

ABSTRACT

Does Electoral System Contribute to Party Polarization in European Democracies?

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This study examines the relationship between electoral system and party polarization through both a qualitative case study of the United Kingdom, Germany, and Switzerland and a quantitative regression analysis of twenty-two democratic countries. The first part of this study analyzes this relationship through an analysis of the frequency and quality of the instances in which each party references the political opposition via party platforms, speeches, and news reports. The United Kingdom and Switzerland appear to have the higher levels of polarization and Germany appears to have the lowest levels of polarization of these three cases. The second part of this study consists in multiple linear regression analyses, using both Reiljan and Dalton's polarization indexes to determine whether there is a significant relationship between electoral system and affective polarization levels. Counterintuitively, this study concludes that there is no such statistically significant relationship. These conclusions suggest that electoral system does not necessarily affect polarization in established democracies.

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DOES ELECTORAL SYSTEM CONTRIBUTE TO PARTY POLARIZATION IN
EUROPEAN DEMOCRACIES?

A QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Chapter One: Literature Review	3
Chapter Two: Qualitative Analysis	11
Chapter Three: Quantitative Analysis	25
Chapter Four: Conclusion	39
Bibliography	43

INTRODUCTION

The object of this thesis is to determine whether electoral system has a significant effect on a country's polarization levels. This study will begin with a literature review, outlining the previous scholarship on this topic. The second chapter will examine this question through a qualitative case study of the UK, Germany, and Switzerland. The third chapter of this study will attempt to answer this question qualitatively, using linear regression analyses over a large number of cases. In order to fully examine this question, the qualitative chapter will focus on polarization among the political elites, while the quantitative chapter will focus on polarization within the electorate.

This question is of significant relevance not only for citizens of the United States, but for citizens of countries throughout the world. The United States and the United Kingdom are the only two prominent countries in the developed world that utilize single-member district plurality (SMDP) electoral systems. Both the US and the UK are two-party systems, with parties that are infamous for their rates of polarization. Yet far from being simply an American or British problem, polarization affects many countries to varying extents throughout the world—thus, answering this question is essential in understanding why certain countries experience more polarization than others. Understanding the causes of polarization is necessary for the mitigation of its negative effects. Additionally, if it is the case that there is a connection between electoral system and polarization levels, understanding the nature of this connection is essential, first, in analyzing the pros and

cons of different electoral systems, and second, helping politicians make more informed decisions about electoral reform.

This research question has not been answered definitively, so this thesis provides an original contribution to our understanding of polarization. Previous studies rely on conflicting theoretical expectations regarding which electoral systems promote more polarization and which promote less polarization. Additionally, many studies rely on differing definitions of polarization—some view polarization as the ideological distance between policy stances, while others view polarization as the difference between the negative emotions a partisan feels for the out-party and the positive emotions they feel for their own party. This study synthesizes the previous relevant scholarship and data, and provides an original insight into whether there is a relationship between electoral system and polarization.

CHAPTER ONE

Literature Review

Many political scientists have attempted to understand the nature and causes of political polarization. Two notable figures in this study are Morris Fiorina and Alan Abramowitz, who, despite both focusing on the condition of the parties within the United States, ultimately come to different conclusions. While their work primarily concerns the U.S., their conclusions provide a foundation for understanding whether there is a connection between electoral system and polarization in other countries as well. Essential variables in answering this question include the polarization of a country's political elites compared to the polarization levels of the electorate, and the homogeneity of ideology within the parties.

In understanding polarization, these important scholars come into contrast with one another: Abramowitz argues that the American electorate is becoming more ideologically polarized, while Morris Fiorina argues that most of the electorate is moderate, and it is political elites who are becoming increasingly polarized. Abramowitz attributes much of the increase in polarization of American citizens to political parties becoming consistently ideologically homogenous (2010). The Democratic Party is the ideologically liberal party, and the Republican Party is the ideologically conservative party. Abramowitz argues that these ideologies are so pervasive that liberal republican candidates and conservative democratic candidates are almost nonexistent. He asserts that increasingly ideologically aligned parties result in each party putting forth essentially

identical candidates each election cycle, leaving little reason for voters to vary which party they vote for (2010).

On the other hand, Morris Fiorina's position locates the polarization not in the electorate, but in the political elites (2017). Still, like Abramowitz, he acknowledges the increased alignment between political party and ideology. The fundamental difference between Abramowitz's and Fiorina's conclusions is that Fiorina attributes polarization to party sorting—ideological divisions have come to coincide with partisan divisions in the politically elite class, alienating the moderate base of the electorate. The parties themselves are well-sorted ideologically, but most Americans fall closer to the middle of the political spectrum; consequently, they are not welcome or well-represented by either party (Fiorina 2017). Although most voters would prefer a moderate option, they are given politically and ideologically polarized candidates to choose from. While Abramowitz holds that the American electorate itself is polarized, Fiorina posits that polarization is most significant within the political elites. In order to fully investigate the relationship between electoral system and polarization this study examines both the electorate and elite levels in majoritarian, proportional, and mixed systems.

In a majoritarian electoral system, there are typically two broader-defined parties; while in a proportional representation (PR) system, there are typically more than two parties with clear ideologies (Fiorina 2017). However, the parties in the United States now look much more like the ideology-based parties which are characteristic of a proportional system. The parties are much more homogenous in their lives and beliefs, and this homogeneity results in political issues becoming more partisan and divisive (Fiorina 2017). Moral, social, and cultural issues have been introduced into the political

agenda. Fiorina argues that polarized partisanship, both perceived and actual, leads voters to become disillusioned with politics. In direct contrast to Abramowitz, Fiorina claims that ideological party-sorting causes the average citizen to be less likely to participate in politics, on account of this disillusionment (2017).

The works of Abramowitz and Fiorina are helpful context for determining whether electoral system has an influence over political polarization. Fiorina and Abramowitz's idea of parties sorting themselves by ideology is observable in both other two-party single member district plurality (SMDP) systems as well as multiparty PR systems. As Fiorina argues, this ideological polarization causes moral and cultural issues to become part of politics, further grouping people into distinct and polarized camps. One effect of this phenomenon is what Markus Wagner calls "affective polarization," or the extent to which voters feel negatively towards those outside of their party and positively towards those within their party (2021). Although affective polarization is most easily identifiable within two-party systems, it is also possible in countries with PR systems and multiple parties, if politics are divided into "two distinct camps, each of which may consist of one or more party" (Wagner 2021). Even when there are several different political parties to identify with, there can still be a perceived 'in-group' and a perceived 'out-group.'

