to the fact that, initially, there was no partisan disagreement about the flood catastrophe. The situation changed, however; when Chancellor Schröder presented a plan on how to provide financial assistance to flood victims, the CDU/CSU and FDP criticized him harshly. As a result, in week 36 a positive evaluation of the government action lowers the probability of a vote for the CDU/CSU or FDP to a significant degree. However, the flood effect on voting intention for the liberal-conservative opposition turns out to be a temporary phenomenon, since it vanishes by week 38. Turning to the governing parties once again, Figure 3 reveals a remarkably different development: the flood effect increases steadily and approaches statistical significance in the week before September 22nd. Hence, the governing parties succeeded in priming this issue.

In the course of the campaign, candidate effects on voting intention for both the governing and the opposition parties vary quite clearly. As far as voting for the CDU/CSU and FDP is concerned, from January to September 22nd, the candidate effect tends to increase from about 0.8 to about 1. However, the fluctuations shown in Figure 4 remain within the margin of sampling error. Turning to the candidate effects on voting intention for the governing parties, the analysis reveals substantial variations. After a period of slight growth, the effect decreases sharply from week 34 to week 35; as the temporal coincidence suggests, this decrease can be interpreted as a consequence of the first televised debate. The second debate, however, appears to have a different effect: from week 36 to week 37, the impact of candidate orientations on electoral choice clearly increases. Hence, candidate effects on voting intention for the SPD/Greens react much more sharply than in the case of the opposition parties. Like in some cases

reported above, however, the debate effect wears off soon after the event. But the remarkable point is that, even after this decline, the candidate effect measured immediately before the election, roughly 1.3, is significantly stronger than at the outset of the campaign when it was about 0.75.<sup>22</sup> Thus, it can be concluded that voting intentions for the governing parties became more personalized in the course of the year 2002.

In summary, the analysis shows that the effects on voting intention of party loyalties and attitudes towards economic competence did not change significantly in 2002. In contrast, the candidate effect on voting behavior became much stronger; this result is particularly noteworthy, since from 1980 to 1998, in only two out of six German federal election campaigns, empirical evidence points to an increasing influence of candidate orientations on voting behavior.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, the two issues that entered the public agenda in the summer of 2002 became powerful predictors of voters' preferences on September 22nd. Hence, in line with the theory-based expectations presented above, the priming strategy of the governing coalition was much more successful than that of the opposition parties.

#### *Priming Effects and the Election Outcome*

For parties and candidates, priming effects are especially important insofar as they influence the outcome of an election. Whether this was the case in the 2002 federal election is analyzed as follows. In order to examine the effect of candidate priming on the election returns for the SPD and the Greens, the share of votes obtained in the sample interviewed immediately before the election is compared with the share of votes the red-green coalition would have received in that week if – all other things being

equal– the candidate effect had been as strong as it had been at the outset of the campaign.

As can be seen in Table 3, the governing parties would have done significantly worse if the candidate effect had not increased during the campaign; this result does not come as a surprise, though the increase of the candidate effect may seem quite small: due to Chancellor Schröder’s large lead in popularity, an increase of the candidate effect could shift the partisan balance clearly in favor of the red-green coalition. Similarly, the public strongly approved of the government’s management of the flood catastrophe; consequently, the governing parties benefited considerably from the increasing effect of the flood issue. As a large majority of Germans opposed the intention to send German troops to Iraq, the opposition parties would have won significantly more votes if the Iraq issue had not entered the public agenda.

- Table 3 about here –

In summary, the changes with respect to the determinants of voting behavior increased the share of votes cast for the governing parties by more than 6 percent, while it decreased the share of votes the opposition received by about 2 percent. Hence, the comparative advantage enjoyed by the governing parties that can be attributed to priming is considerably larger than the SPD/Greens’ lead of 1.2 percentage points over the CDU/CSU and the FDP on 22 September 2002. As a result, the analysis suggests that the red-green coalition and Gerhard Schröder would not have won the German federal election in 2002 if priming effects had not occurred.

