

# Voter Polarization, Strength of Partisanship, and Support for Extremist Parties

Comparative Political Studies

2014, Vol. 47(11) 1558–1583

© The Author(s) 2013

Reprints and permissions:

sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav

DOI: 10.1177/0010414013512605

cps.sagepub.com



Lawrence Ezrow<sup>1</sup>, Margit Tavits<sup>2</sup>, and Jonathan Homola<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

In this study, we evaluate how voter polarization and the level of partisanship influence electoral outcomes. We show that when the level of partisanship is low, the polarization of voter preferences translates into popular support for extreme parties. In contrast, longstanding attachments to mainstream (moderate) parties dampen the relationship between voter polarization and support for extreme parties. The implication of these findings is that the lack of voter attachment to parties contributes to extreme party competition, while strong attachment can help reduce party extremism even if electorates are polarized.

## Keywords

voter polarization, extremist parties, elections, partisanship, postcommunist

When do electorates reward extreme parties? This is a question of high practical and theoretical relevance given that extreme party success is a defining feature of party system polarization (Dalton, 2008). Political polarization has received considerable scholarly and media attention in the United States,

---

<sup>1</sup>University of Essex, Colchester, UK

<sup>2</sup>Washington University in St. Louis, MO, USA

## Corresponding Author:

Lawrence Ezrow, Department of Government, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester, Essex CO4 3SQ, UK.

Email: ezrow@essex.ac.uk

where the increasingly visible partisan divisiveness has been associated with legislative gridlock, uncivil political discourse (Binder, 2003; Jamieson & Falk, 2000; Jones, 2001; Layman, Carsey, & Horowitz, 2006; Sinclair, 2001), decreased trust in government (Fiorina, Abrams, & Pope, 2005; Neckerman & Torche, 2007; Shea, 2003), and increased inequality (McCarty, Poole, & Rosenthal, 2006). In comparative politics, scholars have also long cautioned that polarization, affected by the success of extremist parties, creates increased potential for conflict and problems with democratic governance (Powell, 1986). Several studies associate polarization with democratic breakdown (Sani & Sartori, 1983; Valenzuela, 1978). Linz (1978), for example, discusses several cases where polarization or “centrifugal competition” with the corresponding “deep personal antagonism between parties and the impossibility of forming a broad, shifting center coalition against extremists on both sides of the spectrum” has undermined democracy (p. 44). Even if the threat of regime survival seems distant, polarization can decrease citizen satisfaction with democracy (Ezrow & Xezonakis, 2011) and increase riots and demonstrations (Hibbs, 1973; Powell, 1982). The presence of extremists can also create legislative deadlock and government instability, and thereby affect policy: Powell (1982) shows that extremist party support decreased cabinet stability, while Frye (2010) demonstrates that polarization undermines economic performance. Because of these significant consequences to democratic governance, it is important to understand under what conditions electorates reward extremists.

The existing spatial modeling literature suggests that extreme voter preferences drive party polarization (Cox, 1990; Merrill & Adams, 2002). That is, if voters spread toward the extremes of the ideological continuum, then vote-seeking parties have more to gain by articulating noncentrist positions. Alternatively, as the degree of ideological polarization in the electorate declines, the expectation is that parties, responding to voters, will converge toward the center of the ideological space.

In this article, we argue that, in addition to voters’ policy beliefs, *partisanship* also influences extreme party support. Specifically, voter polarization is more likely to benefit extremist parties when partisanship is weak. As parties become better established in the electorate, extremists may not win even if voter preferences are highly dispersed along the left–right continuum. This is because partisanship is likely to influence the extent to which voters’ (changing) policy positions determine their vote choice. When levels of partisan attachment to mainstream parties are high, then even polarized electorates may still gravitate toward the moderately positioned mainstream parties rather than toward extremists. We further argue that parties are likely to be significantly less established and party loyalties weaker in younger democracies

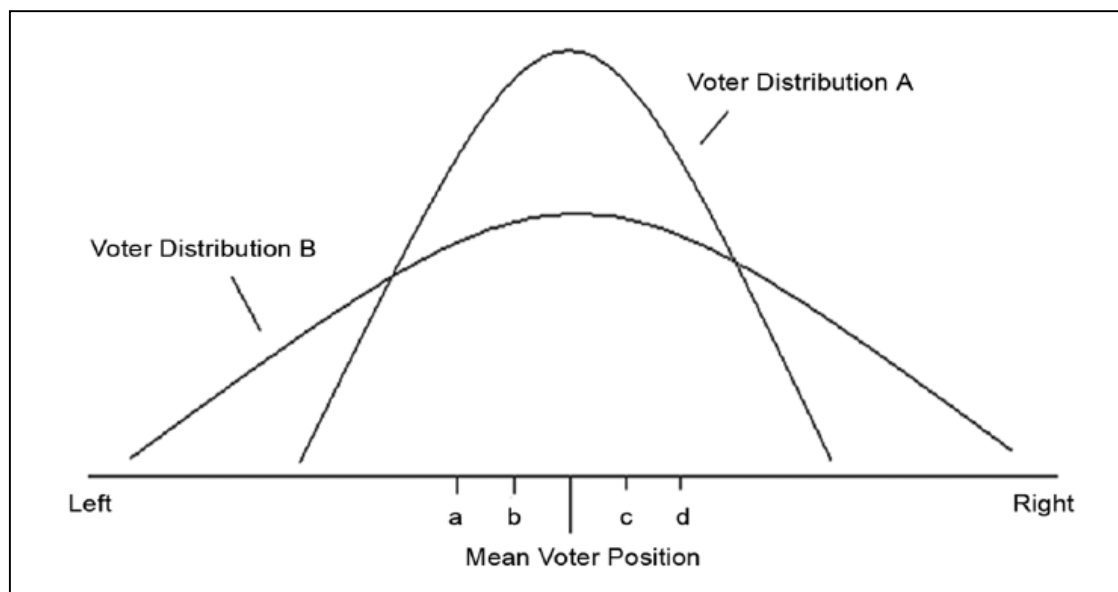
(see also Brader & Tucker, 2011; Lupu, 2012), while parties become better established in the electorate as democracies age and electorates gain more familiarity with them (Converse, 1969; see also Dalton & Weldon, 2007; Fiorina, 1981). This implies that polarized electorates are more likely to reward extremists in newer democracies than in established ones.