Further, psychological studies have shown that people within a two-group structure show higher levels of ingroup bias when compared to those part of a three-group structure (Hartstone, Augoustinos 1995). The existence of two distinct groups in isolated opposition to one another heightens both hostile feelings toward the other side and favorable feelings towards those identifying with oneself (Hartstone, Augoustinos

1995). This binary structure can either be built into the party system itself or can develop as two distinct political camps rise out of a multiparty system. For example, the two-party structure of the US has two distinct groups, the Democratic and Republican parties, built into it. Nevertheless, a similarly two-group structure rises out of the Swiss multiparty system, but instead of one party versus the opposition party, it is one party versus all other parties. This is especially evident in the Swiss People's Party program—although there are multiple parties, there are essentially two perceived groups, and so the same 'us versus them' mentality is present as in a two-party system.

Therefore, affective polarization is possible in both multiparty PR systems and two-party SMDP systems. Still, it remains in question whether one system promotes more polarization than the other. Interestingly, some scholars have asserted that majoritarian systems are more polarized, while others have asserted that PR systems are more polarized. There is widespread disagreement over the relationship between electoral system and polarization—scholars disagree on which type of system causes greater polarization, as well as on whether there is a relationship between these two variables at all.

For example, Boxell, Gentzkow, and Shapiro's study shows that negative affect towards the perceived out-group is increasingly prevalent in SMDP systems. In this examination of the polarization levels of twelve different countries over the past four decades, the United States stands out with the highest levels of negative affect toward the opposition party (2021). However, in terms of overall affective polarization, the U.S. falls more towards the middle of the scale (2021). Similarly, Great Britain, another SMDP democracy, also shows an increase in negativity regarding the opposition, but not

necessarily a notable difference in polarization levels. Switzerland, France, Denmark, and Canada also demonstrated a rise in dislike for the opposing parties in this study, but to lesser extent than the US. The countries that demonstrated lower levels of out-party dislike were New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, and Germany (Boxell, Gentzkow, and Shapiro 2021). Notably, New Zealand and Germany have mixed electoral systems, while Norway and Sweden are PR systems.

In order to best measure polarization in multiparty systems, this study also utilizes Andres Reiljan's Affective Polarization Index (API). Reiljan's system accounts for the existence of multiple parties in most European countries, as well as the varied sizes and relevance of each party. In contrast to the U.S., many European countries have several parties of varying sizes and so Reiljan avoids overemphasizing polarization existing between smaller parties (Reiljan 2020). Reiljan calculates API by subtracting the average out-party evaluations from the average in-party evaluations, weighting this subtraction by the out-party vote share (2020). After this calculation, the API is weighted by the vote shares of the respective party. This study finds that affective polarization is definitely present within European countries, and in contrast to previous studies, the US does not lead in terms of polarization levels but falls more towards the middle.

Hetherington and Rudolph, in contrast to Fiorina, provide a theoretical explanation for the connection between polarization at the elite level and polarization within the electorate (2015). There is not much controversy over the existence of polarization at the elite level, and while ideally representatives form their policy positions around the desires of the electorate, this is often not the case (Hetherington, Rudolph 2015). Political matters are not of primary concern for most Americans, and so instead of

devoting significant time and energy to forming their own political opinions, they are greatly influenced by the positions of their chosen elites (Hetherington, Rudolph 2015). Yet the more affectively polarized the public is, the less likely they are to support any policy put forward by the perceived out-party (2015). In this way, elite polarization boosts polarization in the electorate, while polarization in the electorate boosts elite polarization (2015).

Reiljan applies the findings of Hetherington and Rudolph and applies it to AP in a multiparty system. In multiparty systems, political elites respond to high levels of polarization in the electorate by refusing to form coalitions with the out-party (Reiljan 2021). Therefore, far from being only a problem of majoritarian systems, high rates of affective polarization make well-functioning governments extremely difficult to form within PR systems (2021).

There remains much debate surrounding whether majoritarian or proportional systems encourage occupying the “middle ground” on policy issues. Some studies have argued that electoral system has little to no effect on political polarization (Adams, Rexford 2018). On the one hand, because the entire election is at stake in plurality voting systems, political candidates may feel pressured to moderate their policy stances to obtain the votes of the larger pool of moderate voters. Nevertheless, this is only an effective vote-winning strategy if the wider pool of voters holds moderate views. While political candidates within plurality voting structures may feel more able to take extreme stances due to a lower barrier of entry into government, they also face pressure to moderate to be a favorable coalition partner (Adams, Rexford 2018).

Additionally, Hetherington and Rudolph claim that polarization is often more rooted in the feelings of partisans than in their policy stances (2015). Even if it is not the case that a country's electoral system causes its citizens to hold polarized policy views, it could be the case that electoral system plays a role in forming how each party feels about those outside of their group. Hetherington and Rudolph argue that this affective polarization is more present within the American electorate than polarization with regard to policy matters (2015). In other words, determining whether a country is polarized can depend on where you look and how you define polarization.

Within the two-party systems created by SMDP electoral systems, there is a clear incentive to demonize the opposing party. While the 'us-versus-them' mentality characteristic of affective polarization is possible within multiparty systems, it remains a question whether the separation of people into two groups rather than multiple groups creates more hostility towards the other side. As the two parties become more ideologically aligned and politics continues to encompass social and moral issues more and more, political elites face increasingly less pressure to moderate their policy stances to appeal to voters. Electoral systems contribute to the structure and number of political parties within a country, which directly affects the way citizens engage with politics. The object of this study is to determine if electoral system has a significant effect on a country's polarization levels.

Based on the existing research, I expect to find that countries with SMDP systems and two-party structures are more polarized than countries with proportional representation systems and multiple prominent parties. I expect to find this because the two-party systems that plurality voting creates provide ample incentive for protest voting.

Within a system that only contains two parties that have a realistic chance of possessing power, demonizing the opposition presents a more direct benefit to one's own party. In multiparty systems, it is harder to control which party benefits from a negative attack and demonizing other parties may ultimately harm one's own future coalition-building interests. In SMDP systems, the parties are not concerned with coalition building, and so they can directly critique the opposition with fewer consequences. Although this paper does not specifically examine the state of political parties within the United States, knowledge of American party relations informs my theoretical expectations. The 'us-versus-them' mentality that is characteristic of polarization is evident in observing the interactions between the Republican and Democratic parties.

The research surrounding the question of the relationship between electoral system and polarization levels is relatively recent, and it does not specifically address whether one variable has a significant influence over the other. Thus, this study attempts to answer whether a country's electoral system type affects its polarization levels. Prior studies have not provided an answer to this question, and understanding this relationship can provide valuable insight into the causes of polarization, mitigation techniques, and electoral reform.

