Polarization, Fragmentation, and Democratic Deconsolidation in Interwar Europe

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Around the world, democracy seems to be under threat. Polarization is considered a key culprit. In this study, we return the focus to ideological party system polarization, which we conceptualize as multidimensional, encompassing different policy dimensions. Theoretically, we argue that the effect of polarization on democracy is neither linear nor unconditional: Both high and low levels of polarization have deleterious consequences for democracy, particularly at low levels of fragmentation. When voters cannot meaningfully distinguish between government and opposition, democracies are as threatened as when political opponents represent fundamentally different ideologies. Finally, we introduce novel data on election outcomes and party positions in 25 European interwar democracies, an understudied period in which many Western democracies failed. Our observational analysis supports the predicted inverted U-curve relationship between ideological polarization and democracy, as well as its conditional nature on low party fragmentation.

Keywords: Polarization; fragmentation; democratic deconsolidation; historical political science; party systems; multidimensional polarization

Introduction

Around the world, democracy seems to be under threat and polarization is considered one of the main culprits.[1] Recent developments in countries as diverse as Brazil, India, Hungary, Turkey, and the United States have raised fears that democracy may deconsolidate in some of the largest and oldest democracies. Democratic deconsolidation,[2] which we define as the weakening of democratic rules and norms within democracies and the shift from democratic to autocratic regimes, is typically accompanied by the success of populists and right-wing nationalists that thrive on us-vs-them platforms.[3] Yet few contemporary, highly polarized democracies have failed outright. Out of four EU member states that faced threats of democratic deconsolidation,

only Hungary's democratic system seems to have suffered severe damage.[4] While democracy is still embattled in the United States, attacks have had little effect in Brazil.

Given the mixed evidence, is increasing polarization driving democratic deconsolidation? Although both classic and recent studies answer this question affirmatively,[5] some political scientists disagree. Instead, they highlight the positive consequences of polarization for democracy, particularly greater alignment between voters and parties, and increased turnout at elections.[6] Upon closer inspection, a second disagreement between classic and more recent contributions appears. Whereas Sartori emphasized the detrimental effects of polarized pluralism,[7] i.e., high levels of ideological disagreement among a large number of parties, recent studies stress that polarization is most dangerous between two equally sized groups.[8]

We confront these disagreements in two steps . First, we explore the consequences of both extremely low and high levels of ideological party system polarization for democracy. When party systems become highly polarized, political deadlock, fear of government alternation, and weakened normative commitments towards democracy among elites become more likely, all of which spur deconsolidation. However, we also contend that very low levels of polarization damage democracy. Too little differentiation between parties undermines accountability and contributes to elite collusion and personalist politics. Hence, both extremely low and high levels of polarization are associated with democratic deconsolidation.

Second, we analytically separate party system polarization and fragmentation to adjudicate between Sartori's model of polarized pluralism and the more recent expectation that polarization is most threatening in a low-fragmentation, two-party context. Contra Sartori, we argue that low rather than high party system fragmentation magnifies the negative consequences of extreme polarization. At low levels of

fragmentation and high levels of polarization, competition between two parties increases the stakes of political competition, thus decreasing the chances of compromise and increasing fear of losing power. At low levels of polarization, low fragmentation limits the already constrained choice for citizens. In contrast, high levels of fragmentation mitigate polarization, for example, by making it less likely that two strongly opposing camps will form.

To test our theoretical propositions, we study 25 democracies in Europe's interwar period. Investigating democratic deconsolidation in the two decades between 1919 and 1939 provides us with ample variation on both the outcome and the explanatory factors. In contrast to prevalent disagreements about the extent of deconsolidation in individual cases and broader samples today,[9] scholarly consensus exists around the fate of interwar democracies. The historical distance to the interwar period gives us the benefit of clarity on the actual outcome of regime journeys, and thus helps us trace the effects of polarization and fragmentation on democratic deconsolidation. Although others have already probed the origins of democratic survival in interwar Europe,[10] our study is the first to quantitatively analyze the effects of polarization on democracy during the interwar years.

We introduce novel data on 417 political parties and alliances across 130 elections in 25 European democracies between 1919 and 1939. Our data provides information on parties' vote and seat shares, as well as their policy positions across multiple policy dimensions, including economic, majority-nationalists, centre-periphery, urban-rural, and regime cleavages. As polarization might occur along different cleavage types in different countries,[11] we construct measures of multidimensional polarization.

We evaluate our theoretical arguments with conservative fixed effects estimators. Relying on multiple estimation techniques, model specifications, and operationalizations of our explanatory and outcome variables, we probe the robustness of our results. Our findings support our curvilinear and conditional polarization argument: high levels of polarization are associated with declining democracy values, especially at low levels of party fragmentation. Similarly, we find that low levels of polarization and fragmentation are associated with democratic deconsolidation, although our confidence in this result is lower due to an insufficient number of cases. We conclude by discussing how our findings relate to recent debates about the consequences of polarization.

Party System Polarization & Fragmentation

Recent debates advance the idea that polarization negatively affects democratic rules and norms. Moreover, political scientists highlight the role of mass and elite-level polarization in processes of democratic deconsolidation – the weakening of democratic rules and norms within democracies and the shift from democratic to autocratic regimes.[12]

In the prevalent theoretical account, elected incumbents exploit or even foment deep group divisions to undermine democracy from within.[13] These anti-democratic elites use their supporters' rejection or dislike of opposition policies or identities to attack three key pillars of democracy: first, they assault horizontal accountability in a process called "executive aggrandizement" that sidelines other elite veto players; second, they challenge vertical accountability by restricting opposition parties' ability to organize; third, they subvert the principle of participation by attempting to exclude opposition supporters from voting. Voters tolerate anti-democratic behaviour by in-group politicians because they value partisan interests more highly than democratic

principles.[14]

Many of these developments eerily recall deconsolidation and regime failure during the interwar period. For example, Weimar Germany's democratic breakdown was preceded by the hollowing out of horizontal accountability through three years of minority rule by presidential executive decrees that sidelined the elected parliament. Once Hitler was appointed Chancellor in late January 1933, he quickly undermined vertical accountability by curtailing the freedom of press and assembly for his major leftist opponents, and he limited their participation through a massive campaign of violence against Social Democratic and Communist supporters.

In his classic study of polarized pluralism, Sartori outlines a model that connects voter and elite polarization between the radical left and right to democratic deconsolidation. Irresponsible policy claims by radical political actors promised voters a better life against the backdrop of economic crises. A fragmented party system emerged in which moderate parties did not garner sufficient support to alternate in power. Voters became disillusioned with the moderate ruling parties and turned to the ideological extremes in ever-greater numbers. In turn, these antisystem parties blocked any political compromise; voters lost trust in the democratic system itself and embraced authoritarian alternatives.[15]

Seemingly, Sartori's model anticipates contemporary work on the polarization-deconsolidation link. Yet three inconsistencies between Sartori's work and recent studies call for a renewed investigation of the polarization-deconsolidation link. First, both Sartori and the contemporary literature focus on the negative consequences of high levels of polarization.[16] However, some scholars highlight the benefits of polarization. They argue that polarization induces greater alignment between voters and parties and increased turnout at elections.[17] Both relationships should counteract deconsolidation.