## **Conclusion**

In the 2002 German federal election, the red-green coalition remained in power, though for many weeks, the polls had clearly shown stronger support for a CDU/CSU and FDP coalition. The present analysis shows that priming effects contributed considerably to this electoral recovery. First, it is demonstrated that voters reacted to the strategies parties and candidates employed; to put it differently, to a considerable degree, voting behavior turns out to echo the choices offered by the political elite.<sup>24</sup> The red-green coalition succeeded in priming candidate orientations, attitudes about the Iraq issue and the management of the flood crisis along the Elbe. In line with my theoretical reasoning, the opposition parties were not able to strengthen the influence of competence attributions in the field of economic politics. Since, with respect to the three dimensions whose electoral influence increased in 2002, the governing coalition was much more popular than the opposition, the change in the importance of the criteria of decision-making contributed significantly to the electoral success of the red-green coalition. Thus, in Germany, like in other Western democracies, issue management and priming strategies pay at the polls.

According to these findings, priming strategies can be expected to be a common instrument in future election campaigns. Such strategies appear more promising when the topic to be primed is in line with the criteria mass media employ when they decide which topics and in which way to report. Besides covering surprising and negative events, the media favor to personalize political issues. Hence, one can expect candidate attitudes to play a key role in future priming strategies.

In a more general perspective, the analysis sheds some light on the role of campaigns in electoral politics. As empirical evidence reveals, in German election campaigns the

effect of party identification on voting intention remains the same throughout a campaign, while attitudes on short-term factors become more important. This pattern is not in line with the notion that campaigns activate deep-seated loyalties and make electoral outcomes return to an equilibrium defined by the quite stable distribution of party loyalties. Rather, campaigns strengthen the influence of factors that are variable and can be influenced easily by parties and candidates; hence, they increase the influence of political elites on electoral outcomes and contribute to electoral change from one election to another. As a result, in the long run, campaigns appear to be rather destabilizing than stabilizing forces in electoral politics.

Finally, priming effects do not leave unchanged the conclusions that can be drawn from electoral outcomes. In the 2002 campaign, voting behavior was increasingly influenced by candidate orientations and attitudes towards the two “flash” issues, while the effect of attitudes towards the competence of the parties in economics was not strengthened. Since priming effects lowered the comparative influence of socioeconomic orientations, at the end of the campaign, voting behavior can be regarded as being less a mirror image of public opinion on socioeconomic problems than it was at the outset of the campaign. Thus, priming effects undermined the justification to interpret the election outcome as a public mandate for certain socioeconomic policies to attack fundamental political problems. In a more general perspective, one may conclude the following: as far as parties and candidates have incentives to prime topics other than well-known fundamental political problems, priming strategies can contribute considerably to electoral success, but they cannot secure the government a public majority for its policies on fundamental political problems that reenter the public agenda after an election. Thus, what happened in Germany after the 2002 election does

not come as a surprise: after Chancellor Schröder had claimed an electoral mandate for his socioeconomic policies in his inaugural address, the government, and especially the SPD, has been experiencing increasingly hard times in public opinion.



## *Appendix – Operationalizations*

### *Voting intention*

Vote for governing parties: 1: SPD, Greens; 0: other parties, no voting intention.

Vote for CDU-CSU or FDP: 1: CDU/CSU, FDP; 0: other parties, no voting intention.

*Party identification:* “A lot of people in Germany feel closer to a specific party, although they might sometimes vote for another party. What about you? Do you – generally speaking – feel close to a specific party? And if so, which one?”

-1: CDU/CSU, FDP; 0: PDS, REP, other parties, no identification; 1: SPD, B’90/Grüne.

*Candidate preference:* Comparison of 11-point sympathy thermometer for Schröder and Stoiber. -1: preference for Stoiber; 0: no preference; 1: preference for Schröder