CHAPTER TWO

Qualitative Analysis

Introduction

This chapter qualitatively examines the relationship between a country's electoral system and their levels of party polarization. By conducting an in-depth analysis of the condition of the political parties in three countries of different electoral systems, I attempt to answer this question: does the electoral system of a country contribute to increased or decreased levels of political polarization? The countries this chapter examines are the United Kingdom, Germany, and Switzerland.

Method

This chapter utilizes qualitative research methods. I have conducted a comparative case study examining three countries: the United Kingdom, Germany, and Switzerland. I selected these three countries because they each represent different electoral systems, allowing for the maximum variation of my independent variable. This study relies on the most similar method—the cases are as similar as possible, differing only in terms of electoral system. I chose this method to best isolate the effect of electoral system on polarization. These countries are all within the same general region and possess similar levels of wealth, yet the UK is an SMDP system, Germany is a Mixed Member PR system, and Switzerland is a pure PR system. In this way, I have selected countries as similar in as many ways possible except for electoral system to control for alternative explanations.

The case study method provides a more in-depth look at the explanation behind the connection between electoral system and polarization rates. It allows for the use of data that is not easily quantifiable. However, a potential problem with this study is the fact that the electoral systems of these countries has not changed, yet their levels of polarization have. The ideological structure of the parties themselves provides a more detailed look at the possible relationship between electoral system and polarization levels. As ideologically homogenous parties are increasingly relevant, a qualitative case study allows for the consideration of the ideological makeup of the parties as well as whether certain electoral systems encourage or discourage such parties to become more polarized. To account for this potential source of error, this study focuses on data from the last few years and does not rely on evidence consisting in increasing or decreasing polarization.

The weaknesses of this study consist in the difficulty of generalization and replication, as well as the potential for bias. Because each country varies in the precise practice of their elections, the formation of their party documents, and their methods for campaigning, there is significant potential for alternative explanations. To limit this, I focused my study primarily on party platform documents, which are accessible and fundamental documents present in nearly every political party in every type of democracy. This method is also limited by the small number of cases examined, causing difficulty in generalizing the results to a larger number of countries.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis is that countries with single member district electoral systems are more polarized than countries with proportional representation electoral systems. The

independent variable is the electoral systems of different countries, and the dependent variable is the higher level of political polarization. I hypothesize that there will be a positive relationship between these variables. To operationalize the independent variable, I recorded the type of electoral system that each country in my study utilizes. The level of measurement precision is nominal, as these are simply different categories and cannot be ranked.

To operationalize the dependent variable, I have conducted an examination of the party platforms and official party websites by searching for and recording the instances at which the opposing party or parties were mentioned. I considered the frequency at which the opposition was mentioned and whether the language was hostile or accusatory. The level of precision for the dependent variable is ordinal because the frequency and quality (i.e., whether the opposition party is mentioned positively, negatively, or neutrally) can be ranked, but they will not be at equal intervals from each other. To further operationalize the levels of polarization, I examined speeches from party leaders and again noted the instances at which they spoke about another party. I analyzed these instances and determined whether their language was positive or negative.

The null hypothesis would be that electoral system has no effect on a country's polarization levels. Determining a specific point at which to definitively reject the null is challenging in a qualitative study with a limited number of cases, so there is a concern that the null could be wrongly rejected. Sources of concern for systematic error are the differences in culture and language among these countries. There are also other variables that could cause countries to be more or less polarized, such as its ethnic diversity, religious makeup, and its wealth disparity.

Data and Evidence

Much of my data comes directly from the official party platforms of the United Kingdom, Germany, and Switzerland. I also examine speeches given by prominent party leaders and news reports in each of these countries. To determine how electoral system relates to party polarization, if at all, I will describe the conditions of the major parties in each country and their electoral systems. By analyzing the instances when the major opposition parties speak about each other, I will then conduct an analysis that compares the polarization evident in these countries. With this analysis, I will attempt to process trace the mechanism linking electoral system and party polarization.

The first country this study examines is the United Kingdom. The prominent system for voting in the UK is single member plurality voting, or first-past-the-post. In this type of electoral system, the candidate with the most votes wins the seat. The UK is split into different geographical constituencies, each represented by a member of parliament who received the most votes in that area (Meredith 2019). Following Duverger's Law, which states that SMDP systems typically have two parties and PR systems typically have multiple parties, the United Kingdom has a two-party system. The two parties are the Labour Party, an ideologically left-leaning party, and the Conservative Party, an ideologically right-leaning party. Although coalition governments have occasionally existed in the past, the parties generally rely on obtaining a majority within parliament to enact their policies.

The Labour Party's 2019 platform under Jeremy Corbyn mentions the Conservatives forty-two times, dedicating a significant portion of their platform to criticizing the opposition. All these instances present the Conservatives as the unfavorable alternative, whose rule spells out the eventual destruction of the UK. Just as the Conservative platform, Labour depicts the political opposition as the villain, purposefully harming the good of the nation: "the Conservatives have fanned the flames of racism, using difference to divide" (Labour 2019). The Labour platform outrightly describes the Conservatives as racists who are bent on purposefully dividing the country. The most hostile attacks on the Conservatives are those that accuse them of being anti-human in some way. As mentioned before, the Labour Party accuses the Conservatives of racism, and they also claim that "the dignity of people with disabilities has been degraded by the Conservatives" (Labour 2019). The Conservatives degrade people in marginalized groups, and these threatening examples are presented as the only alternative to supporting the Labour Party. The Labour Party cares about the citizens of the UK, while the Conservative Party does not.

The Labour Party's platform mentions the Conservatives as the unfavorable alternative to each of their policy positions. Even going beyond policy, Labour uses a combination of fear and criticism of Conservative rule. Each of their positions is directly followed by a list entitled "The Conservative Status Quo," listing the risks and dangers that Britain faces if the Conservatives remain in power (Labour 2021). The message presented by the Labour Party is that the UK's security is threatened by Conservative control: "They have weakened our country's foundations, entrenched insecurity and stripped back our vital public services" The country is weak because of the

Conservatives, and the threat of them “continuing to make the same mistakes” is an essential part of the Labour Party’s platform., and therefore their strategy for gaining votes (Labour 2021).

Beyond attacks on the opposition party, current Labour Party leader Keir Starmer also criticized Prime Minister Boris Johnson of the Conservative Party during his 2021 Party Conference Address: “I think he is a trivial man. I think he’s a showman with nothing left to show. I think he’s a trickster who has performed his one trick.” This statement contains nothing of Boris Johnson’s political views, but it relies on an attack against his character. This is characteristic of affective polarization: Starmer is not disagreeing on a political stance with this statement, but he is expressing personal dislike for the prime minister. Such behavior in the elite class influences the electorate to become more affectively polarized as well (Hetherington, Rudolph 2015).