Whereas voter-party alignment increases accountability as voters are better able to identify deviations from their preferred outcomes and punish parties for it, higher turnout rates improve representation. These diverging expectations might explain why recent empirical studies yield positive, negative, and null results.[18]

Second, Sartori emphasizes the detrimental effects of polarized pluralism, i.e., high levels of ideological disagreement, particularly between a large number of parties.[19] In line with Sartori's model, other scholars highlight the negative effects of fragmentation irrespective of polarization, especially during the interwar period and in presidential systems.[20] This view of fragmentation and polarization stands diametrically opposed to the "us versus them" dynamic highlighted by the most recent literature on polarization. Today, most political scientists hold that polarization is most threatening to democracy when two groups of similar size oppose each other.[21]

Third, Sartori and recent work on polarization[22] ultimately hold voters accountable for supporting antisystem parties. Yet in her pathbreaking study of democratic breakdown in interwar Europe and Cold War Latin America, Bermeo argues that elite rather than mass polarization led to democratic deconsolidation.[23] Other studies of the interwar period similarly recognize the crucial role of elites.[24] Elite actions are central for the mechanism of deconsolidation discussed at the beginning of this section.

Party System Polarization & Democratic Deconsolidation
Considering the diverging theoretical expectations on the link between polarization and deconsolidation, the contradictory expectations regarding the impact of party system fragmentation, and the emphasis on elite culpability in processes of deconsolidation, we study party-level ideological polarization and its consequences for democratic deconsolidation.[25] More precisely, we argue that both high and low levels of

polarization are detrimental to democracy. We conceptualize polarization as the distance between political parties on policy issues within a party system.[26] As parties are the key institutions of elite expression and organization in democracies,[27] differences between them capture the central drivers of deconsolidation.

We begin by outlining different inter-elite and elite-voter mechanisms that connect both high and low polarization to deconsolidation. First, increasing ideological polarization spurs deconsolidation by inducing political deadlock. Large distances in ideological positions between parties make it more difficult to find political compromise and keep parties from forming stable governments.[28] Unable to solve political problems through parliamentary majorities, politicians might opt to choose extra-constitutional means, for example, through rule by executive decree as in Weimar Germany.[29] Even if radical parties are still small, their mere parliamentary representation moves moderate parties towards adopting culturally protectionist or nationalist positions.[30]

Second, extremely high levels of polarization increase the fear of government alternation. The potential loss of executive power to political competitors that aim to implement "radical social transformations" proves intolerable to incumbents who seek to pre-empt the transfer of power with all-out efforts of non-democratic means.[31] Although this fear-of-alternation argument has been primarily associated with voters,[32] it equally pertains to political elites. Governing elites may attempt to tilt the playing field in their favour to keep the "radical" opposition out of office. Opposition elites may start violating democratic norms because they perceive the sitting government as a threat to their existence.[33]

Third, a lack of normative commitment to democracy among key leaders suffices to render deconsolidation possible.[34] As soon as political elites are unwilling to incur policy costs to protect democratic principles, the survival of democracy is at

risk.[35]

The three mechanisms of deadlock, fear of alternation, and normative commitments towards democracy can be reinforced through feedback effects from the electorate. Once radical right-wing parties enter parliament, and thereby increase ideological polarization, the electorate polarizes as well.[36] Similarly, once radical right parties gain representation, the norms that made radical right supporters conceal their views crumble.[37] When extreme positions become normalized, voters increasingly express polarized attitudes and preferences, raising the demand for greater party-system polarization. Thus, the interaction between elite and mass polarization results in a process that Sartori calls "centrifugal drives"[38]: increased party-system polarization feeds into increased voter polarization, which increases demand for further party system polarization, and ultimately increases the likelihood of deconsolidation.

Theorists of polarization frequently predict a linear, negative relationship between polarization and democracy. As argued above, we embrace the view that extremely high levels of ideological polarization induce deconsolidation. Additionally, we return to earlier claims to argue that the absence of partisan divisions might similarly induce deconsolidation.[39] Instead, intermediate levels of polarization are the best antidote to deconsolidation. Moderate polarization energizes the electorate and increases participation.[40] In younger democracies, ideological polarization creates lasting voter-party alignments that strengthen elite responsiveness to voters in the long run.[41]

Conversely, extremely low levels of polarization threaten the stability of democracies through several mechanisms. Discussing the rise of cartel parties, Katz and Mair capture the threat of low polarization: "as the distinction between parties in office and those out of office becomes more blurred, the degree to which voters can punish parties [...] is reduced."[42] Moreover, lacking ideological differences could induce party

collusion to secure powerful positions for elites, thus undermining their commitments to voters and damaging democratic accountability.[43] In the absence of party ideological differentiation, personalist and clientelist politics prevail.[44] In turn, the absence of elite responsiveness and accountability induces democratic deconsolidation, as elites start bending institutional rules to their own advantage.[45] Without a credibly different opposition, it becomes more likely that a dominant government successfully undermines democratic institutions.

Recent studies demonstrate that the party-system dynamics that we describe here replicate at the mass level. Torcal and Magalhaes find that moderate perceived ideological distances between parties increase principled support for democracy among citizens. They also find that ideologically extreme citizens exhibit lower support for democracy.[46] Similarly, Jansen and Turkenburg report that both very low and very high levels of out-group dislike among citizens, as opposed to medium levels of affective polarization, are associated with decreased support for democracy.[47]

We speculate that the self-reinforcing dynamics described by Sartori for high levels of polarization may also be at play at low levels of polarization. Where ideological polarization decreases, citizens find it harder to discern differences between parties. This feeds into voter demobilization and increased dissatisfaction with the democratic rules. As citizens care less about them, parties have more leeway to collude and violate democratic rules. We summarize the low and high polarization logics in our first hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. *Party-system ideological polarization at very high and very low levels is associated with democratic deconsolidation.*

Fragmentation, Polarization & Deconsolidation

Above, we defined ideological polarization as the distance on policy issues between political parties. We explicitly bracketed out party system fragmentation, the number and size of groups, which is inherent to many definitions of polarization.[48] As highlighted in our review of the literature, different theoretical models that agree on the dangers of increasing between-actor distance make diametrically opposing predictions about the number of actors.

Reviewing each of the mechanisms that connect polarization with deconsolidation, we side with more recent arguments that two ideologically distant camps are most damaging for democracy. At high levels of party system polarization, increasing fragmentation has no clear effect on political deadlock, but it decreases fears of alternation and blunts the impact of lacking normative commitments to democracy. First, high levels of party fragmentation should make it more difficult to form stable governments because coalition formation requires greater compromise. Yet, a higher number of parties in an ideological space implies a closer ideological distance between some of these parties, thus facilitating coalition building. Which effect dominates is an open empirical question.[49] Second, high levels of fragmentation imply that ideologically extreme parties cannot govern alone, thus making elections less of an all-or-nothing contest, and thereby reducing fear of alternation. Third, where high ideological polarization between parties induces weakened normative commitments to democracy, higher party fragmentation increases the probability that parties have different stances towards the political system. This should lower the probability of agreement within a government to undermine democratic rules and norms.

Similarly, at low levels of polarization, low levels of fragmentation should aggravate deconsolidation pressures. Low fragmentation and polarization scores may describe a dominant party system where the opposition is as weak as in Orban's

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Hungary, which threatens accountability. They might also describe a two-party system with little ideological differentiation in which voters do not face much of a choice. In both cases, a weak or weakly visible opposition decreases voter participation, enables elite collusion, and decreases responsiveness. In contrast, increased party fragmentation should induce additional vote choice, additional coalition partners, and additional, potentially cross-cutting policy positions, even in cases of low polarization, thus mobilizing voters and improving accountability. Combining our argument about the effect of polarization conditional on fragmentation, we posit our second hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2. *Party-system ideological polarization at very high and very low levels is associated with democratic deconsolidation, specifically at lower levels of party fragmentation.*

Case Selection

We study Europe's interwar period. Between the end of the first and the beginning of the second World War, European democracies experienced deep economic crises, rapid technological and scientific advances, and changing social mores, including the widespread adoption of women's voting rights. In the aftermath of the Great Depression that began in 1929, ideological polarization rose in many democracies, accompanied by political violence, and increasing electoral success by extremist parties.[50] Deconsolidation and democratic breakdown followed in about half of the countries, especially in the younger democracies.[51]

We investigate Europe's interwar period for three reasons. First, we challenge Sartori's model of polarized pluralism, which was developed against the backdrop of the interwar period. If we find evidence in the interwar period that refutes Sartori's proposition that high polarization/high fragmentation cases are most likely linked to

deconsolidation, this would be strong evidence in favour of the high polarization/low fragmentation argument we advance.