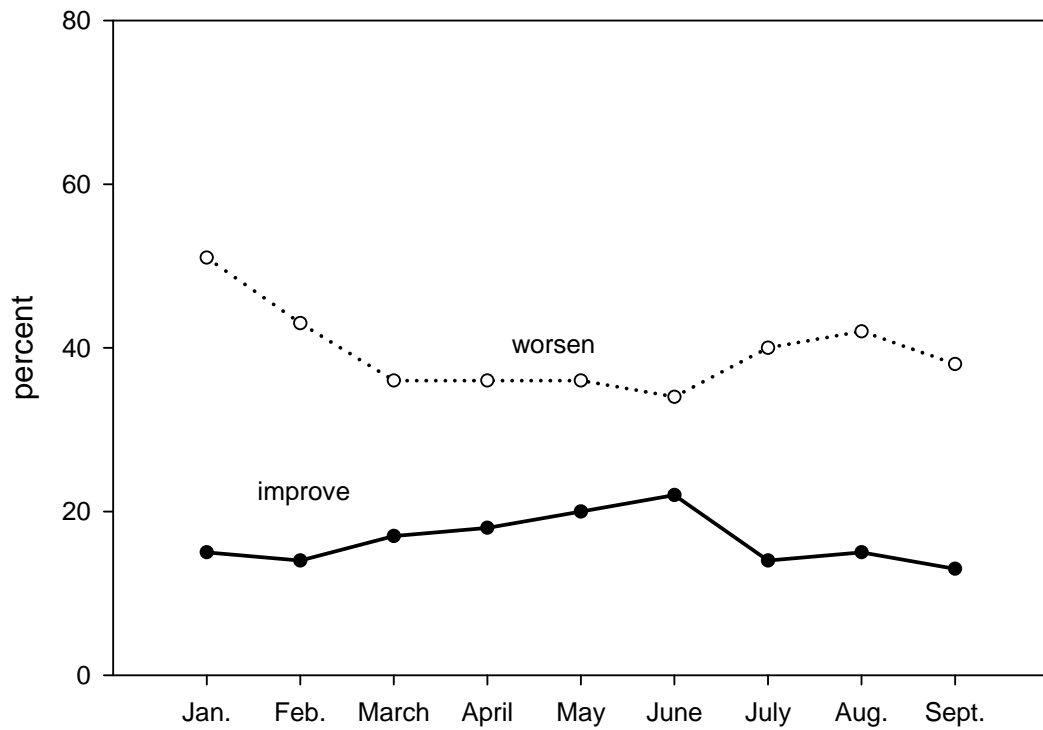
*Economic competence:* „Which party is most capable of improving the economy?“. -1: CDU/CSU, FDP; 0: PDS, REP, DVU, other parties, no party; 1: SPD, B’90/Grüne.

For analyses of voting intention for CDU/CSU and FDP, the predictor variables were coded inversely.

*Management of the flood crisis:* “What do you think: Does the government do enough to help the flood victims, not enough (week 36-38: or too much)? 0: not enough, too much; 1: enough.

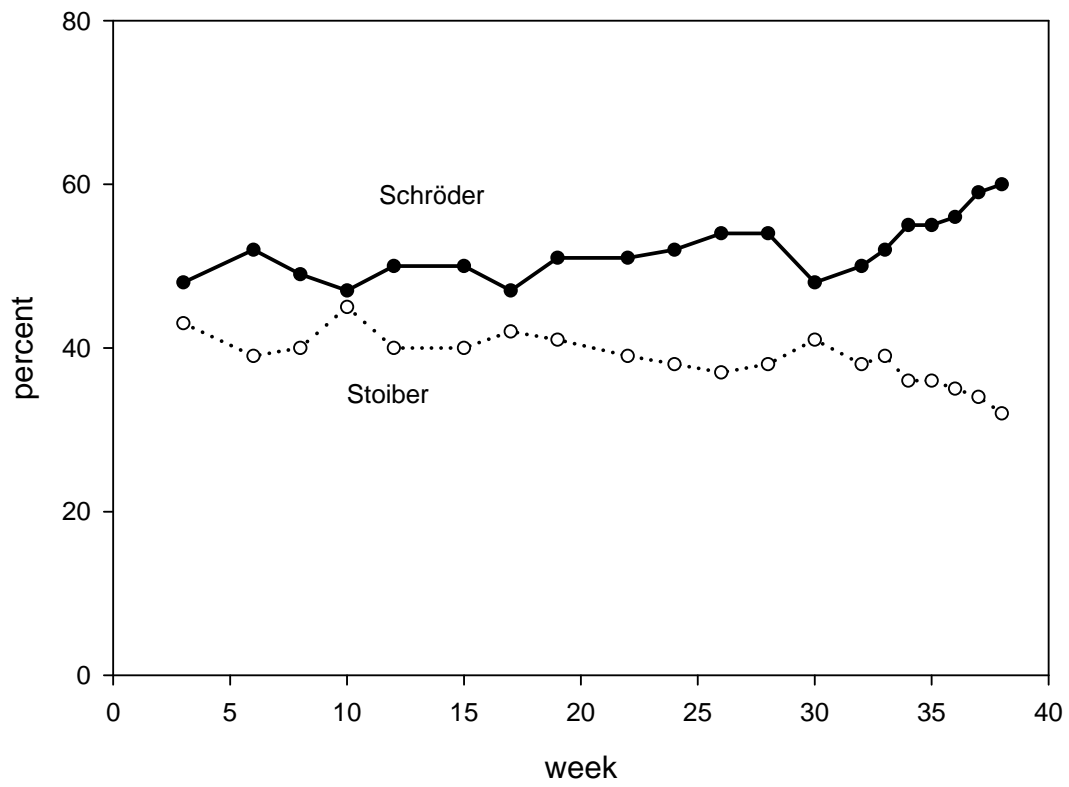
*Military intervention in Iraq:* “If the United States attacks Iraq, should Germany participate in any case, only if the UN sanctions such an attack, or should Germany categorically stay out of it?”. -1: Support USA; 0: UN-framework; 1: oppose.