Similarly, in his own 2021 Party Conference Address, Johnson describes the Labour Party as a “Corbynista mob of Sellotape-spectacled sans-culottes. Or the skipper of a cruise liner that has been captured by Somali pirates desperately trying to negotiate a change of course and then changing his mind.” He refers to his opposition as a mob of disorganized radicals. Again, this statement does not emphasize the shortcomings of the opposing party’s policies, but the shortcomings of their generalized moral character and intelligence.

The 2019 Conservative Party platform mentions the Labour Party fourteen times, not only criticizing their policies but also utilizing personal attacks against the then party leader, Jeremy Corbyn. The Conservative platform also makes use of fearmongering

language to dissuade voters from Labour, accusing Corbyn's party of "wantonly" raising taxes, such that "they would destroy the very basis of this country's prosperity." (Conservative 2019). This language directly implicates Corbyn and the Labour Party as irresponsible and careless in providing for the future of their country and its citizens.

The Conservative platform also states that "unlike those currently leading the Labour Party, we view our country as a force for good" (Conservative 2019). The suggestion being that Labour does not see their country as a force for good, or even that they see it as a possible source for evil. The platform paints the opposition party as an almost cartoonish villain, who should be kept out of power at all costs. The rhetoric creates a strict us-versus-them picture of Conservatives and Labours—someone is either with the Conservatives, and therefore supports the prosperity of the UK, or with the Labours, and therefore supports the destruction of the prosperity of the UK. The rhetoric indicates strong levels of polarization. Furthering the hero-villain narrative that the Conservatives put forward, they claim: "For the past nine years, the Conservatives have been cleaning up Labour's mess" (Conservative 2019). The Labour Party is responsible for the UK's problems, which the Conservatives have been tirelessly working to fix. Again, Labour is the 'bad guy' destroying the country, and the Conservatives are the 'good guys,' solving the issues that Labour caused and saving the UK from ruin. From the examination of these official party documents and speeches, strong polarization is present in the UK's political elites.

The next country this study examines is Germany. As a mixed member proportional representation system, Germany falls in between the strict first-past-the-post system in the United Kingdom and the pure list PR found in Switzerland. Germany has a

two-vote system: the first is a personal vote given to a candidate in one of the single-member constituencies, and the second vote is a party vote given to a party list at the federal level (Staudenmaier, 2021). Germany has a 5% electoral threshold, so it is not purely proportional. Each party must receive at least 5% of the vote in order to receive representation in parliament. The major parties in Germany are the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) on the right, and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) on the left. However, Germany is a multiparty system, and neither one of these parties can form a majority without coalition partners. The other significant parties in coalition forming are the Christian Social Union, the Free Democratic Party, the Green Party, and the Left Party (Goldenberg 2021). For this study, I will be focusing on the relationship between the most prominent liberal party, the Social Democratic Party, and the most prominent conservative party, the Christian Democratic Union. Nevertheless, the necessity for each party to cooperate with the others in order to form a functioning government is important context for understanding polarization in this country.

In contrast to the Conservative and Labour parties of the UK, the CDU's official party positions contain no mention of the opposing parties or their leaders. The CDU is a center-right party with a Christian identity, finding roots in both liberalism and conservatism (Staudenmaier, 2021). The only explicit mention of the political opposition on the CDU website was in their statement describing their methods for campaigning, which included points on the importance of a "fair and transparent election campaign," as well as a dedication to factual discussion and data security (CDU 2021). Following this is a statement expressing that these values are shared by all democratic parties in Germany: "It became clear that there was broad agreement on the important elements of a fair and

transparent election campaign. If you want to look for differences, you will find the corresponding voluntary commitments by the SPD and the Greens here” (CDU 2021). Such a statement acknowledges a common ground of democratic principles among the parties, rather than using rhetorical strategies to demonize the opposition. Their official position does not rely on protest voting—they explicitly “condemn personal attacks” as part of election campaigning (CDU 2021).

Similarly, the Social Democratic Party contains little to no mention of their political opposition. There is one explicit mention of conservatives in the SPD party program: “time and again, employers and conservative forces demand that people work longer for a good pension” (SPD 2021). Still, there is no party or party leader named, just a warning against vaguely defined “conservative forces.” Therefore, the condition of the parties is difficult to determine from party programs alone, as they refrain from attacks on each other, at least within their official positions. Notably, the previous government was a grand coalition between the CDU and the SPD, which is currently transferring into a three-way coalition of the SPD, the Greens, and the Free Democratic Party under chancellor Olaf Scholz. The changing coalition structures discourage direct party attacks, as alienating a party could ruin one’s chances of gaining a majority in the future.

Additionally, Olaf Scholz worked with Angela Merkel as finance minister and vice chancellor during Merkel’s chancellorship, and so issuing personal attacks against her or her party would reflect negatively on Scholz. Merkel, although mostly absent from the campaign, has publicly supported a conservative coalition under Armin Laschet, stating that the choice is between, “a government consisting of the SPD and the Greens, who accept support through the Left or at least don’t rule it out ... or a government led by

CDU and CSU under a Chancellor Armin Laschet, a government that leads our country into the future with moderation,” (Karnitschnig 2021). Merkel primarily directs her critique at the potential for the new coalition to accept support from the more extreme and less powerful Left Party. The statement promotes the CDU and CSU’s government over the coalition under Scholz, but it does not include any *ad hominem* language. Unlike the rhetoric of the political elites in the UK, the criticisms that German politicians publicly issue against one another are less about personal dislike and more about political stances. This indicates less affective polarization present in Germany than in the United Kingdom.

Switzerland is a pure list proportional representation system with four prominent parties that have formed a grand coalition since 1959: the Free Democratic Party, the Social Democratic Party, the Christian Democratic Party, and the Swiss People's Party. The Swiss People’s Party (SVP) falls decidedly on the right of the ideological spectrum, the Social Democratic Party falls on the left, and the Christian Democratic Party and the Free Democratic Party hover around the ideological center (Mombelli 2017). The Swiss Federal Council consists of seven members who Parliament elects. Members of the Swiss Parliament are directly elected by the people, and currently there are eleven parties represented; however, only those parties with the largest proportion of the popular vote are represented on the Federal Council (2021).

The 2015-2019 Swiss People’s Party program contains several mentions of the other parties in the Swiss political sphere, although none are mentioned by name. The program accuses all other parties, excluding the SVP of “undermining and destroying these pillars on which our state is built” (SVP 2015). At seven separate points in the party

program, the other parties are mentioned. The SVP accuses the other parties of prioritizing foreign law over Swiss law, ignoring federalism, limiting direct democracy, and overestimating the value of renewable energy sources (SVP 2015). Although the grouping of the other parties together avoids directly criticizing a specific party or party leader, such language separates the political landscape into two groups, creating a mentality comparable to the ‘us-versus-them’ perception characteristic of two-party systems. The SVP criticizes the other parties not only for their policy stances, but the platform also includes the negative out-party feeling characteristic of affective polarization. The SVP program offers a binary view of Swiss politics: the Swiss People’s Party on one side and all other parties grouped together as the opposition.