Second, Europe's interwar democracies are an interesting laboratory for political scientists in and of themselves. Although we are not the first political scientists to study deconsolidation during the interwar period,[52] we are the first to quantitatively analyse the role of party system polarization and fragmentation.

Third, many observers have drawn analogies between the past and the present, yet others point to the particularities of the interwar period.[53] We believe that our data and findings will help to put these analogies on firmer footing. In Online Appendix A2, we therefor compare the European interwar democracies with their successor states in the 21st Century and a non-European sample of post-World War II states. Although interwar and contemporary European democracies obviously differ, they resemble each other more closely than non-European cases on a range of institutional and socio-economic dimensions.

New Data

We introduce new data on elections, parliaments, and parties for all European democracies between 1st January 1919 and 31st August 1939. This data is available as part of the AIEEDA data.[54] We identify European interwar democracies relying on Boix, Miller, and Rosato's minimal definition of democracy. Accordingly, a state is democratic if it holds free and fair elections to select its legislature, holds direct or indirect elections for its executive, and a majority of adult men has the right to vote.[55] This definition applies to interwar Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, San Marino, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and Yugoslavia.

For all 25 European interwar democracies, we collected data on 130 parliamentary elections, 387 parliamentary parties, 30 electoral alliances, and 47 independents and others.[56] For 14 out of 25 countries, we relied on existing election results from the ParlGov database[57] and only corrected minor mistakes. For the remaining eleven predominantly eastern and southern European democracies, we collected original data. Together with two PhD students[58] with specific regional expertise, we consulted election compendiums,[59] national parliamentary websites, archives, historical newspapers, national libraries, electoral commissions, and other academic experts to compile and clean all data.

Most importantly, we assembled new information on policy goals and organizational characteristics for all political parties and electoral alliances. Our data provides information on parties' seats and vote shares, their status as government or opposition parties, their position on the economic left-right dimension, their nationalist, territorial, rural, and antisystem claims, the presence of violent wings, and the number of party factions.

We implemented a multi-stage classification process to ensure data reliability and validity. After developing a codebook and an online data entry portal that helped prevent typos and other forms of entry errors, we trained several research assistants across three rounds of feedback and test cases. Where standardized party or party system case studies were available,[60] the research assistants extracted relevant information for parties and classified the variables of interest. The authors reviewed these decisions and weighed in on critical cases for which information was sparse or contradictory.

In a second round, the authors and two regional experts classified challenging cases, specifically younger and short-lived democracies in eastern and southern Europe.

In these cases, we relied on primary sources such as newspaper articles, contemporary books, and election manifestos, as well as historical case studies. To classify the remaining cases, including countries for which we lacked linguistic expertise and small parties that were only represented in parliament for a single period, we contacted historians and political scientists who specialized in interwar European politics.[61]

Measurement

To test our hypotheses, we compare variation in polarization, fragmentation, and democracy levels for each of our 130 democratic interwar elections. Our main outcome variable is the Polyarchy index from the V-DEM data.[62] Relating back to Dahl's foundational work on democracy,[63] the index captures the quality of electoral democracy on a continuous scale between 0 and 1 on five fundamental dimensions: the degree over which citizens elect the legislature and executive, the extent of suffrage, the scope of election interference, and the range of freedom of association and expression. The index explicitly ignores components of liberal democracy such as the protection of minority rights.[64] We capture democracy levels in the year following the election, as we expect that the effects of polarization and fragmentation require time to unfold.

Our first explanatory variable measures party-system polarization. Because our theoretical argument calls for separating the effects of polarization and fragmentation, we introduce a measure of polarization that focuses exclusively on ideological differences between two parties.[65] Moreover, we introduce a multi-dimensional measurement.

Importantly, parties vary in their ideological distance on various dimensions. While the economic left-right conflict was the dominant political divide in the twentieth century, its intensity differed between regions and has waned over time.[66] In the newly created successor states of the Austro-Hungarian, German, and Russian Empires in

Central and Eastern Europe, an additional line of division organized party politics: the so-called "minorities question". The relationship between an ethno-national majority and ethnic minorities was central to politics in the Baltics, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia[67], but also in the United Kingdom before Irish Independence, and in Spain. A third important source of political divisions were urban-rural differences. Agrarian parties dominated in the Baltics. They also played crucial roles in the so-called "crisis agreements" in Scandinavia after the Great Depression.[68] Finally, different actors contested the system of government itself. Multiple parties across Europe supported a dictatorship of the proletariat, a return to monarchy, or fascist dictatorship.[69]

Our coding scheme for party positions covers all dimensions discussed above. We capture class conflict by coding policy differences on a five-point scale following the Chapel Hill Expert Survey coding instructions.[70] Communist parties typically place on the very left of the scale (1), whereas social democratic parties are commonly situated in the centre-left (2). Christian democratic parties are more variable in their economic placements and typically occupy both centre-left (2) and moderate positions (3) on the scale. Liberal and conservative parties generally hold centre-right positions (4), while very few liberal parties that rejected any state intervention in the economy, such as the Estonian Economic Group (Majandusline rühm), are classified on the extreme right (5). National socialist or fascist parties pursued various economic programs: some advocated socialist intervention into the state whereas others supported the economic status quo.

To capture ethnic conflict, we measure centre-periphery divisions with territorial claims (0 if none, 1 for demands to decentralize, and 2 for secessionist claims). Sinn Féin prior to Irish Independence and the Republican Left of Catalonia are examples of secessionist parties. The Bavarian People's Party in Germany and the Lithuanian

German's Committee promoted decentralization. Ethnic conflict also manifested itself between national majorities and minorities without clear territorial homelands. We thus additionally capture majoritarian nationalism that targets minority rights, e.g., of Jews across many central and eastern European states, in a dichotomous variable.

Next, we assess urban-rural conflicts by classifying rural claims by parties that advocate agrarian interests or interests of the rural population. Venstre in Denmark or the Polish People's Party were prototypes of agrarian parties. Notably, parties with rural claims vary substantively along the economic left-right dimension. Some supported major land reform and a social welfare state, others represented the status quo of wealthier farmers.

Finally, we capture the presence of a regime cleavage through antisystem claims, a dichotomous indicator of whether a party takes stances against parliamentary democracy. This variable captures antisystem claims by the Italian Fascist Party, the Belgian Rexist Party, or the Spanish Syndicalist Party. Concluding, our multidimensional measurement of polarization combines information on parties' economic left-right positions and their urban-rural, majoritarian nationalists, territorial, and antisystem claims.

Unlike contemporary efforts to classify parties' policy positions, our data are time invariant. Given the inconsistent publication of party manifestos during Europe's interwar period, to say nothing of election manifestos, and the paucity of digitally accessible speeches and/or newspaper proclamations, we were unable to uncover election-by-election updates on party policy positions. However, few of the sources pointed towards stark changes in party positions. For example, the German Catholic Center Party published only one party program in 1922 that lasted throughout the entire interwar period. Instead, parties typically split or dissolved when internal divisions

became too tense. Moreover, new parties regularly entered parliaments in the highly volatile interwar periods whereas others were voted out of parliament.[71] In fact, 41.41 percent of parties in our data competed in only one election.[72] Since our data includes information on these new and short-lived parties, we cover the main source of variation in party system polarization. Within-party changes account for much less variation in party-system polarization.