To test our argument, we conduct a macro-level analysis of citizen polarization, party positioning, and election outcomes across 31 countries from 1996 to 2007.<sup>1</sup> Our study produces the following findings. First, in line with our theoretical expectation, we find that in the context of new democracies, parties competing in polarized electorates receive an electoral benefit when they adopt distinctly noncentrist (i.e., extremist) policy positions. However, this relationship disappears in established democracies: Extremists gain no advantage even if electorates are polarized rather than compact. We also test the partisanship argument more directly and confirm that voter polarization is indeed more likely to be related to the success of extremists the less established parties are in the electorate, that is, the younger the parties, the lower the levels of partisanship in the electorate, and the less familiar voters are with parties.

These findings are important for at least four reasons. First, our findings relate to studies of political polarization. They suggest that because of low levels of partisanship, newer democracies may be especially vulnerable to political polarization. However, our findings also imply that parties that are well established in the electorate may help guard against polarized politics with its negative consequences for the quality and stability of democracy. As parties mature and stabilize, threats of polarization are likely to diminish.

Second, the findings are relevant to the literature on party positioning strategies. We show that policy beliefs may not always translate into electoral support as a matter of course. Rather, partisanship significantly affects this relationship. This finding is in line with other empirical literature that has considered how contextual factors, such as electoral systems, affect party positioning incentives (Budge, 1994; Dow, 2001, 2011; Laver, 2005).

The findings are also important because they relate to the literature on the consequences of partisanship. We add to the line of research by several prominent scholars who have shown that partisanship in the electorate significantly affects several basic notions of political representation, such as congruence (Rohrschneider & Whitefield, 2012a, 2012b) and the extent to which voters respond to the policy positions of parties (Brader & Tucker, 2011). Finally, our findings suggest that the spatial modeling framework helps us understand electoral competition not only in established but also in newer democracies (Rohrschneider & Whitefield, 2009, 2012a, 2012b).



**Figure 1.** Demonstrating the voter polarization hypothesis.

Note. a, b, c, and d represent hypothetical parties.

## Theoretical Argument and Hypotheses

We start from the theoretical works of Cox (1990) and Merrill and Adams (2002), which suggest that parties' centripetal and centrifugal incentives are influenced by the polarization of the electorate's policy preferences. The logic of this argument is quite clear: If voters spread toward the extremes of the ideological continuum, then vote-seeking parties have more to gain by articulating noncentrist viewpoints. Alternatively, as the degree of ideological polarization in the electorate declines, the expectation is that vote-seeking parties will gravitate toward the center of the ideological space.<sup>2</sup> This argument allows formulating a relatively straightforward hypothesis:

***Voter Polarization Hypothesis (H1):*** *The more (less) polarized the electorates, the greater the vote share for the more extremely (moderately) positioned parties.*

Figure 1 depicts the expectation that is raised by the voter polarization hypothesis. The figure displays four parties a, b, c, and d that are arrayed along a left–right ideological dimension; the figure also displays two voter distributions: A and B. Holding party positions constant, under Voter Distribution A, the parties closer to the center (b and c) will gain more votes than they would under Voter Distribution B, which is more favorable to the extremely positioned parties (a and d).

This clear-cut expectation assumes direct translation of preferences to party choice. It builds on the micro-level assumption that individual voters support parties that are closest to their ideal point on the left–right scale, and that this proximity is the *only* factor that influences their vote choice. Our central argument, however, is that such translation of preferences to party choice is not necessarily automatic because other factors besides ideological preferences may influence how people vote.

### *The Role of Partisanship*

Our argument builds on the well-established literature on political behavior that posits partisanship to be a key factor in voting decisions (Bartels, 2000; Miller, 1991; Miller & Shanks, 1996; Zaller, 1992). This proposition was first developed in the context of the U.S. politics, but has been shown to be valid also in comparative settings (Brader & Tucker, 2007, 2009, 2011; see also Lupu, 2012).

Partisanship is defined as deep psychological attachment with a party, a latent bias that attracts an individual to support and keep supporting a particular party and policies associated with it (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960; Cohen, 2003; Lupia & McCubbins, 1998; Miller, 1991). It is considered to be a form of social identity, and its effect on people's behavior is, therefore, equally strong (Green, Palmquist, & Schickler, 2005; Lupu, 2012). Indeed, partisanship is argued to persist over the course of an individual's life and can be inherited like other types of identities, such as religion. Furthermore, scholars contend that partisanship represents a long-term affective orientation, and not just a policy-based evaluation of parties (Adams, Merrill, & Grofman, 2005; see also Adams, 2001a, 2001b; Campbell et al., 1960).<sup>3</sup>

Because voters generally face significant information constraints in terms of not being able and/or willing to gather all pertinent information to make political decisions, partisan attachment helps voters orient themselves in politics (Brader, Tucker, & Duell, 2010; Ferejohn & Kuklinski, 1990; Lupia, McCubbins, & Popkin, 2000; Popkin, 1991; Zaller, 1992). It makes voting decisions easier and less costly—a vote is cast on the basis of long-term affinity and identity rather than exhaustive information gathering about the party and its rivals. Given this, however, partisanship may easily lead voters to support positions that differ from those they would have supported if they acquired full and objective information on all parties or candidates (Brader et al., 2010). Other research confirms that voters' electoral choices are affected by several factors in addition to policy. Valence judgments and other “affective” components have been shown to cause voters to prefer spatially

distant parties to more proximate ones (Abney et al., 2013; Clark, 2009; see also Adams & Merrill, 2009; Groseclose, 2001). Adams et al. (2005) also present evidence to support the assertion that policy considerations alone are not sufficient to explain vote choice, and that party identification is based at least in part on factors that are not directly related to the parties' current policy positions.

The general conclusion from the partisanship literature then is that strong party attachment may keep voters supporting their party even if their own policy preferences are not in perfect alignment with the position of this party but are closer to a competitor. Referring back to Figure 1, a voter who has a strong attachment to Party b is not likely to switch one's vote in favor of Party a even if his or her policy preferences become more leftist. This is not the case for a similar voter with weak or no attachment to Party b (despite possibly having previously voted for it).