Figure 1: Evaluations of the economy during election year, 2002



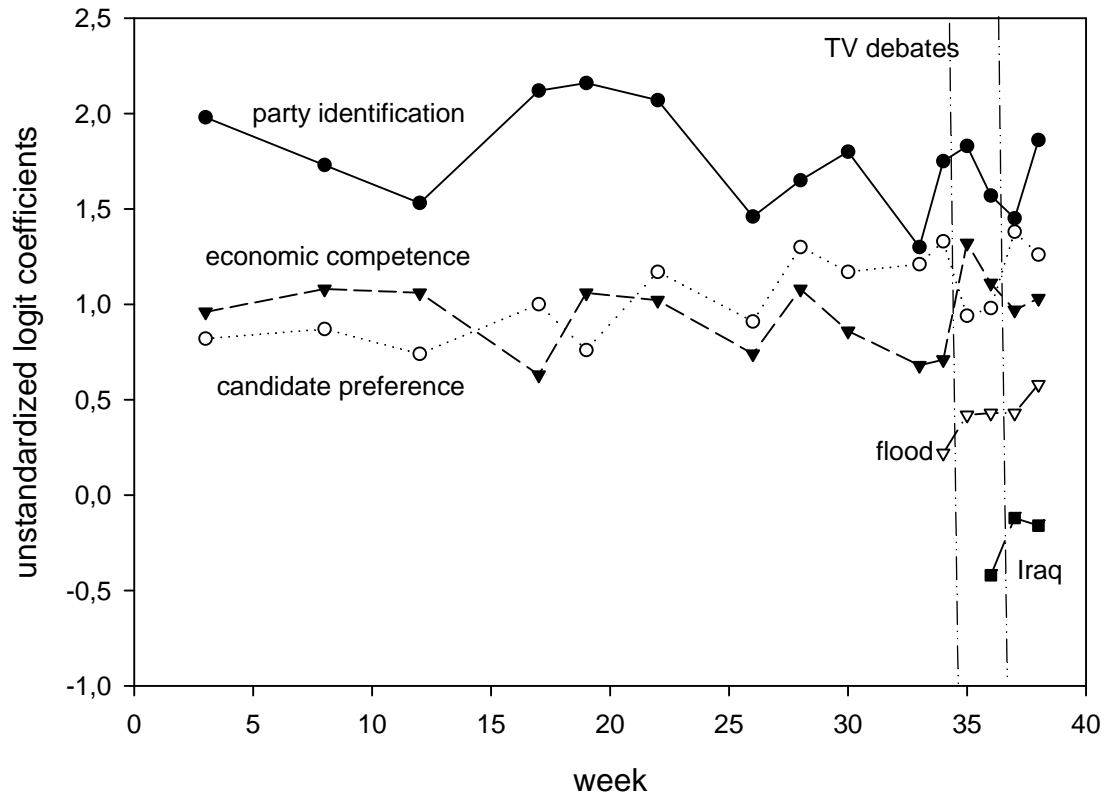
Source: Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, monthly Politbarometer 2002. Question wording: "Will the economy improve or worsen?"