To compute party-system polarization, we combine the information across the five policy dimensions: economic left-right positions and territorial, majoritarian nationalist, antisystem, and urban-rural claims. We measure the Euclidean distance between each party pair at every election across these dimensions. The Euclidean distance is the square root of the sum of squared differences between positions p of parties i and j for all dimensions k (see Equation 1). By dividing the square root of the sum of squared distances by the number of dimensions K, we scale the Euclidean distance for each party pair i, j to lie between 0 and 1.

$$EuclDist_{i,j} = \frac{1}{K}\sqrt{\sum_{k-1}^{K}(p_{i,k} - p_{j,k})^2} \qquad (1)$$

Next, we choose the maximum Euclidean distance observed in an election as our final measurement of multidimensional polarization for this election. We do so because we expect the most extreme distance between any two parties in an election to affect democratic deconsolidation the most. This mirrors what Sartori calls the "overall spread of the ideological spectrum of any given polity"[73].

Figure 1 illustrates the utility of a multidimensional measure of polarization by visualizing different unidimensional measures of polarization for all elections in three interwar democracies.[74] The horizontal axis always displays the economic left-right dimension, whereas the policy dimensions on the vertical axis vary: we plot polarization

levels for the territorial issue in the upper left, for majority nationalism in the upper right, for the rural-urban divide in the lower left, and for antisystem stances in the lower right quadrant. Each point (square, triangle) represents one election in interwar Belgium (Yugoslavia, Latvia).

Unidimensional measures of polarization fail to capture polarization in a comparative way across these countries. Conflict between the economic left and right hardly mattered in interwar Yugoslavia (squares), where parties representing ethnic groups competed over autonomy and majority status, instead. Latvia (triangles) experienced left-right, urban-rural, and ethnic conflict, but not territorial disputes. Finally, the case of Belgium (circles) demonstrates the importance of all policy dimensions while showing substantial temporal variation.

Figure 1: Different dimensions of ideological polarization in select interwar elections, 1919-1939.
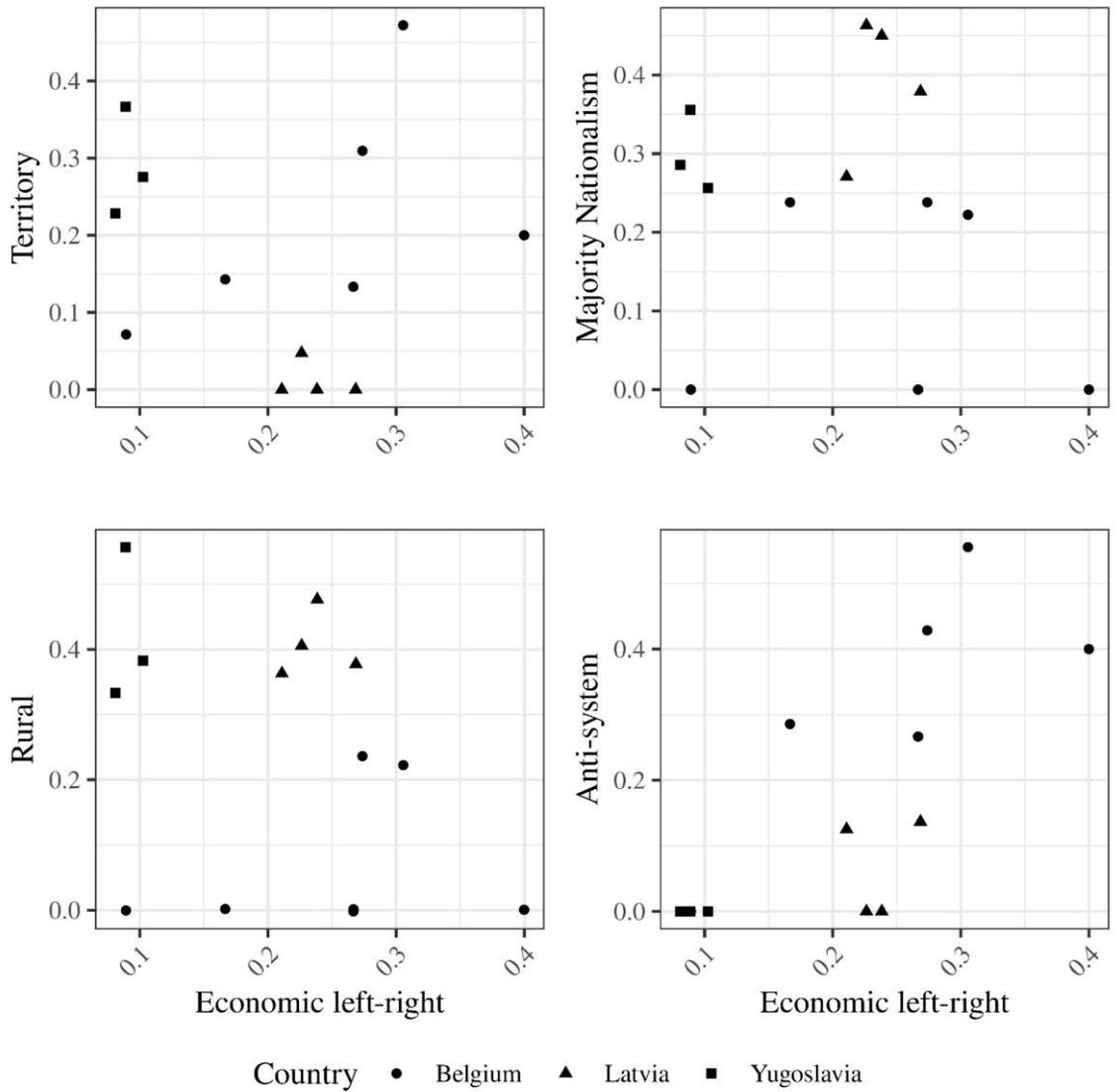
We capture fragmentation, the second explanatory variable of interest, by computing the effective number of parties (ENP),[75] the inverse of the sum of squared seat shares s for all parties n represented in a parliament (see Equation 2). A simple Pearson's correlation test reveals that the ENP and polarization are not only theoretically distinct, they also do not co-vary (r = −0.04, p = 0.69).

$$ENP = \frac{1}{\sum_{i=1}^{n} s_i^2} \qquad\qquad (2)$$

Modelling Strategy

We model the relationship between polarization, fragmentation, and Polyarchy with beta regressions. The Polyarchy index takes values between 0 and 1, though in our cases neither 0 nor 1. Due to this distribution of the outcome variable, linear regression models estimate neither unbiased nor efficient estimates,[76] and fit values beyond the actual bounds of our measurements.[77] The Beta function only predicts values between 0 and 1 (excluding 0 and 1) and simultaneously estimates mean and dispersion parameters, thus effectively addressing heteroskedasticity in the data.[78]

We employ conservative country and year-fixed effects to control for any country-specific and period trends that drive changes in the level of Polyarchy. We further assess whether our results are robust to adding control variables. The extant literature identifies economic development,[79] small country size,[80] democratic legacies,[81] and party institutionalization as key correlates of democratic stability.[82] Thus, we control for the following confounders: a country's level of economic development as well as its population size (both logged and lagged by one),[83] its democratic experience (logarithm of years since democratic transition),[84] its history as an independent state (logarithm of years since independence),[85] its level of party institutionalization (logarithm of oldest party age, coded by authors), and the prevalence of violence in a given country (number of parties with violent wings, authors' data).[86] Section C in the Online Appendix displays descriptive statistics of all variables included in our analysis.