On the aggregate, party level, this means that those parties that enjoy high levels of voter attachment are likely to continue attracting support even if the policy preferences of some of their supporters are different from the positions of these parties. In Figure 1, if the moderate parties b and c enjoy stronger voter attachment than the more extreme a and d, then, holding their positions constant, they may still attract a similar level of electoral support under Voter Distribution B as they do under A. However, if no party enjoys strong voter attachment, b and c would be much better off under Voter Distribution A than B, while the opposite is true for parties a and d. In sum, partisanship is likely to significantly condition the relationship between voter distribution and party support.<sup>4</sup>

### *Party Stability and Partisanship*

The literature on partisanship further argues that the strength of the partisanship effect depends on contextual factors (Lau & Redlawsk, 2001; Lupia & McCubbins, 1998) including party stability, that is, its longevity and consistency (Brader & Tucker, 2011; Brader et al., 2010; Lupu, 2012; Merolla, Stephenson, & Zechmeister, 2008). Since party attachment develops and strengthens over time, the longer and more consistently (in terms of its name and identity) a party has existed, the stronger the voters' attachment will be to it (Achen, 2002; Fiorina, 1981; Lupu, 2012; Rahn, 1993; Sanders & Norris, 1998). That is, the longer a party endures, the more familiar partisan voters are with it and the more frequently they have had the opportunity to affirm their partisanship by voting for it. Such repeated positive association, in turn, helps crystallize voters' attachment to the party (Achen, 2002; Brader et al., 2010; Converse, 1969).

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics for the Dependent Variable (Vote Share) and the Independent Variables.

	All countries	Postcommunist	Established
Vote share	18.71 (11.87)	18.30 (12.01)	18.87 (11.84)
Party policy distance	1.76 (1.06)	1.88 (1.23)	1.71 (0.98)
Voter partisanship	46.73 (12.60)	43.42 (11.50)	47.96 (12.79)
Voter familiarity with parties	82.30 (11.14)	75.82 (13.43)	84.68 (9.10)
Party age	34.16 (18.54)	8.75 (4.26)	43.50 (11.75)
Age of democracy	42.92 (20.65)	11.70 (3.94)	54.38 (9.29)
Voter polarization	2.37 (0.33)	2.61 (0.36)	2.28 (0.26)

Note. Table entries are mean values with respective standard deviations in parentheses. The variables are defined in the text. The complete set of countries, election years, political parties, mean voter positions, voter polarization, parties' left-right positions, and party vote shares included in the empirical analyses are presented in the Supplementary Information.

On the party level, this argument implies that older, more established parties are likely to enjoy higher levels of voter attachment than their newer competitors (Brader et al., 2010; see also Lupu, 2012). Given this, one would expect more voters to be more strongly attached to mainstream than to niche parties, which tend to be newer and less stable (Gallagher, Laver, & Mair, 2011). By a similar token, on the country level, partisanship is likely to be more widespread in older, more established democracies, where the same (mainstream) parties have been around for longer than in new democracies with less stable parties all around—mainstream or otherwise (Brader et al., 2010; see also Converse, 1969; Dalton, 2006). Table 1 reports descriptive statistics from our data that corroborate this argument: The longevity of parties and levels of party attachment are greater in established than in new, postcommunist democracies.

In older democracies, it is the more stable mainstream parties that also tend to be more moderate in their policy positions (Gallagher et al., 2011). Opportunities for party entry in these systems, when they exist, are at the periphery of the political space (Laver, 2005). Because of this, we would expect partisanship to dampen the relationship between voter polarization and support for extremist parties especially in older democracies. In new democracies, on the other hand, where the level of partisanship is generally lower than that in older democracies, voter preferences are more likely to be directly translated into party choice. Consequently, here we would expect voter polarization to be more strongly related to support for extremist parties. More specifically,

***New Democracies Hypothesis (H2a):*** *In new democracies, the more dispersed the electorates, the greater the vote share for the more extremely positioned parties.*

***Established Democracies Hypothesis (H2b):*** *In established democracies, the vote share for the more extremely positioned parties is less likely to depend on the polarization of the electorate.*

In addition to the posited clear difference between newer and older democracies, we will also test our argument by using a continuous rather than dichotomous measure of the age of democracy. We will also explore the proposed causal mechanisms more directly by testing whether the effect of voter polarization on support for extremist parties varies across (a) levels of partisanship, (b) voter familiarity with parties, and (c) party longevity.

## Data and Method

To test our hypotheses, we use data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), which allows us to construct measures of citizen polarization and policy distances.<sup>5</sup> The survey, in addition to reporting party *Vote shares* (our dependent variable),<sup>6</sup> asks respondents in each country to place themselves, and each of their significant national parties, on a left–right scale that ranges from 0 (*extreme left*) to 10 (*extreme right*).<sup>7</sup> The standard deviation of respondents' self-placements constitutes our measure of *voter polarization*.<sup>8</sup>

We use the same question to compute the mean voter position in each country election. In addition, we use the mean response to a similar 0- to 10-item scale asking respondents about the left–right position of the national parties competing in a given election to calculate parties' left–right policy positions.<sup>9</sup> We then compute party policy distance as follows:<sup>10</sup>

$$\text{Party policy distance} = |A_i - X_i|, \quad (1)$$

where  $A_i$  is the position of the mean voter on the left–right dimension, and  $X_i$  is the mean perceived position of party  $X$ .

Our analysis encompasses 335 observations of party policy distances and vote shares in 31 democracies for which CSES data are available. The data include 21 established European and Anglo American democracies, and 10 new, postcommunist democracies. Recall that in addition to contrasting the effect of the polarization of voter preferences on electoral outcomes across these two sets of democracies, we also measure age of democracy and familiarity with parties more directly. Therefore, even though our new democracies are limited to the postcommunist region, we believe that our results are



more broadly generalizable to contexts where party attachments are low. The Supplementary Information (SI) presents the complete set of countries, election years, political parties, voter polarization scores, mean voter positions, parties' left–right positions, and party vote shares included in the empirical analyses. Table 1 reports descriptive statistics of the variables in our data set.