In contrast to the more aggressive language in the SVP program, the Social Democratic platform does not mention the opposing parties at all. While the SVP’s approach resembles the more hostile attitude toward the opposition than the Conservative and Labour parties of the UK demonstrate in their platforms, the Social Democratic platform, like the German party platforms, refrains from explicitly mentioning or criticizing other parties. However, disagreements between the parties have recently turned violent surrounding the referendum concerning the new COVID-19 vaccine requirement to enter many types of social establishments. At a protest, health minister Alain Berset of the Social Democratic Party was depicted with devil horns (Foulkes 2021). Even in the face of this political turmoil, BBC reports of those attending the protest that “some wore the insignia of the far right, others the far left” (Foulkes 2021). Therefore, this divide in Switzerland seems less about one party versus another, and more about those against vaccine mandates versus those favoring vaccine mandates.

Results and Conclusion

Out of the three case studies, the United Kingdom stands out as most blatantly polarized, each party outrightly criticizing the other as a significant portion of their official platform. Significant portions of the both the Labour and Conservative party's platforms are dedicated to presenting the political opposition as the source of their country's destruction. The UK's SMDP system fosters a reliance on protest voting and cultivating fear within the electorate to gain votes. Through this mechanism, parties within two-party systems have incentive to demonize the opposition, contributing to higher levels of polarization. Both the Conservative and Labour party platforms contain significantly more mentions of the opposing party than the party platforms in either Germany or Switzerland. The Labour Party includes the potential unfavorable consequences of both past and future Conservative rule.

German political parties demonstrate success of a moderate candidate and the prioritization of respect for the opposition in political campaigns. Even when the parties criticize their opposition, there is relatively little name-calling. The German electoral system relies greatly on changing coalition building, having recently shifted from a grand coalition of the ideologically left leaning party and the ideologically right leaning party. While the Labour and Conservative parties are only ever political opponents in the two-party SMDP system of the United Kingdom, the CDU and SVP often must work as partners to gain a majority in parliament. The CDU and SVP official party programs contain essentially no mention of the opposition, relying on their posited statements rather than negative descriptions of the opponent.

The Labour Party does not fear that backlash following harsh criticisms of the Conservatives will cause them to become an unfavorable coalition partner. Nor do they need to be concerned that the vote will be split between themselves and another ideologically similar party because there are no such parties. This applies to the Conservative Party as well. In Switzerland, despite the existence of many parties proportionately represented in parliament, the SVP in particular frames an ‘us-versus-them’ narrative within their party platform that is not found in the Swiss Social Democratic Party’s platform. Like the condition of the Conservative and Labour parties, the SVP is the only relevant party falling on their side of the ideological spectrum in their country (Mombelli 2017). Polarization benefits the SVP in such a way that it does not benefit any of the other Swiss parties, because they can count on their ideological base not splitting the vote. This is evident in the different ways the SVP and the SP approach discussing their political opposition in official party documents.

From this case study, it is evident that electoral system plays a role in polarization, but it is not the case that countries with pure PR systems are the least polarized. It does seem that the UK is the most polarized out of the countries examined, but its polarization levels seem to match closely with that of Switzerland. In the context of these three countries, Germany’s political elites are the least polarized. In contrast to the parties of the UK and Switzerland, the German official party documents and the speeches of their politicians do not rely on rhetoric insulting their opposition. This presents a question for further discussion on this topic: do mixed electoral systems create less incentive for polarization than PR and SMDP systems?

Some possible implications of this conclusion include the need for electoral reform. As ideology and party identification become increasingly tied to one another, it may be beneficial for the wellbeing of a democracy to incorporate elements of both majoritarian and plurality systems to mitigate the ill effects of polarization. Additionally, another important consideration is the role that the ideological makeup of the different parties play in polarization levels. The existence of far-right parties such as the SVP in Switzerland may contribute to polarization regardless of electoral system. Still, there is not a large far-right presence in the UK despite there being evident polarization among the political elites. Another potential variable not explored in this study is the influence of each of these country's historical backgrounds on their party relations.

This study provides insight into the nuances of the party platforms and the actions of the political elites in the UK, Switzerland, and Germany. However, it does not provide a generalizable framework by which to examine a large number of cases. The following chapter presents a quantitative examination of the polarization of many different democratic countries. The larger number of cases will supplement the limited number of cases possible to analyze with quantitative methods, as well as allow for an empirical analysis.

CHAPTER THREE

Quantitative Analysis

Introduction

The previous chapter examined polarization at the elite level between an SMDP system, a mixed system, and a PR system. This chapter will focus on polarization within the electorate of twenty-two countries. To generalize across this number of countries, this chapter relies on survey data from The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES). Additionally, because this chapter focuses on polarization within the electorate, it examines affective polarization. To reiterate, affective polarization focuses on how partisans feel about one another, rather than the distance between each party's policy positions (Reiljan 2021).

This chapter continues to examine the question of whether there is a relationship between electoral system and polarization, focusing on the electorate rather than the politically elite class. I use both Reiljan and Dalton's polarization indexes to empirically answer this question. These indexes were created with the survey data from the CSES, which asked participants about their feelings regarding both the members of the opposing parties and how they would rate them on an ideological Left/Right scale.

Method

This chapter utilizes quantitative research methods. To supplement the previous, qualitative chapter, this section of the study examines my hypothesis through a

systematic, empirical investigation via linear regressions. This allows for a larger number of cases, and therefore this method is easily replicable and more generalizable than the case study method. Although the nature of such an analysis is rigid and lacking in explanatory abilities, the qualitative methods of chapter two supplement these shortcomings. I chose to include multiple regressions in this study in order to examine my hypothesis from many different angles. By using multiple methods for operationalizing my independent variable, I was able to test if my method of operationalizing that was dictating the results of the regression. Because the results were nearly the same, I can more reliably conclude that electoral system likely does not have a statistically significant effect on the affective polarization index, regardless of how the variables are operationalized.

This method allows for an empirical examination into whether there is a significant relationship between electoral system and affective polarization. The previous chapter examined polarization at the elite level, particularly focusing on official party documents and the speeches of government officials. In contrast, this chapter focuses primarily on polarization within the electorate, relying heavily on the concept of affective polarization. As stated before, polarization is a controversial issue, with some placing polarization primarily at the elite level and others placing polarization in the electorate, and some denying its prevalence altogether. For these reasons, I chose to examine both levels to answer more definitively how electoral system effects both the elites and the larger body of citizens.