Most of the control variables clearly constitute pre-treatment confounders rather than post-treatment mediators or colliders that would bias our results.[87] The exceptions are our indicators of economic development and violence. If polarization causes violence and leads to democratic deconsolidation, violence would be a mediator and capture some of polarization's direct effect, thus weakening the association we find

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between polarization and violence. If, however, violence results from both polarization and deconsolidation, then the bias on our main effect would be unknown. The same considerations apply for economic development. Unfortunately, we cannot simply drop either variable, as it is conceivable that violence and economic development cause both polarization and deconsolidation. Although we cannot completely escape the dilemma of either risking omitted variable or collider bias, we display models with and without these controls as a first indication that our results are robust in both cases.

Empirical Analysis

We begin by describing the unconditional, bivariate relationships between two polarization and democracy indices in Figure 2.[88] Each dot represents an election for which we measure polarization at time t. Democracy indices are shown for time t + 1. While all elections took place under democratic rule, democracy broke down in some cases shortly after an election or in the following year. All combinations of measurements demonstrate curvilinear relationships. The relationship between democracy and our preferred measure of polarization, the maximum Euclidean distance, shows a consistent inverse U-shape. At low and high values of polarization, the two democracy indices indicate lower levels of democracy than in the intermediate range of polarization. The Esteban and Ray index of polarization[89] also indicates an inverted U-curve, albeit with greater uncertainty at higher levels of polarization. As previously mentioned, Esteban and Ray's index depends on policy positions and party size, and their conflation may contribute to the greater observed uncertainty.

Figure 2: Polarization indices for interwar European elections (t) and democracy measures (t+1). Each dot is an election. The solid line depicts the non-parametric

estimate of a loess function. The dashed line indicates the common cut-off point between democracies and autocracies for the democracy measures.
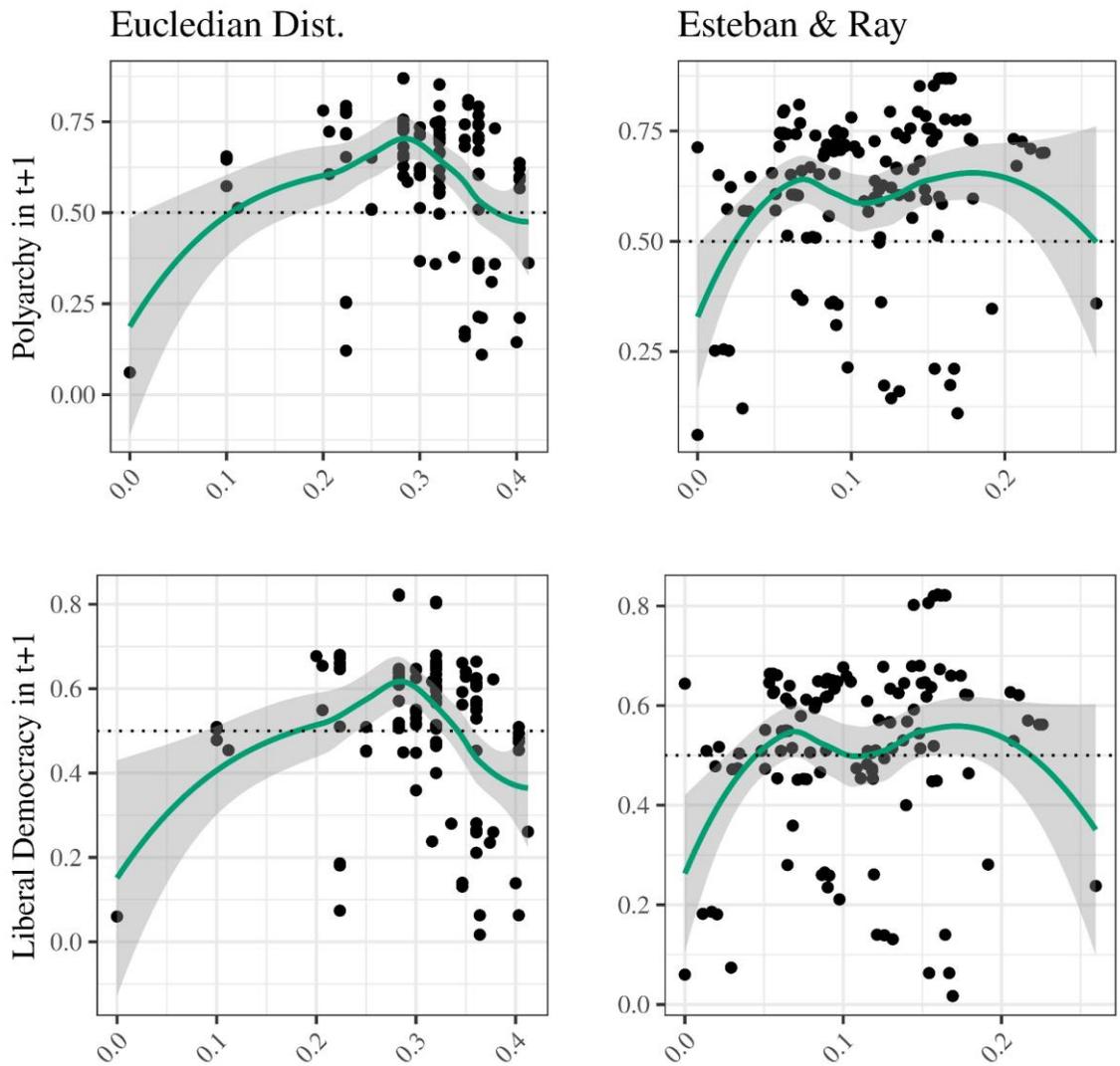
Next, we turn to the multi-variate analysis of the unconditional effect of polarization on democratic performance. Table 1 shows results from different beta regressions with a logit link function. We regress levels of Polyarchy in the year after an election on polarization and fragmentation. All models include country and year-fixed effects. Model 1 only contains a linear specification of polarization, our maximum Euclidean distance measure, to test the established claim that high levels of polarization are damaging to democracy. Model 2 adds our measure of fragmentation, the effective number of parties (ENP). Finally, Model 3 constitutes the first test of Hypothesis 1, that

the effect of polarization on democracy is curvilinear, by adding a squared term of the

Euclidean distance. Model 4 also includes control variables. Models 5 and 6 then test

Hypothesis 2, that the effect of polarization varies across levels of fragmentation.

Table 1: Beta regression models of V-Dem Polyarchy in year t+1 on multidimensional
polarization in election year t, 1919-1939.