Recall that the voter polarization hypothesis posits that the relationship between party policy distance and party support (vote share) is conditioned by the polarization of voters' left–right policy preferences. That is, extreme parties should perform better in elections where the electorates are highly dispersed. (In contrast, moderate parties should be punished less in more compact electorates.) Thus, our basic specification to test this hypothesis is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Vote share} = & \beta_1 + \beta_2 [\text{Party policy distance}] \\ & + \beta_3 [\text{Party policy distance} \times \text{Voter polarization}] \\ & + \beta_4 [\text{Voter polarization}] \\ & + \beta_5 [\text{Number of competitive parties} > 5\%] + e, \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

where *Party policy distance* and *Voter polarization* are measured as defined earlier, and *Number of competitive parties > 5%* is the number of parties in a given election that received more than 5% of the vote. We include the last variable to account for the number of viable competitors since parties competing in elections with more competitors will, on average, receive fewer votes.<sup>11</sup>

To test H2a and H2b, we split the sample into new (postcommunist) and established democracies, and estimate the model presented in Equation 2 separately for each subsample. Our expectations derived from the three hypotheses can be summarized as follows:

**Hypothesis 1:**  $\beta_3 > 0$ , for all parties.

**Hypotheses 2a and 2b:**  $\beta_3$  for postcommunist countries  $>$   $\beta_3$  for established democracies.

Specifically, if the parameter estimate  $\beta_3$  associated with the interaction term between *Party policy distance* and *Voter polarization* is positive and statistically significant, then we can conclude that as electorates become more dispersed, voters are more likely to support distinctly noncentrist political parties. Hypotheses 2 and 3 suggest that the parameter estimate  $\beta_3$  will be greater for new democracies than for established democracies because of the lower levels of party stability and weaker voter attachment to parties in the former compared with the latter.

Our cross-sectional analysis pools 194 parties, and each is observed an average of 1.7 elections. Note that because the dependent variable is vote share (i.e., a proportion), the errors for all parties in the same election will be correlated. We address this concern by estimating robust standard errors clustered by election.<sup>12</sup>

## Results

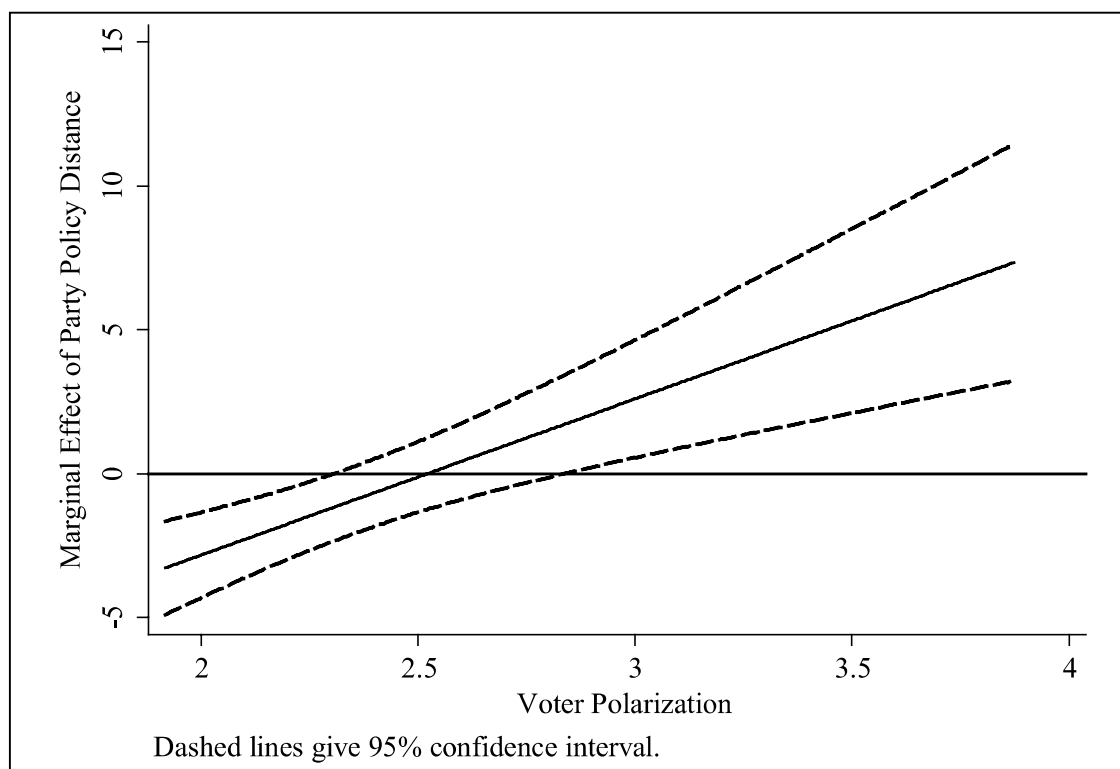
The results for all democracies for the basic specification in Equation 2 are reported in Table 2, column 1. The coefficient for the variable *Party policy distance* is negative and statistically significant. However, this effect is estimated for when the *Voter polarization* variable is zero (which is outside the range of observed values). Figure 2 depicts the parameter estimates for the *Party policy distance* variable, conditional on different levels of voter polarization for all of the parties in the analysis. These estimates conform to the expectations developed in the voter polarization hypothesis. As the figure indicates, the effect of party policy distance on vote share is negative when electorates are compact (i.e., voter polarization is low) and becomes positive as voters become more dispersed or polarized. The coefficient on *Party policy distance* attains statistical significance when *Voter polarization* is below 2.31, which is true for 57% of our sample of observations. In these cases, the coefficients on the *Party policy distance* variable are negative, which indicates that compact electorates support moderate parties. Where voter polarization is relatively dispersed ( $>2.83$ , true for about 10% of our sample), our model estimates that party policy distance has the opposite, statistically significant influence on vote share, that is, polarized electorates reward extreme parties relative to their moderate competitors. This suggests that there are centripetal incentives for parties competing in compact electorates, and centrifugal incentives for parties competing in dispersed electorates, which is a finding that supports the theoretical models of Cox (1990) and Merrill and Adams (2002).<sup>13</sup>

While this general relationship holds for the pooled sample, we have argued that it is likely that these results are driven by those countries, where parties are less stable and voter attachment to parties is weak. Columns 2 to 3 of Table 2 evaluate this claim by presenting the results separately for parties competing in new, postcommunist democracies (column 2) and established democracies (see column 3). As expected, we find that the coefficient for the interaction term is stronger for the former than for the latter set of democracies (Model 2:  $\beta = 9.61$ ,  $SE = 2.31$ ,  $p < .01$ ; Model 3:  $\beta = -0.47$ ,  $SE = 1.76$ ,  $p = .79$ ). Again, to enhance the substantive interpretation of the parameter estimates, we present Figures 3a and 3b, which depict the marginal effects for