A potential weakness in this method is the reliance on measurements of polarization from a single study. There is always the possibility for error in survey data,

yet there is a limited amount of data that measures polarization at the global scale. To lessen the effect of this error, I used both Reiljan's polarization index and Dalton's polarization index to vary my methods of operationalization. These two measurements rely on data from two different questions within the CSES survey, minimizing error that could result from relying on a single question that could be confusing or misleading to some survey participants.

Although Reiljan and Dalton's methods for determining API are as reliable and as inclusive of the population as possible, there is still the possibility of error. For example, Reiljan's method does not include nonpartisans. With his inclusion of political 'leaners' as partisans, it is safe to conclude that his index accounts for most of each country's population. Additionally, although I used two methods for operationalizing electoral system, each country has variations within the three types of systems that cannot be fully accounted for on a numerical scale. Therefore, a regression analysis is inevitably limited in what it can measure due to the complexities present in the political systems of every country.

Hypothesis

The findings of the previous chapter indicate that the null hypothesis is correct, that there is no significant relationship between electoral system and polarization. However, the previous chapter only examines this question from a qualitative point of view. This chapter will answer this question from a quantitative standpoint in order to test the hypothesis more thoroughly.

This chapter examines a similar question as the previous chapter: is there a relationship between a county's electoral system and its affective polarization? This chapter examines the same variables, electoral system and polarization, yet operationalizes them numerically. Again, in order for this study to explore all the possible sources of polarization, the focus of this chapter is the electorate rather than the political elites.

For the quantitative section of this analysis, I chose to conduct multiple linear regressions analyzing the relationship between the electoral systems and affective polarization of twenty-two different countries. Using a linear regression allows for the examination of a large number of cases, making this section of the study more generalizable. The linear regression provides a straightforward method for discovering whether there is a statistically significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables, as well as for controlling for outside factors that may influence the results.

The quantitative section of this study focuses on polarization within the electorate, in contrast to the previous chapter, which analyzed polarization quantitatively at the elite level. My study relies on data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) as well as Andres Reiljan's Affective Polarization Index (API) and Russell Dalton's Polarization Index. These indexes were calculated with equations that measured participants in-party feelings against their out-party feelings, and then weighted these scores by the size of the party. I will explain these equations in greater depth later in this chapter.

As in the previous chapter, the independent variable is electoral system, and the dependent variable is polarization level. In order to ensure the reliability of my results, I have chosen to use two different methods for operationalizing electoral systems. The first method utilizes a scale: 1 indicates a PR system, 2 indicates a mixed electoral system, and 3 indicates a majoritarian system. The second method of measurement is binary: 0 indicating PR and 1 indicating a mixed or majoritarian system. To better isolate the effect of electoral system on affective polarization, this study controls for GDP per capita, cultural diversity, and religious diversity. I operationalized the dependent variable through Reiljan's API and Dalton's Polarization Index, which both measure the average citizen's feelings about their own party and the opposing parties, but they use different methods. I will describe the difference between these methods in more detail below.

Potential sources of error include the difficulty of accurately operationalizing electoral systems and the exclusion of non-partisans from a country's API. I attempted to lessen the potential error by using two different methods for measuring electoral system, but the electoral systems of different countries vary so greatly and contains complex nuances that cannot be fully contained in a numerical scale. Reiljan notes the problem with excluding non-partisans from his study, but he also notes that the error is lessened by his inclusion of partisan 'leaners,' or those who are moderate but lean either to the right or left (2020). Partisans and leaners together should account for the majority of the electorate.

The null hypothesis would be that a country's electoral system does not have a statistically significant effect on its affective polarization index. To reject the null, there must be a p-value of less than .05 in the linear regression analysis. Because there are

many factors that could affect affective polarization beyond electoral system, such as differences in culture, ethnicity, religion, GDP, etc. I attempted to isolate the effect of electoral system on polarization by controlling for these factors in one of my regressions. I also conducted many regressions in order to limit the possibility of falsely rejected the null hypothesis.

Data and Evidence

In operationalizing the dependent variable, this study first uses Reiljan’s API. Specifically, the dependent variable of this quantitative study is the polarization levels within the electorates of twenty-two countries. Reiljan’s index effectively operationalizes affective polarization by measuring the feelings of the members of partisan groups concerning their own party and the other parties in their country (2020). Reiljan accomplishes this through data available through the CSES, particularly the question that asks:

‘I’d like to know what you think about each of our political parties. After I read the name of a political party, please rate it on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means you strongly dislike that party and 10 means that you strongly like that party.’

Reiljan averages the like-dislike scores that each group has for their own and the opposing party, and then calculates the API using this equation:

$$API = \sum_{n=1}^N \left[\sum_{\substack{m=1 \\ m \neq n}}^N ((Like_n - Like_m) \times (\frac{Vote\ share_m}{1 - Vote\ share_n})) \times Vote\ share_n \right]$$

Essentially, this equation finds the difference between the average evaluation of one's own party ($Like_n$) and the average evaluation of the out-parties ($Like_m$) and weights this value by the vote shares of the out-party (Reiljan 2020). The last step in the equation weights this number by the vote shares of the in-party. In this way, the API accounts for the evaluations of one's own party versus other parties, as well as the relative size and relevance of each party (Reiljan 2020). The API value for each country is theoretically on a scale from -10 to +10, but a value lower than 0 would indicate that the average partisan rates the out-party more positively than the members of their own party, so all API values are greater than 0 (Reiljan 2020). The table below shows the API values of twenty-three countries, as well as their electoral systems operationalized in two different methods:

Countries	Avg. API	Electoral System	
Bulgaria	6.68	1	0
Portugal	5.43	1	0
Czech. Rep.	5.37	1	0
Slovakia	5.26	1	0
Montenegro	5.25	1	0
Spain	5.02	1	0
Greece	5	2	1
Serbia	4.89	1	0
Poland	4.78	1	0
Croatia	4.54	1	0
Latvia	4.5	1	0
Great Britain	4.48	3	1
Estonia	4.46	1	0
France	4.45	3	1
United States	4.38	3	1
Sweden	4.27	1	0
Denmark	4.24	1	0
Switzerland	4.1	1	0
Austria	4.1	1	0

Germany	4.05	2	1
Finland	3.86	1	0
Iceland	3.83	1	0
Netherlands	2.76	1	0

After conducting the linear regression, the p-value of 0.6759 demonstrates that the effect of electoral system on affective polarization is not statistically significant.