	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6
Polarization	1.65^*	1.02	8.93^{**}	13.41^{***}	29.76^{***}	30.15^{***}
	(0.72)	(0.75)	(3.40)	(3.79)	(5.81)	(6.07)
Polarization²			-18.44^*	-25.07^{**}	-64.11^{***}	-60.36^{***}
			(7.63)	(8.24)	(12.87)	(13.23)
ENP		0.12^*	0.17^{***}	0.15^{**}	0.72^{***}	0.72^{***}
		(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.21)	(0.21)
Polarization:ENP					-6.72^{***}	-5.68^{***}
					(1.56)	(1.57)
Poarlization²:ENP					14.14^{***}	11.27^{***}
					(3.12)	(3.11)
Constant	-0.14	-0.18	-0.77^*	20.34	-2.31^{***}	14.25
	(0.29)	(0.29)	(0.38)	(15.07)	(0.68)	(14.45)
Country-FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
N	129	128	128	121	128	121
Log Likelihood	158.33	160.08	163.11	166.52	173.40	173.24

$^{***}p < .001$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^*p < .05$

Our data reveals modest evidence for an unconditional effect of polarization on

democracy. Models 1 and 2 only exhibit weak signals of a linear effect of polarization

on democracy scores, and the direction of the effect runs counter to existing theories

that associate high polarization levels with decreasing democracy scores. Evidence for a

curvilinear effect is stronger because the quadratic terms for polarization in Models 3

(without control variables) and 4 (with control variables) are different from zero. A

likelihood ratio test between Models 2 and 3 supports the better fit of the quadratic term

to the data (p = 0.014), thus supporting (H1)

Moreover, our data reveals strong evidence for a conditional, curvilinear effect of polarization on democracy. Models 5 (without control variables) and 6 (with control variables) capture both the curvilinear and conditional logic of our theoretical argument by including the interaction between polarization and fragmentation (H2). Coefficients for polarization and fragmentation are different from zero, with high certainty. Moreover, both models reveal increasing effect sizes and substantial improvements in model fit: likelihood ratio tests between Models 3 and 5 and 4 and 6 reject the null of no improvement in model fit.

Figure 3 plots predicted values for the relationship between polarization and levels of Polyarchy conditioning on the level of fragmentation. We chose to fix the ENP at 2.5 and 6 respectively, following Sartori's seminal classification of two-party systems and polarized pluralism.[90] The points depict actual observations, whereas the black and green lines show predicted democracy values from Model 5 in Table 1. The shaded regions span the 90% confidence intervals around the estimated median level of Polyarchy.

Figure 3: Predicted values of Polyarchy as a function of multidimensional polarization (maximum Euclidean distance) interacted with the effective number of parties based on Model 5.
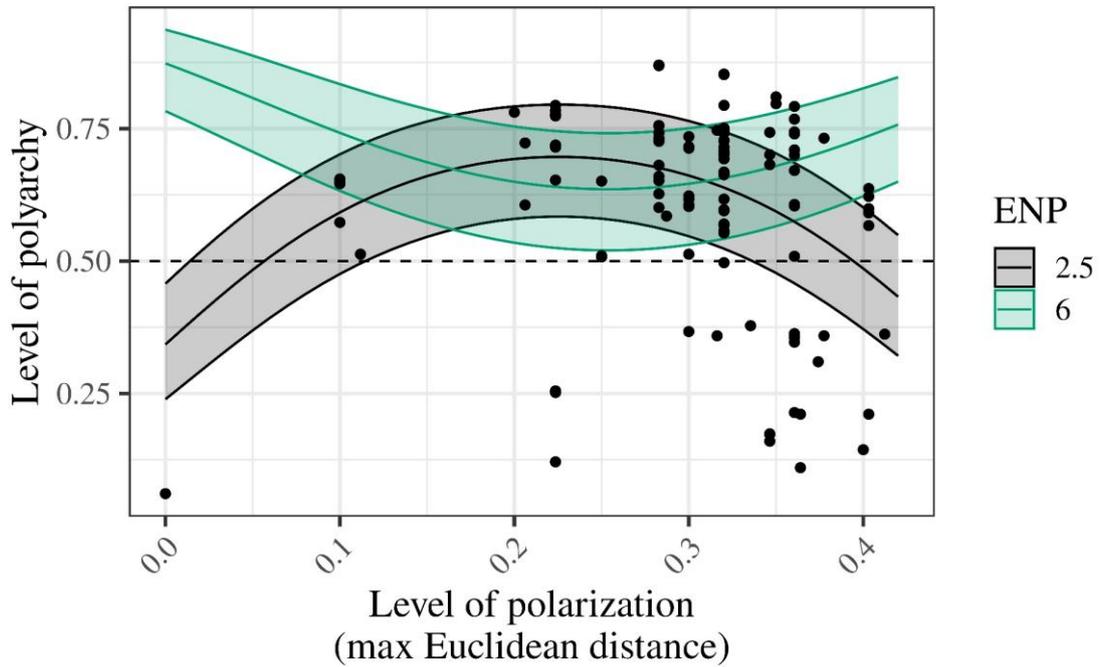

Figure 3 provides two key insights. First, the effect of polarization on democracy critically depends on the degree of party fragmentation. Contra Sartori, party systems that approach two-party competition and that are either highly polarized ideologically or not polarized at all decrease democratic scores in line with H2. In contrast, at high levels of fragmentation, polarization has a negligible effect on Polyarchy scores. The shape of the curve inverts to a very flat U, though the changes in predicted democracy levels along different polarization scores are hardly substantial. High fragmentation diffuses polarization.

Second, the predicted effect of polarization becomes substantively and statistically stronger at both the high and the low ends of our measurement. Statistically significant differences to the median value are now recognizable in the intervals [0, 0.09] and [0.36, 1]. Hence, we conclude that party ideological polarization at very high and very low levels is associated with democratic deconsolidation, specifically at lower levels of party fragmentation.

Robustness Tests

We subject our thesis to several robustness tests. To guard against model-dependence, we re-estimate all models in Table 1 using ordinary least squares regressions (Online Appendix D.1). To ensure that our findings are not driven by measurement choices, we use two additional outcome variables (V-Dem's liberal component index and the Polity V score in Section D.2), as well as three alternative operationalizations of our explanatory variables: the mean Euclidean distance which considers policy positions by all parties, and multidimensional implementations of Dalton's[91] and Esteban and Ray's indices.[92] As the latter two measurements capture elements of both party system polarization and fragmentation, we only test the curvilinear relationship between polarization and deconsolidation (Section D.3). When only testing H1 in Models 3 and 4, we fully replicate the results in the majority but not in all models. We find substantively similar and statistically significant results in all replications of Models 5 and 6, which jointly test the curvilinear (H1) and conditional (H2) effects of polarization on deconsolidation.

Next, we probe whether any single underlying dimension drives the multidimensional polarization results we find. In line with our argument that we need to measure multidimensional polarization to capture important cross-national differences, we find substantively weaker and frequently statistically insignificant results when testing individual policy areas (Section D.4).

We probe the sensitivity of our results to omitted variable bias by simulating the effect of hypothetical confounders.[93] The simulation results are reported in Online Appendix D.5. They indicate that even a predictor three times the strength of the GDP per capita estimate would not undermine our findings.

Finally, we test whether our findings are an artefact of reverse or circular

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causality by replicating our models using Polyarchy in the election year and in the year before the election as outcome variables (Section D.6). If reverse or circular causality were explaining our results, our coefficients should be non-zero in these models, too. However, nearly all coefficients are indistinguishable from zero.

Outlier

Above, we identify outlier observations as a threat to the validity of our findings. Figure 3 points to a singular influential case that might drive our results: there is only one observation with extremely low levels of polarization, fragmentation, and democracy, namely the Greek election on June 9, 1935. At the high end of the polarization scale, far more data points buttress our findings. Other borderline cases of democratic rule might undermine our findings, among which the German election on March 5, 1933, is the most notable one, because it might arguably take place under authoritarian rule.[94] Finally, we identify the 1919 Italian election and the 1937 Icelandic election as data points that exceed three times the mean of Cook's distance in our sample. Thus, we re-estimate Models 3 and 5 from Table 1 while dropping the Greek, Italian, Icelandic, and all borderline democratic elections. When dropping the 1945 Greek election, we fail to detect statistically significant coefficients for our key variables in our replication of Model 3 but continue to estimate the expected direction. Moreover, re-estimating Model 5 without the Greek election still returns statistically significant results in line with our expectations. Dropping any of the other outliers does not change our results.