**Table 2.** The Conditional Effect of Voter Polarization on Parties' Vote Shares.

	(1) All parties	(2) New democracies	(3) Established democracies	(4) Triple interaction	(5) Age of democracy
Party policy distance	-13.69*** (3.12)	-22.87*** (6.35)	-0.97 (4.15)	-1.14 (4.18)	-28.27*** (7.44)
<b>Party policy distance × Voter polarization</b>	<b>5.43*** (1.30)</b>	<b>9.61*** (2.31)</b>	<b>-0.47 (1.76)</b>	-0.41 (1.78)	11.73*** (2.78)
Voter polarization	-12.65*** (2.82)	-24.4*** (6.7)	-0.95 (3.52)	-1.21 (3.60)	-30.40*** (7.92)
Number of competitive parties > 5%	-3.70*** (0.46)	-1.81*** (0.80)	-4.14*** (0.47)	-3.71*** (0.43)	-3.62*** (0.44)
Postcommunist				51.43** (21.57)	
Age of democracy					-1.16*** (0.42)
Party policy distance × Postcommunist				-19.50** (7.82)	
Party policy distance × Age of democracy					0.46*** (0.16)
Voter polarization × Postcommunist				-22.72*** (8.24)	
Voter polarization × Age of democracy					0.50*** (0.16)
<b>Party policy distance × Voter polarization × Postcommunist</b>				<b>9.11*** (3.01)</b>	
<b>Party policy distance × Voter polarization × Age of democracy</b>					<b>-0.21*** (0.06)</b>
Constant	68.56*** (6.11)	86.38*** (18.09)	45.42*** (0.47)	43.87*** (7.99)	111.15*** (20.88)
N	335	90	245	335	335
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.17	.21	.20	.20	.19

Note. Table entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with robust standard errors clustered on election in parentheses. The dependent variable is *Vote share*. Variables and parameter estimates in bold type are of direct theoretical interest.  
\* $p < .10$ . \*\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .01$ , two-tailed test.

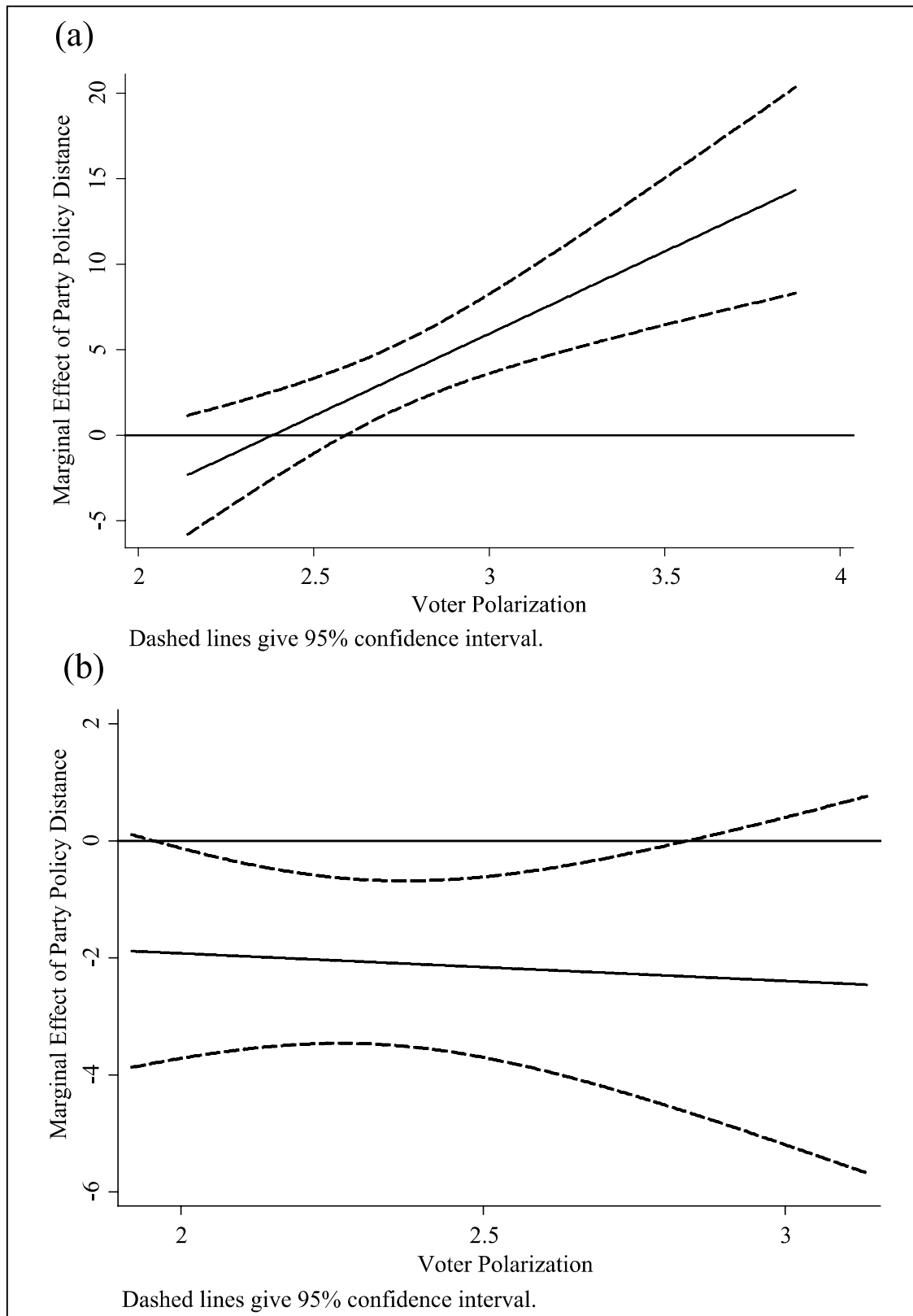


**Figure 2.** Marginal effects of party policy distance on vote share, based on levels of voter polarization, for all parties.