Additionally, the R square value shows that electoral system only accounts for about 0.008% of the affective polarization index. This regression used the first method of measuring electoral system, in which 1 indicates a PR system, 2 indicates a mixed system, and 3 indicates a majoritarian system. The results of the regression are shown below:

<i>Regression Statistics</i>	
Multiple R	0.092107
R Square	0.008484
Adjusted R Square	-0.03873
Standard Error	0.771438
Observations	23

<i>ANOVA</i>					
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>
Regression	1	0.106932	0.106932	0.179683	0.675956
Residual	21	12.49743	0.595116		
Total	22	12.60437			

	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Lower 95%</i>	<i>Upper 95%</i>
Intercept	4.727248	0.349646	13.52009	7.83E-12	4.000119	5.454377
Electoral System	-0.09764	0.230332	-0.42389	0.675956	-0.57664	0.381367

The second method for measuring electoral system uses a binary scale: 0 representing a PR system and 1 representing a mixed or majoritarian system. I chose to include this method in order to observe whether the possession of any qualities characteristic of either a PR or a majoritarian system correlate with higher or lower affective polarization. As in the first regression, the results indicate that the effect of electoral system on a country's affective polarization index are not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). Similarly, this regression shows that electoral system only accounts for about 0.008% of API. The results of the regression using the binary scale for measuring electoral system are below.

<i>Regression Statistics</i>	
<i>Multiple R</i>	0.088035
<i>R Square</i>	0.00775
<i>Adjusted R Square</i>	-0.0395
<i>Standard Error</i>	0.771723
<i>Observations</i>	23

<i>ANOVA</i>					
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>
<i>Regression</i>	1	0.097685	0.097685	0.164024	0.689575
<i>Residual</i>	21	12.50668	0.595556		
<i>Total</i>	22	12.60437			

	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Lower 95%</i>	<i>Upper 95%</i>
<i>Intercept</i>	4.63	0.181897	25.45399	2.88E-17	4.251725	5.008275
	-0.158	0.390125	-0.405	0.689575	-0.96931	0.65331

Notably, it is impossible to fully isolate electoral system's effect on polarization, since there are many other factors that could have an influence on the polarization of the electorate. In order to minimize the potential for error due to outside variables, I collected

data concerning the ethnic, religious, and economic diversity rates of these countries to use as control variables for a third regression analysis.

Countries	Avg. API	Electoral System	GDP per Capita	Diversity Index	Religious Index
Bulgaria	6.68	1	20,948	0.289	3.5
Portugal	5.43	1	32,554	0.22	1.4
Czech. Rep.	5.37	1	38,020	0.262	4.1
Slovakia	5.26	1	32,371	0.241	2.9
Spain	5.02	1	39,037	0.669	3.9
Greece	5	2	28,583	0.167	2.5
Serbia	4.89	1	15,432	0.396	1.6
Poland	4.78	1	29,924	0.069	1.2
Croatia	4.54	1	26,296	0.171	1.4
Latvia	4.5	1	28,362	0.547	5.7
Great Britain	4.48	3	44,920	0.399	5.1
Estonia	4.46	1	33,448	0.458	5.5
France	4.45	3	44,033	0.103	5.9
United States	4.38	3	59,928	0.527	4.1
Sweden	4.27	1	51,405	0.219	5.4
Denmark	4.24	1	54,356	0.177	3.3
Switzerland	4.1	1	66,307	0.367	3.7
Austria	4.1	1	53,879	0.248	3.8
Germany	4.05	2	52,556	0.168	5.3
Finland	3.86	1	46,344	0.138	3.5
Iceland	3.83	1	55,322	0.08	1.1
Netherlands	2.76	1	54,422	0.354	6.4

The data concerning ethnic diversity comes from the Historical Index of Ethnic Fractionalization (HIEF) dataset. Ethnic fractionalization measures the probability that two randomly selected citizens from a given country will be from two different ethnic groups. I chose to use GDP at Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) to account for the relative cost of living in each country. This value gives an accurate account of the wealth of each

country. The religious diversity variable is operationalized by the 10-point Religious Diversity Index. This study from the Pew Research Center takes the percentage of each country's population that belongs to eight major religious groups, and the closer the country has to having equal shares of each group, the higher it scored on the Religious Diversity scale. The results of the regression with the control variables are below:

<i>Regression Statistics</i>	
Multiple R	0.698294
R Square	0.487615
Adjusted R Square	0.367054
Standard Error	0.605316
Observations	22

<i>ANOVA</i>					
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>
Regression	4	5.927803	1.481951	4.044542	0.017496
Residual	17	6.228929	0.366408		
Total	21	12.15673			

	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Lower 95%</i>	<i>Upper 95%</i>
Intercept	6.00257	0.5091	11.79056	1.32E-09	4.928463	7.076676
Electoral System	0.142038	0.194918	0.728704	0.476102	-0.2692	0.553279
GDP per Capita	-3.5E-05	1.06E-05	-3.25808	0.004631	-5.7E-05	-1.2E-05
Diversity Index	0.540893	0.90483	0.597784	0.557864	-1.36813	2.449918
Religious Index	-0.09669	0.098301	-0.9836	0.339104	-0.30409	0.110708

These results demonstrate that the overall effect of a country's electoral system, GDP per capita, ethnic diversity, and religious diversity account for about 49% of its affective polarization. Still, the effect of electoral system, as well as ethnic and religious

diversity, is not statistically significant according to this regression. The effect of GDP per capita, however, is statistically significant ($p < .05$). Based on the results of this regression, GDP has a far more significant relationship with a country's API than its electoral system.

In addition to Reiljan's API, the CSES provides another method for measuring polarization across several countries. The CSES asks participants to locate both themselves and the parties in their country on an 11-point Left/Right scale (Dalton 2021). Russell Dalton uses the polarization index from this question in his study concerning the causes of polarization, in which he concludes that polarization levels are generally higher in PR systems than in majoritarian systems (2021). This polarization index uses the population's average perception of a party's Left/Right position, weighted by the vote shares of each party. This index stands out from Reiljan's index because it focuses on how participants view the political positions of the parties in their country rather than how much they like or dislike each party. The range of Dalton's index is from 0, which would indicate that all parties are located in the same ideological position, and 10, which would indicate that all parties are located at the extremes of the Left/Right scale (2021). The following regression uses as the 1,2,3 scale for measuring electoral system as the independent variable and Dalton's polarization index as the dependent variable.