That the 1935 Greek election drives parts of our results for the low-polarization, low-fragmentation logic is reasonable. As an influential case, it exemplifies our reasoning about weakly polarized and weakly fragmented party systems. In cases where one party dominates parliament, party system polarization and fragmentation decrease due to negligible opposition forces. In turn, the risks of violent extra-parliamentary

opposition, executive aggrandizement, self-coups, or coups by opposing actors increase. Democratic deconsolidation becomes far more likely.

This is exactly what happened around the 1935 Greek election. As a response to an attempted coup, the Tsaldaris government substantially increased the hurdles for opposition parties to compete in the upcoming election. Tsaldaris and his allies then won all but 13 out of 300 parliamentary seats. In the absence of a meaningful opposition, factions within the government coalition that opposed parliamentary democracy staged a coup against Tsaldaris, thereby ending democratic rule in Greece in 1936.[95]

Conclusion

In this study, we advance the literature on party-system ideological polarization and democratic deconsolidation. We argue that high and low levels of ideological polarization contribute to democratic deconsolidation, specifically at low levels of party fragmentation. Our empirical results lend support to our arguments, and thus reconcile earlier studies that stressed a positive impact of polarization[96] with more recent work that highlights its negative consequences[97] or finds null results in linear specifications of the polarization-deconsolidation link.[98] Our non-linear findings further align with recent studies that uncover a similar inverted U-shape when studying the relationship between individual-level ideological/affective polarization and support for democracy.[99]

A second key result is that our empirical analysis rejects Sartori's classic argument that identifies the highest risk for democracy in highly polarized and highly fragmented party systems.[100] In contrast, our findings lend support to more recent arguments that high levels of polarization are most threatening in low fragmentation contexts.[101] What makes the latter results more compelling is that our evidence derives from the very period on which Sartori based his insights: interwar Europe. Although our

observational research design does not allow us to make causal claims, we show it is unlikely that omitted variable bias or reverse causality drive the observed correlations. Finally, our results are robust to the choice of statistical models as well as various operationalizations of the outcome and explanatory variables.

Our argument and data emphasize ideological differences between parties. If recent work is correct that affective polarization is endogenous to elite cues,[102] it is essential to arrive at a better understanding of ideological elite divisions. Our study of democratic deconsolidation in Europe's interwar period further echoes one important finding from in-depth qualitative comparisons of deconsolidating democracies today. The superior empirical fit of our multidimensional measure of polarization relative to unidimensional operationalizations underlines the insight that elites may activate any one of a multitude of cleavages to polarize society.[103] Polarization measured exclusively along the economic left-right dimension hides important political conflicts, such as ethnic or urban-rural divisions.[104] Particularly, broad cross-country comparisons need to take into account the varying sources of political differentiation to capture the true extent of polarization.

Throughout this article, we related historical patterns of polarization and deconsolidation during the interwar period to contemporary cases. Yet, how much can we learn from these historical cases for today? The interwar period was unique in several ways. The destruction and settlement of World War I as well as the prevalence of paramilitary groups associated with political parties provided a context that is not directly comparable to today, even if political violence has been rising in recent years.[105] Yet on several institutional and socio-structural variables, contemporary European democracies resemble their interwar predecessors more than other, non-European post-World War II cases (see Online Appendix B.2). In this sense, the lessons

from the past should inform our analysis of contemporary trends.[106] Future research

should thus explore the non-linear relationship between party-system polarization and

deconsolidation as well as the conditional relationship between polarization,

fragmentation, and democratic decline in contemporary democracies.

Data availability statement

Replication material is available in the OSF dataverse (DOI:

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1Notes

McCoy and Somer, "Toward a Theory of Pernicious Polarization and How It Harms Democracies" and Svolik, "Polarization versus Democracy."

2   Diamond, "Facing Up to the Democratic Recession" and Lührmann and Lindberg, "A Third Wave of Autocratization is Here."

3   Mudde and Kaltwasser, "Populism in Europe and the Americas" and Inglehart and Norris, "Trump and the Populist Authoritarian Parties."

4   Bakke and Sitter, "The EU's Enfants Terribles."

5   e.g., Sartori, "Parties and Party Systems" and Arbatli and Rosenberg, "United We Stand, Divided We Rule."

6   e.g., Dalton, "The Quantity and the Quality of Party Systems"; Schmitt and Freire, "Ideological Polarization"; Wang, "The Effects of Party Fractionalization and Party Polarization on Democracy" and Gallego, "Unequal Political Participation Worldwide."

7   Sartori, "Parties and Party Systems."

8   McCoy and Somer, "Toward a Theory of Pernicious Polarization and How It Harms Democracies."

9   Diamond, "Facing Up to the Democratic Recession"; Lührmann and Lindberg, "A Third Wave of Autocratization is Here"; Levitsky and Way, "Democracy's Surprising Resilience" and Treisman, "How Great is the Current Danger to Democracy?"

10 e.g., Cornell, Møller, and Skaaning, "The Real Lessons of the Interwar Years."

11 Reiljan, "Fear and Loathing Across Party Lines'(also) in Europe," 393.

12 Diamond, "Facing Up to the Democratic Recession" and Lührmann and Lindberg, "A Third Wave of Autocratization is Here"; Other scholars use the terms "backsliding", "decline", or "erosion" to denote similar concepts (Puddington, "The Freedom House Survey for 2009"; Bermeo, "On Democratic Backsliding" and Kaufman and Haggard, "Democratic Decline in the United States"), though some focus exclusively on variation within democracies (Waldner and Lust, "Unwelcome Change"). Importantly, our definition requires a continuous rather than a categorical conceptualization of the differences between democracies and autocracies.

13 McCoy and Somer, "Toward a Theory of Pernicious Polarization and How It Harms Democracies" and Svolik, "Polarization versus Democracy."

14 Svolik, "Polarization versus Democracy" and Graham and Svolik, "Democracy in America?"

15 Sartori, "Parties and Party Systems."

16 e.g., McCoy et al. "Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy," 18 and Iyengar et al. "The Origins and Consequences of Affective Polarization in the United States," 130.

17 e.g., Dalton, "The Quantity and the Quality of Party Systems"; Schmitt and Freire, "Ideological Polarization" and Gallego, "Unequal Political Participation Worldwide."

18 Wang, "The Effects of Party Fractionalization and Party Polarization on Democracy"; Arbatli and Rosenberg, "United We Stand, Divided We Rule" and Orhan, "The Relationship Between Affective Polarization and Democratic Backsliding."

19 Sartori, "Parties and Party Systems."

20 e.g., Shugart and Carey, "Presidents and Assemblies" and Karvonen and Quenter, "Electoral Systems, Party System Fragmentation and Government Instability."

21 Esteban and Ray, "On the measurement of polarization"; Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes, "Affect, not Ideology" and McCoy, Rahman, and Somer, "Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy."

22 e.g., Svolik "Parties and Party Systems."

23 Bermeo, "Ordinary People in Extraordinary Times"; see also Weyland, "Assault on Democracy."

24 Berman, "Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic" and Luebbert, "Liberalism, Fascism, or Social Democracy."

25 From here on, we use the term polarization to refer to ideological, party-system polarization.

26 Sartori, "Parties and Party Systems," 111.

27 Valentim and Dinas, "Does Party-System Fragmentation Affect the Quality of Democracy?" 152.

28 McCoy, Rahman, and Somer, "Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy," 18 and Warwick, "Ideological Diversity and Government Survival in Western European Parliamentary Democracies."