Note. This figure charts the marginal effects of Party policy distance on Vote share over values of Voter polarization, as provided by Table 2, Model I. Dashed lines report 95% confidence intervals.

party policy distance on vote share, conditional on voter polarization. For parties in postcommunist democracies (see Figure 3a) the conditioning effect of voter polarization on election outcomes is quite strong. In fact, the estimated slope of the interaction effect is almost twice as large as that of the pooled model (9.61 compared with 5.43). The effect is positive and statistically significant for almost half of the observations, corroborating earlier findings that adopting positions further from the mean voter position benefit political parties in postcommunist democracies (Ezrow, Homola, & Tavits, in press). More importantly, they suggest that parties that adopt distinct noncentrist positions in postcommunist countries will receive an additional benefit when the electorate's political preferences are dispersed, compared with when they are compact.

The results for the established democracies, where parties are stable and enjoy higher voter attachment, tell a different story. The coefficient on the interaction term in column 3 is negative, close to zero, and insignificant ( $\beta = -0.47$ ,  $SE = 1.76$ ,  $p = .79$ ). In Figure 3b, we display the marginal effects of



**Figure 3.** Marginal effects of party policy distance on vote share, based on levels of voter polarization, for (a) postcommunist and (b) established democracies. Note. The two figures chart the marginal of Party policy distance on Vote share over values of Voter polarization, as provided by Table 2, Models 2 and 3, for postcommunist and established democracies. Dashed lines report 95% confidence intervals.

party policy distance on vote share across the sample range of values for voter polarization for established democracies. The negative estimates on *Party policy distance* support the finding that, in established democracies, moderate parties tend to perform better—a finding that is consistent with previous studies (see, for example, Ezrow, 2005). However, the slope of the line is flat, which suggests that the estimated effect of party policy distance on vote share remains fairly consistent across compact and polarized electorates. That is, consistent with our argument, support for extreme parties does not systematically increase when the electorate is polarized.

The substantive effects are sizable. A moderate party competing in a compact electorate in a postcommunist democracy with three competitive parties is predicted to gain 30% of the vote. The same party, competing in a polarized electorate, is only expected to receive 4% of the vote. On the other hand, the same party competing in an established democracy is expected to gain around 30% irrespective of voter polarization (i.e., the expected vote share only changes 0.84 percentage points when a moderate party competes in a compact versus a polarized electorate in an established democracy). Extreme parties are expected to gain 12 percentage points when moving from compact to polarized electorates in postcommunist democracies. Substantive effects for a wider range of values are presented in SI Table S2.

In addition to splitting the sample, we also estimated a model, presented in Table 2 column 4, which pools all countries and includes a triple interaction. Specifically, in addition to the variables included in the previous analyses, this model includes (a) a dummy variable *Postcommunist* that equals 1 for parties in postcommunist countries and 0 for those in established democracies, (b) a triple interaction variable (*Party policy distance*  $\times$  *Voter polarization*  $\times$  *Postcommunist*), and (c) two-way interactions between all of the constituent terms in the three-way interaction. The estimates on the three-way interaction term are positive and significant ( $\beta = 9.11$ ,  $SE = 3.01$ ,  $p < .01$ ) suggesting that the differences in the coefficients in columns 2 and 3 for the interaction term (*Party policy distance*  $\times$  *Voter polarization*) are statistically significant. That is, voter polarization has a stronger conditioning effect on the relationship between party policy distance and vote share in postcommunist democracies than in established democracies.

In still another analysis (Table 2, column 5), we replaced the dichotomous measure of democratic longevity by a continuous one—*Age of democracy*—measured as the number of years a country has been democratic at the time of a given election.<sup>14</sup> This allows capturing differences not only between postcommunist and established democracies but also within each group of countries. As the results show, the three-way interaction term is negative and significant, confirming the earlier result that as democracies mature, the conditioning effect of voter polarization on the relationship between party policy

distance and vote share weakens (see Figure S1 in SI). That is, extreme parties are increasingly less likely to benefit electorally from competing in polarized electorates as democracies mature.

## Testing the Role of Party Attachment More Directly

We have argued that the results for the postcommunist democracies are different from those of the established ones because the former have less stable parties and, consequently, lower levels of partisanship. It is possible to provide a more direct test of this mechanism by explicitly measuring party stability and the level of partisanship. To measure *Voter partisanship*, we follow other comparative studies (see, for example, Dalton & Weldon, 2007; Huber, Kernell, & Leoni, 2005; Lupu, 2012) and rely on the CSES question “Do you usually think of yourself as close to any particular party?” As measures of party stability, which encompasses party longevity and consistency, we use two different indicators: *Party age* and *Voter familiarity with parties*. The former is measured as the average age of political parties in an election, with party ages weighted by their vote shares.<sup>15</sup> To measure voter familiarity with political parties, we consider the willingness of voters to place parties on an ideological scale. The more familiar voters are with the parties, the more willing (and confident) they are in placing them on the ideological scale. This measure relies on the CSES question (described in the previous section) that asks respondents in each country to place each of their significant national parties on a left–right scale that ranges from 0 (*extreme left*) to 10 (*extreme right*). We, first, calculate the proportion of respondents who were willing to place a given party on the left right scale, and then average these proportions for each party with more than 5% of the vote to get the average proportion willing to place the party for a country in a given election year.

The expectations for these variables are quite clear: If party stability and voter attachment to parties matter the way that we have specified in our argument, then the higher the levels of voter partisanship, voter familiarity with parties, and average party age, the weaker the conditioning effect of voter polarization on the relationship between party policy distance and vote share. Put simply, when voters have strong attachments to political parties, extreme parties are less likely to attract support even if voter preferences are polarized.

Table 3 reports estimates from a series of triple interactive model specifications. Recall that the interaction (*Party policy distance* × *Voter polarization*) will be positive (and statistically significant) if the polarization of voter preferences conditions the effect of party policy distance on vote share. Thus,

**Table 3.** The Conditioning Effects of Partisanship as Measured by Levels of Partisan Identification, Voter Familiarity, and Party Age.