Figure 2: Preference for chancellor during election year, 2002 (in percentages)



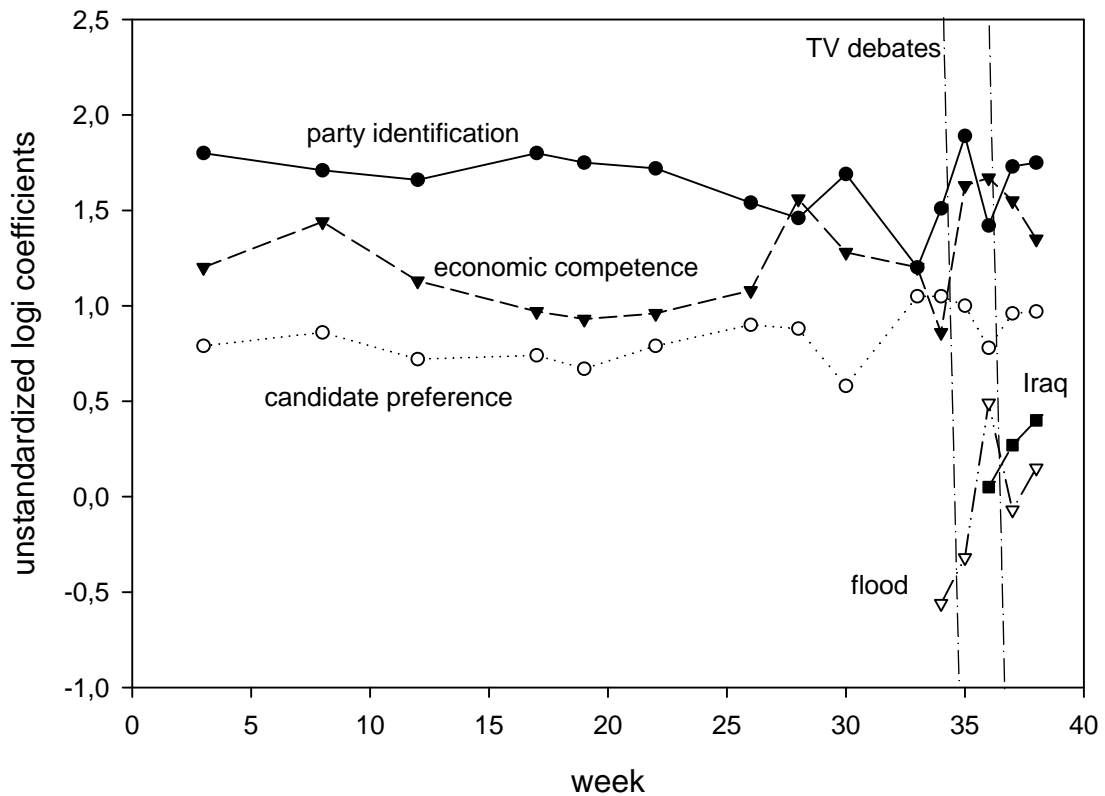
Source: Politbarometer 2002; Question wording: "Whom would you prefer as chancellor?"

Figure 3: Effects of party identification, issue attitudes, and candidate orientations on the intention to vote for SPD and Greens in 2002 (multivariate logit analysis)



Note: Positive coefficients mean that a positive value on the independent variable increases the likelihood of casting a vote for SPD or Greens. A positive effect of ‘candidate preference’ implies that a preference for Schröder increases the probability of voting for the red-green coalition.

Figure 4: Effects of party identification, issue attitudes, and candidate orientations on the intention to vote for the CDU/CSU and FDP in 2002 (multivariate logit analysis)



Note: Positive coefficients mean that a positive value on the independent variable increases the likelihood of casting a vote for CDU/CSU or FDP. A positive effect of 'candidate preference' implies that a preference for Stoiber increases the probability of voting for one of the Christian-liberal opposition parties.