<i>Regression Statistics</i>	
Multiple R	0.13146
R Square	0.017282
Adjusted R Square	-0.03185
Standard Error	0.993303
Observations	22

ANOVA

	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>	
Regression	1	0.347017	0.347017	0.351712	0.559793	
Residual	20	19.73302	0.986651			
Total	21	20.08004				

	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Lower 95%</i>	<i>Upper 95%</i>
Intercept	3.993934	0.458552	8.709884	3.06E-08	3.037412	4.950457
Electoral System	-0.17689	0.298262	-0.59305	0.559793	-0.79905	0.445279

Dalton's index shows essentially the same results as the regressions using Reiljan's index. I also ran the regression using the 0/1 electoral system measure, which resulted in the same conclusion. The influence of electoral system on the polarization index is not statistically significant ($p > .05$). These consistent results suggest that the relationship between electoral system and polarization is not simply that majoritarian systems are more polarized than PR systems or vice versa. It is also important to note that these polarization measures only capture the state of a country at a moment in time. Polarization rates vary over time, especially surrounding election seasons.

Results and Conclusion

The results indicate that the null hypothesis is correct. The regressions consistently show that electoral system does not have a statistically significant effect on a country's polarization index. Even when controlling for ethnic diversity, religious diversity, and GDP per capita, electoral system does not significantly account for the presence or absence of polarization within a given country. Out of all the variables tested, GDP had the only significantly significant effect on polarization.

The use of multiple regressions consisting in different methods of operationalizing both variables allow for the conclusion that there is not a relationship between the type of electoral system a country has and how polarized it is. From this data, it is not the case that majoritarian systems are more polarized than PR systems or that PR systems are more polarized than majoritarian systems. Notably, Dalton concludes in his study that PR systems typically have higher levels of polarization than majoritarian systems.

A further avenue for study includes the use of spectrum method for operationalizing electoral system. One of the difficulties in conducting this study quantitatively is operationalizing the extremely diverse methods each country uses for conducting their elections. While every democratic country falls more or less into one of the three categories this study uses (majoritarian, mixed, or PR), there is a broad range of what this looks like in practice. For example, some mixed systems lean more heavily on the PR side while others resemble a majoritarian system more closely. Therefore, creating a scale that accounts for these nuances would provide interesting insight into the relationship between electoral system and polarization

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

The two chapters provide two different methods for discovering whether there is a relationship between electoral system and political polarization levels. Chapter two provides a qualitative analysis into this question, focusing on the official party documents as well as notable speeches given by politicians. This chapter uses the case study method, examining polarization within the elite classes of the UK, Germany, and Switzerland. There are two different definitions of polarization which are observable in these cases: the first is polarization in terms of policy stances, and the second is coined ‘affective polarization,’ and pertains to the average positive feelings for one’s own party and negative feelings for one’s out-party.

The UK demonstrated the highest levels of both these types of polarization out of the three cases in chapter two. The Labour and Conservative parties were polarized both in terms of policy and in sheer dislike for the opposing side. Similarly, both types of polarization are observable in Switzerland. Although there seemed to be less documentation of political elites making personally disparaging attacks on their opponents, this type of rhetoric is present in the Swiss political arena. Germany, in comparison to the UK and Switzerland, appears to be the least polarized. While there is evidence of ideological divergence in political stances, the rhetoric of elites contains less blatant attacks on the character of those identifying with their political opponents.

There are theoretical reasons to believe that a majoritarian system would cause greater polarization, but there are also equally compelling theoretical reasons to believe that a PR system would cause greater polarization. Majoritarian systems generally favor two-party systems, creating greater incentive for protest voting and separating the electorate into two distinct camps. However, majoritarian systems also tend to promote occupying the moderate policy position, while PR systems tend to promote parties that hold more ideologically extreme views. For this reason, some studies have concluded that PR systems promote higher levels of polarization.

The study of the relationship between electoral system and polarization is relatively new, and it has mostly focused on majoritarian or PR systems. Studies analyzing the effect of mixed electoral systems on polarization are scarcer, suggesting opportunity for further study. As mentioned in the previous chapter, operationalizing electoral system presents unique difficulties, especially regarding mixed systems. For example, Germany has a two-vote system, with one personal vote going to a candidate in a first-past-the-post election and one party vote going to a party list in a proportional election. This is just one example of a mixed electoral system, others may operate similarly, or rely more heavily on proportional methods or SMDP methods. A more in-depth look into the different types of mixed electoral systems and their effects on polarization would be a fruitful avenue for further research.

It is notable that this study focuses primarily on established European democracies. I chose these countries due to the accessibility of data and for the purpose of minimizing the effect of outside factors on my results. However, expanding the study to countries in all regions of the world would provide even more insight into the

relationship between electoral system and polarization. Further research should be done to discover whether these results are also applicable to newer democracies and those outside Europe. Additionally, this study focuses on countries whose electoral systems have remained relatively unchanged. Therefore, future research could examine those countries with fluctuating systems, observing the polarization levels before and after the electoral change. There also countries in which polarization levels have changed while the electoral system has remained constant. A closer look into the causes of this phenomenon would also provide more clarity to the question of whether there exists a relationship between these variables.

Chapter three presents the quantitative side of this analysis into electoral system and polarization. While one of the potential sources of error in chapter two was its narrow focus, chapter three broadens the examination to twenty-two total countries. The linear regressions primarily used Reiljan's Affective Polarization Index of these countries as its dependent variable and electoral system as its independent variable. The results showed no statistically significant relationship between electoral system and affective polarization. When I controlled for ethnic diversity, religious diversity, and GDP the results maintained that there was not a statistically significant relationship and that electoral system only accounted for a tiny percent of the polarization index. To ensure the reliability of my results I conducted another regression using Dalton's polarization index. Between these multiple methods of operationalizing both the independent and dependent variable, there remained no significant relationship between electoral system and polarization. However, the multiple regression indicated that there is a statistically significant relationship between electoral system and GDP.

The results indicate that there is not a direct relationship between a majoritarian system and higher levels of polarization or between a PR system and higher levels of polarization. These results are interesting in themselves, as they are contrary to the theoretical expectations of many scholars. While there exist incentives within each type of electoral system to limit the effects of party polarization, these incentives seem to limit polarization in terms of political viewpoints rather than affective polarization. While a politician in a majoritarian system may be pressured to moderate his or her stances in order to appeal to a wider pool of voters, it is not necessarily the division of policy views that is most attributable for polarization. Rather, affective polarization tends to create the most societal division, which is based more in how one group feels about another than in policy opinion.

These results suggest that the role that electoral system plays in polarization is complicated. Polarization is an ambiguous term, often defined differently depending on the study. Affective polarization is certainly present both in the United States and around the world, in the politically elite class as well as in the general electorate. The results of this study suggest that the key to reducing harmful polarization rates is not as simple as changing electoral rules to be more PR or more majoritarian. The rhetoric of the political elites potentially plays a larger role in whether affective polarization is high or low than the exact electoral rules a country conducts its elections by.

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