	(1) Voter partisanship	(2) Voter familiarity	(3) Party age
Party policy distance	-52.86** (20.20)	-92.68*** (33.38)	-24.30*** (6.82)
Voter polarization	-27.43* (14.31)	-73.60*** (16.31)	-26.28*** (6.97)
Voter partisanship	-0.68 (0.58)		
Party stability		-1.84*** (0.51)	-1.39** (0.56)
Party policy distance x Voter polarization	21.64** (8.72)	36.20*** (12.87)	10.08*** (2.55)
Voter polarization x Voter partisanship	0.27 (0.27)		
Voter polarization x Party stability		0.74*** (0.19)	0.62** (0.23)
Party policy distance x Voter partisanship	0.73** (0.35)		
Party policy distance x Party stability		0.94*** (0.38)	0.52* (0.27)
<b>Party policy distance x Voter polarization x Voter partisanship</b>	<b>-0.30* (0.15)</b>		
<b>Party policy distance x Voter polarization x Party stability</b>		<b>-0.37** (0.15)</b>	<b>-0.23** (0.11)</b>
Number of competitive parties > 5%	-3.82*** (0.44)	-3.65*** (0.49)	-3.68*** (0.42)
Constant	105.63*** (31.79)	219.63*** (42.91)	100.60*** (18.40)
N	331	335	335
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.18	.18	.18

Note. Table entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with robust standard errors clustered on election in parentheses. The dependent variable is *Vote share*. \* $p < .10$ . \*\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .01$ , two-tailed test.



if there is evidence for the “partisanship and party stability” causal mechanism to explain differences between postcommunist democracies and established democracies, the coefficient on the triple interaction variable (*Party policy distance* × *Voter polarization* × *Party stability*) will be negative. The parameter estimates on the triple interaction term (*Party policy distance* × *Voter polarization* × *Party stability*) are, indeed, negative and reach conventional levels of statistical significance for each of the model specifications in columns 1 to 3 of Table 3. Figures S2 to S4 in the SI depict estimates of *Party policy distance* on *Vote share* conditional on levels of *Voter polarization* for high and low levels of *Voter partisanship* (Figure S2), *Voter familiarity* (Figure S3), and *Party age* (Figure S4). In each case, the slope estimate is significantly steeper when party attachments are weak (i.e., below the median value of voter partisanship, voter familiarity, and party age) than when they are strong.

We performed additional tests and found, in accordance with our central causal mechanism, that in established democracies, *moderate* parties have fewer partisans. The correlations in established democracies, between party distance to the mean voter (extremity) and share of partisans ( $r = -.028$ ;  $p < .01$ ), and for postcommunist democracies ( $r = .023$ ;  $p < .05$ ), suggest that *extreme* parties have more partisans in the latter set of countries. Interaction models using either the postcommunist dummy variable or age of democracy continue to confirm this finding (see SI Tables S3 and S4).<sup>16</sup>

This evidence supports the argument that differences between newer (postcommunist) and established democracies in how voter polarization translates into support for extremist parties are due to differences in the level of party stability and partisanship. Voter polarization is more likely to lead to heightened support for extremist parties in contexts where parties are new and unfamiliar to voters and voter attachment to parties is weak. On the other hand, where parties have well-known brands and partisan attachment is strong, polarized electorates are not necessarily abandoning the moderately positioned mainstream parties in favor of competitors with more extreme positions.

## Conclusion

We have shown that extreme parties receive electoral support when electorates are polarized and their attachments to political parties are weak. Our project was motivated by recent studies suggesting that parties’ positioning incentives are affected by the underlying distribution of voters’ political preferences (e.g., Calvo & Hellwig, 2011; see also Ezrow, 2007). We took this straightforward theoretical expectation, and combined it with insights from

the partisanship literature implying that (a) strong party attachments can distort pure proximity issue voting (Adams et al., 2005; Campbell et al., 1960) and (b) partisanship varies with the stability and age of parties (Brader & Tucker, 2011; see also Lupu, 2012).

We produced a number of specific and important findings. First, we found that parties competing in polarized electorates receive an electoral benefit when they adopt distinctly noncentrist policy positions in newer democracies. This relationship disappears in established democracies: Extremists gain no advantage even if electorates are polarized rather than compact. We further established that this difference is due to the different levels of partisanship between the two sets of democracies: The less established the parties in the electorate (i.e., the younger the parties, the lower the levels of partisanship, and the less familiar voters are with parties), the more strongly is voter polarization related to extreme party success.

Identifying conditions under which extreme parties receive electoral support is important given the potentially significant consequences of extremism and party polarization for the quality and stability of democracy. Our findings imply that the threats of extremism and polarization pointed out by existing studies are especially worrisome in democracies where parties are new and lack strong ties to the electorate. Therefore, our results provide a concrete reason for strengthening parties in new democracies. This echoes the general conclusion of the scholarship on party system development, which underlines the importance of strong parties for increasing the stability and quality of democracies (Mainwaring & Torcal, 2006). Note that our findings also imply that in newer democracies with lower levels of partisanship, polarization of the party system (shaped by the support for extremist parties) is likely to be driven by the behavior and preferences of voters: Extremist parties benefit when electorates are polarized. In established democracies with high levels of partisanship, however, system-level polarization might more likely result from the choices of party elites: Party system polarization is observed not because extremists win more votes but perhaps because mainstream parties choose to take more extreme policy positions for whatever reason. These conclusions necessarily remain speculative here, but future studies might want to explore them in more detail. This would be especially relevant in light of the ongoing debate about whether extremism originates from voter preferences or party choices. The findings of this study also contribute to our theoretical and empirical understanding of party positioning incentives (Cox, 1990; Dow, 2001, 2011), electoral competition in newer democracies (Rohrschneider & Whitefield, 2012b), and partisanship effects across different types of democracies (Brader & Tucker, 2011; Lupu, 2012).

Our results point to several interesting avenues for future research. For example, one might explore the relationship between party polarization and partisanship. It is possible that party polarization helps strengthen partisanship (Lupu, 2012), and thereby weaken the relationship between voter polarization and support for extremists. One might also investigate whether and how the dynamics that we have identified here apply to different dimensions of political competition—economic versus cultural (Kriesi et al., 2008; Marks, Hooghe, Nelson, & Edwards, 2006), or principled versus pragmatic (Tavits, 2007). These analyses would help us construct a more complete picture of how voter preferences translate into party support.

### **Acknowledgment**

The authors thank Jim Adams, Noam Lupu, and the anonymous reviewers for helpful comments on this project.