Table 1: Views about the government's management of the flood in election year, 2002  
(by percentages)

Regarding the flood crisis the government does...			
	Enough	Not enough	Too much
Week 35	77	15	--
Week 36	59	33	9
Week 37	59	32	10
Week 38	70	20	4

Source: Politbarometer 2002. For the wording of the question see the appendix.

Table 2: Views about invading Iraq in election year, 2002 (in percentages)

Regarding an invasion of Iraq, Germany should...			
	Participate in any case	Participate if there is a UN framework	Stay out
Week 36	4	41	53
Week 37	4	45	50
Week 38	3	50	46

Source: Politbarometer 2002. For the wording of the question see the appendix.

Table 3: Comparison of empirical and hypothetical vote shares of the SPD and Greens and of the CDU/CSU and FDP in the 2002 federal election (in percentages)

	SPD and Greens	CDU/CSU and FDP
<i>Empirical result (week 38)</i>	46.6	39.9
<i>Hypothetical results</i>		
Model week 38, candidate effect week 2 (= 0.75)	43.4 <sup>a</sup>	-
Model week 38, flood = 0	42.8 <sup>a</sup>	-
Model week 38, Iraq = 0	-	42.0 <sup>a</sup>

a: difference between empirical (first row) and hypothetical vote shares is significant at the 99,9% level (test for dependent samples)

Entries are vote shares (in %) of the respective parties. Hypothetical results are calculated by simulations based on the regression equation estimated in week 38. In order to measure the impact of the changes in effects of independent variables reported in section 3.1 the equation is manipulated: in the case of the candidate effect on the vote for SPD/Greens, the regression weight at the beginning of the year 2002 (approximately 0.75) is included rather than that estimated at the end of the campaign (about 1.3). Then, it is estimated how many votes SPD and Greens would have gained under these circumstances; this result (row 2 in Table 3) is compared to the actual vote share of the red-green coalition in week 38 (row 1 in Table 3); and the difference between both vote shares can be attributed to the growing candidate effect on vote choice.

<sup>1</sup> An earlier German version of this article appeared in Frank Brettschneider, Jan van Deth, and Edeltraud Roller, eds., *Die Bundestagswahl 2002. Analysen der Wahlergebnisse und des Wahlkampfes* (Wiesbaden, 2004). I am grateful to the anonymous reviewers of *German Politics and Society* for helpful comments.

<sup>2</sup> See Wolfgang Hartenstein and Rita Müller-Hilmer, "Die Bundestagswahl 2002: Neue Themen – neue Allianzen," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* B49-50 (2002): 26.

<sup>3</sup> See Helmut Norpoth and Thomas Gschwend, "The Red-Green Victory: Against All Odds," *German Politics and Society* 21 (2003): 15-34.

<sup>4</sup> See Helmut Jung, "Analyse der Bundestagswahl 2002," *Politische Studien* 54 (January/February 2003): 21-33; Robert Rohrschneider and Dieter Fuchs, "It Used to Be the Economy. Issues and Party Support in the 2002 Election," *German Politics and Society* 21 (2003): 76-94.

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<sup>5</sup> See for an example of the concept of “priming” Shanto Iyengar, Mark D. Peters, and Donald R. Kinder, “Experimental Demonstrations of the ‘Not-So-Minimal’ Consequences of Television News Programs” *American Political Science Review* 76 (1982): 848-58, Jon A. Krosnick, Donald R. Kinder, “Altering the Foundations of Support for the President through Priming” *American Political Science Review* 84 (1990): 497-512.

<sup>6</sup> See Richard Johnston, André Blais, Henry E. Brady, and Jean Crête, *Letting the People Decide* (Stanford, 1992), Matthew Mendelsohn, “The Media and Interpersonal Communications: The Priming of Issues, Leaders, and Party Identification” *Journal of Politics* 58 (1996): 112-25, Elisabeth Gidengil, André Blais, Neil Nevitte, and Richard Nadeau, “Priming and Campaign Context,” in David M. Farrell and Rüdiger Schmitt-Beck, eds., *Do Political Campaigns Matter?* (London, 2002): 76-91.

<sup>7</sup> See Robert Rohrschneider and Michael R. Wolf, “The Federal Election of 2002,” *German Politics and Society* 21 (2003): 6-8.