29 Bermeo, "Ordinary People in Extraordinary Times," 38.

30 Abou-Chadi and Krause, "The Causal Effect of Radical Right Success on Mainstream Parties' Policy Positions."

31 Weyland, "Assault on Democracy," 317.

32 Svolik, "Polarization versus Democracy."

33 Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán, "Democratic Breakdown and Survival," 125.

34 cf. Levitsky and Ziblatt, "How Democracies Die."

35 Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán, "Democratic Breakdown and Survival," 126.

36 e.g., Bischof and Wagner, "Do Voters Polarize When Radical Parties Enter Parliament?"

37 Valentim, "Parliamentary Representation and the Normalization of Radical Right Support."

38 Sartori, "Parties and Party Systems," 120.

39 Dalton, "The Quantity and the Quality of Party Systems"; Schmitt and Freire, "Ideological Polarization" and Gallego, "Unequal Political Participation Worldwide."

40 Abramowitz and Saunders, "Is Polarization a Myth?" and Dalton, "The Quantity and the Quality of Party Systems."

41 Bornschier, "Historical Polarization and Representation in South American Party Systems, 1900–1990."

42 Katz and Mair, "Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy," 22.

43 Slater and Simmons, "Coping by Colluding."

44 Kitschelt, "Linkages Between Citizens and Politicians in Democratic Polities."

45 Stokes et al., "Brokers, Voters, and Clientelism: The Puzzle of Distributive Politics" and Frantz et al., "How Personalist Politics is Changing Democracies."

46 Torcal and Magalhaes, "Ideological extremism, perceived party system polarization, and support for democracy."

47 Jansen and Turkenburg, "Breaking free from linear assumptions."

48 e.g., Esteban and Ray, "On the measurement of polarization," 824.

49 The conjecture does not hold in the extreme case that each additional pair of parties represents a new policy dimension, and all parties position themselves in the extreme corners of the policy space. Theoretical approaches that conceptualize polarization as a combination of policy distance and the number of parties would classify this exception as one of intermediate polarization due to the higher number of parties.

50 e.g., Berman, "Democracy and Dictatorship in Europe," 234-284.

51 Cornell, Møller and Skaaning, "The Real Lessons of the Interwar Years."

52 c.f.., Linz, "The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes"; Bermeo, "Ordinary People in Extraordinary Times"; Cornell, Møller and Skaaning, "The Real Lessons of the Interwar Years" and Berman, "Democracy and Dictatorship in Europe."

53 e.g., Weyland, "Assault on Democracy."

54 Kaftan et al., "Introducing the Archive of Interwar Europe Election Data & Assemblies (AIEEDA)."

55 Boix, Miller, and Rosato's, "A complete data set of political regimes, 1800–2007."

56 We provide detailed information on our sample in Online Appendix A.

57 Döring and Manow, "Parliaments and Governments Database (ParlGov)."

58 These are: Bruno Della Sala and Stefan Stojkovic.

59 Mackie and Rose, "The International Almanac of Electoral History" and Nohlen and Stöver, "Elections in Europe."

60 e.g., Wende, "Lexikon zur Geschichte der Parteien in Europa" and McHale and Skowronski, "Political Parties of Europe."

61 We are particularly grateful to Alexandros Makris for his expertise on Greece.

62 Coppedge et al., "V-Dem Codebook v12."

63 Dahl, "Polyarchy."

64 Coppedge et al., "V-Dem Codebook v12," 43-4. We additionally employ V-Dem's liberal component index (v2x_liberal) and the Polity V score (polity2) in Online Appendix D.

65 Other, more commonly used measurements of polarization such as Dalton ("The Quantity and the Quality of Party Systems") and Esteban and Ray ("On the measurement of polarization.") conflate seat distribution and distance between parties. In Online Appendix D.3, we demonstrate that, e.g., the same polarization score is associated with different fragmentation scores. We nevertheless investigate these indices and discuss deviating results as robustness tests.

66 Kriesi et al., "Globalization and the Transformation of the National Political Space."

67 see Palko and Foster, "Contested minorities in the 'New Europe'."

68 Krake, "Reconsidering the Crisis Agreements of the 1930s."

69 e.g., Weyland, "Assault on Democracy," 6-7.

70 Bakker et al., "1999 −2019 Chapel Hill Expert Survey Trend File," 22. Online Appendix B provides the coding instructions for each of the policy dimensions and an illustrative example.

71 Bartolini and Mair, "Identity, Competition and Electoral Availability," 96-100.

72 Excluding the one election in San Marino and all alliances, independents, and "others".

73 Sartori, "Parties and Party Systems," 111; see also Matakos, Troumpounis, and Xefteris, "Electoral Rule Disproportionality and Platform Polarization." We evaluate alternative measures of ideological distance in our robustness section and find similar results.

74 We measure unidimensional polarization similar to multidimensional polarization using the Euclidean distance without aggregating over multiple issues.

75 Laakso and Taagepera, "Effective Number of Parties."

76 To ensure that our results do not depend on the choice of a statistical model, we provide linear regression results in our Online Appendix D.1

77 Cribari-Neto and Zeileis, "Beta regression in R" and Ferrari and Cribari-Neto, "Beta Regression for Modelling Rates and Proportions.".

78 The dispersion parameter is modelled as a function of the mean and a constant ϕ that allows the dispersion to vary for different X.

79 Przeworski et al., "Democracy and Development."

80 Lijphart, "Democracy in Plural Societies."

81 Cornell, Møller and Skaaning, "The Real Lessons of the Interwar Years."

82 Ziblatt, "Conservative Political Parties and the Birth of Modern Democracy in Europe."

83 Bolt and van Zanden, "Maddison style estimates of the evolution of the world economy."

84 Boix, Miller and Rosato, "A complete data set of political regimes, 1800–2007."

85 Gleditsch and Ward, "Interstate System Membership."

86 We fill in missing values for GDP per capita and population size for the Baltic countries, Luxembourg, Iceland, and Poland from country-specific sources.

87 Cinelli, Forney, and Pearl, "A Crash Course in Good and Bad Controls."

88 Online Appendix D.3 lists the functions used to measure polarization according to Esteban and Ray ("On the measurement of polarization.").

89 Esteban and Ray, "On the measurement of polarization."

90 Sartori, "Parties and Party Systems", 110.

91 Dalton, "The Quantity and the Quality of Party Systems."

92 Esteban and Ray, "On the measurement of polarization."

93 Cinelli and Hazlett, "Making Sense of Sensitivity."

94 We provide more detail on the German case in Online Appendix Section D.6.

95 Zink, "Greece."

96 Dalton, "The Quantity and the Quality of Party Systems"; Schmitt and Freire, "Ideological Polarization"; Wang, "The Effects of Party Fractionalization and Party Polarization on Democracy" and Gallego "Unequal Political Participation Worldwide."

97 Arbatli and Rosenberg, "United We Stand, Divided We Rule."

98 Orhan, "The Relationship Between Affective Polarization and Democratic Backsliding."

99 Torcal and Magalaes, "Ideological extremism, perceived party system polarization, and support for democracy" and Janssen and Turkenburg, "Breaking free from linear assumptions."

100   Sartori, "Parties and Party Systems."

101   McCoy and Somer, 2019.

102   McCoy, Rahman and Somer, 2018; Hahm, Hilpert and König, 2024 and Wagner and Praprotnik, 2024.

103   McCoy and Somer, "Toward a Theory of Pernicious Polarization and How It Harms Democracies," 237-40.

104   cf. Boone, "Property and Political Order in Africa"; Reiljan, "Fear and Loathing Across Party Lines'(also) in Europe" and Mason, Wronski, and Kane, "Activating Animus."

105   e.g., Riaz et al, "Out-group threat and xenophobic hate crimes."

106   cf. Levitsky and Ziblatt, "How Democracies Die."