<sup>8</sup> See Frank Brettschneider, “Die Medienwahl 2002: Themenmanagement und Berichterstattung,” *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* B49-50 (2002): 40.

<sup>9</sup> See Andrea Römmele, Anja Hoffmann, Kim Jucknat, and Jochen Wackershauser, “Journalisten fragen, Politiker antworten? Formate, Inhalte und Strategien der TV-Debatten im Bundestagswahlkampf 2002,” *Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen* 35 (2004): 225-26.

<sup>10</sup> See Richard Hilmer, “Bundestagswahl 2002: eine zweite Chance für Rot-Grün,” *Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen* 34 (2003): 193.

<sup>11</sup> See Jung 2002; 29-30.

<sup>12</sup> See “Die SPD im Wahlkampf auf einem ‘deutschen Weg,’” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 6 August 2002, 1.

<sup>13</sup> See Dieter Roth and Matthias Jung, “Ablösung der Regierung vertagt: Eine Analyse der Bundestagswahl 2002,” *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* B49-50 (2002): 12.

<sup>14</sup> See Russell J. Dalton, Paul Allen Beck, Robert Huckfeldt, and William Koetzle, “A Test of Media-Centered Agenda-Setting: Newspaper Context and Public Interest in a Presidential Election” *Political Communication* 15 (1998).

<sup>15</sup> See Frank Brettschneider, “Candidate Voting. Die Bedeutung von Spitzenkandidaten für das Wählerverhalten in Deutschland, Großbritannien und den USA von 1960 bis 1998,” in Hans-Dieter Klingemann



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and Max Kaase, eds., *Wahlen und Wähler. Analysen aus Anlaß der Bundestagswahl 1998* (Wiesbaden, 2001): 358-60.

<sup>16</sup> See for example Samuel L. Popkin, "Campaigns That Matter," in Matthew D. McCubbins, ed., *Under the Watchful Eye. Managing Presidential Campaigns in the Television Era* (Washington, 1992): 153-70.

<sup>17</sup> See Andrew Gelman and Gary King, "Why are American election polls so variable when votes are so predictable?" *British Journal of Political Science* 23 (1993): 409-51, Steven E. Finkel and Peter R. Schrott, "Campaign Effects on Voter Choice in the German Election of 1990," *British Journal of Political Science* 25 (1995): 349-77.

<sup>18</sup> In the present analysis, the dependent variables, for example, voting for the SPD-Greens versus not voting for the SPD-Greens, are nominally scaled. Therefore, rather than standard linear regression, logistic regression is the appropriate technique to analyze effects of independent variables on the dependent variables. It differs from linear regression in the function that links the dependent variable to the independent variables: it is not a linear function but a logistic one. This makes it more difficult to assess by how much an independent variable influences the probability of voting for a party; for the present analysis, however, this is not crucial. In this analysis, it is important to know that, as in linear regression, a positive coefficient of a preference for Schröder on voting choice for SPD-Greens means that a preference for Schröder improves the probability to vote for SPD-Greens, while a negative coefficient means that a preference for Schröder hurts the chances to vote for the red-green coalition.

<sup>19</sup> For the sake of clarity, confidence intervals and standard errors are not displayed in the figures. In the text, however, every statistical significant difference between two coefficients is reported. Since sampling error is not constant for all predictor variables, differences that are quite small can be statistically significant while seemingly larger differences may be insignificant.

<sup>20</sup> The effect of party identification on voting intention even does not increase in bivariate analysis; hence, neither the direct nor the total effect of party loyalties on voting intention does improve.

<sup>21</sup> See Harald Schoen, "Kandidatenorientierungen im Wahlkampf. Eine Analyse zu den Bundestagswahlkämpfen 1980-1998," *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 45 (2004): 321-45, Gidengil et al. 2002, Gelman and King 1993.

<sup>22</sup> In week 2, the partial effect of candidate orientations cannot be calculated directly since economic evaluations were not measured in this week. However, the candidate effect in that week can be calculated

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indirectly by transferring the detrimental effect of control variables on the candidate coefficient in week 3 to week 2.

<sup>23</sup> See Schoen, 2004.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. V.O. Key, “*The Responsible Electorate. Rationality in Presidential Voting 1936-1960*” (New York, 1966): 2.