### **Declaration of Conflicting Interests**

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### **Funding**

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### **Notes**

1. This macro-level approach has been used extensively in empirical studies of the electoral effects of candidates' and parties' positioning in the United States (Ansolabehere, Snyder, & Stewart, 2001; Burden, 2001; Canes-Wrone, Brady, & Cogan, 2002; Erikson, MacKuen, & Stimson, 2002; Erikson & Wright, 1997), the United Kingdom (Nagel & Wlezien, 2010), across 12 West European democracies (Ezrow, 2005, 2010), in new postcommunist democracies (Ezrow, Homola, & Tavits, in press), and in studies of the electoral effects of economic conditions both inside and outside of the United States (Lewis-Beck, 1988; Paldam, 1991; Powell, 2000; Powell & Whitten, 1993).
2. This follows Downs (1957), who argues that the distribution of voters is important in determining the number and relative positions of parties in two-party and multiparty systems. Convergence is expected when the distribution of voters has a single mode and small variance. However, as voter preferences are more spread out, more parties are likely to be supported (especially in multiparty systems) and parties are less likely to converge. This logic is similar to Downs's expectation of divergence in two-party systems with extremists' abstention.

3. Lupu (2012, 2013) differs slightly from these authors in that he conceives of partisanship as relatively unstable instead of fixed. He presents evidence that divergent party positioning enhances party branding, which, in turn, increases partisanship, while convergent party positioning decreases partisanship. In the conclusion, we discuss ways to combine this dynamic view of partisanship with our argument.
4. Voters' inertia may result from affective attachment to parties or from voters' lack of knowledge of other parties and unwillingness or inability to invest in the cost of learning about them. In future studies, it would be interesting to explore whether the reason for party attachment makes a difference to voters' willingness to support other parties when their preferences have changed.
5. The article includes a Supplementary Information (SI) file that includes (a) the main data in the analyses, (b) a number of additional analyses discussed in the text, and (c) robustness tests referenced in notes.
6. Because of the bounded nature of this measure, we performed alternative analyses with parties' logged vote shares as the dependent variable. The results of these analyses (reported in SI Tables S2c and S3c) supported the substantive conclusions reported.
7. Question wording: "In politics people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you place yourself on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?"
8. Duclos, Esteban, and Ray (2004) propose alternative measures of polarization for instances in which the distribution of sample observations is nonnormal and/or multimodal. In our case, the distributions of self-placements are generally unimodal and symmetric around the mean. In alternative analyses, we measured voter polarization based on the 5 to 95 percentile range. These analyses, reported in SI Tables S2j and S3j, supported the substantive conclusions.
9. Question wording: "In politics people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you place [PARTY] on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?" The mean value of all responses to this item in a given election survey constitutes the overall left–right policy stance of the party. The CSES is ideal for our purposes because it circumvents a problem of using different "metrics," that is, different sources and scales for placing citizens and parties (Achen, 1978). Furthermore, correlation between our measure and alternative measures is high:  $r = .57$  ( $p < .01$ ) for the manifesto-based left–right positions and  $r = .89$  ( $p < .01$ ) for the CSES expert placements. In addition, we present in SI Tables S2i and S3i results based on the CSES expert placements, and the results are generally consistent.
10. We performed an alternative set of analyses based on the parties' *squared proximities* to the mean voter position (SI Tables S2l, S3l). These analyses supported our substantive conclusions, although the statistical fit of these models was not as strong as the fit for linear proximities, suggesting that this latter measure is the appropriate metric for evaluating the electoral effects of party positioning.
11. Our results remain similar when using the effective number of legislative or electoral parties (Laakso & Taagepera, 1979; see SI Tables S2d, S2e, S3d, S3e).

12. Our substantive results remain similar if we cluster standard errors on party or country, or control for country-specific effects (see SI Tables S2f-S3h).
13. We found no evidence that electoral systems (degree of proportionality) affected the conditioning influence of voter polarization on the effect of party policy distance (see SI Tables S2a-S3b).
14. *Age of democracy* is calculated by subtracting the year a country is coded as democratic from the country election year. We use 1945 as the cut-off point (i.e., the earliest year in which established democracies can be democratic).
15. Similar to the *Age of democracy*, we use 1945 as a cut-off point for calculating party age.
16. To evaluate whether the proportion of moderate (or extreme) partisans conditions the effect of party policy distance on vote share, we correlate *Party policy distance* with *Share of partisans*, by election, and then reestimate Models 1 to 3 in Table 2 using this correlation as the conditioning variable. The results from these analyses (SI Tables S5 and S6, and Figure S5) suggest that moderate partisanship levels condition the effect of party policy distance on vote share. We acknowledge an anonymous reviewer for suggesting these analyses.

## References

- Abney, R., Adams, J., Clark, M., Easton, M., Ezrow, L., Kosmidis, S., & Neundorff, A. (2013). When does valence matter? Heightened valence effects for governing parties during election campaigns. *Party Politics, 19*, 61-82.
- Achen, C. (1978). Measuring representation. *American Journal of Political Science, 22*, 475-510.
- Achen, C. (2002). Parental socialization and rational party identification. *Political Behavior, 24*, 151-170.
- Adams, J. (2001a). *Party competition and responsible party government*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Adams, J. (2001b). A theory of spatial competition with biased voters: Party policies viewed temporally and comparatively. *British Journal of Political Science, 31*, 121-158.
- Adams, J., & Merrill, S., III. (2009). Policy-seeking parties in a parliamentary democracy with proportional representation: A valence-uncertainty model. *British Journal of Political Science, 39*, 539-558.
- Adams, J., Merrill, S., III, & Grofman, B. (2005). *A unified theory of party competition*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Ansolabehere, S., Snyder, J., & Stewart, C. (2001). Candidate positioning in U.S. house elections. *American Journal of Political Science, 45*, 136-159.
- Bartels, L. (2000). Partisanship and voting behavior, 1952-1996. *American Journal of Political Science, 44*, 35-50.
- Binder, L. (2003, August). *Identity, culture, and collective action*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Philadelphia, PA.
- Brader, T., & Tucker, J. (April, 2007). *Reflective and unreflective partisans? Experimental evidence on the links between information, opinion, and party*

- identification*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, IL.
- Brader, T., & Tucker, J. (2009). What's left behind when the party's over: Survey experiments on the effects of partisan cues in Putin's Russia. *Politics & Policy*, 37, 843-868.
- Brader, T., & Tucker, J. (2011). *Follow the leader: Party cues, policy opinion, and the power of partisanship in three multiparty systems* (Working Paper Series, Estudio/Working Paper 2011/256). Madrid, Spain: Juan March Foundation, Center for Advanced Study in the Social Science.
- Brader, T., Tucker, J., & Duell, D. (2010, August). *Who's the life of the party? The impact of personal and party traits on partisan cue-taking*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, DC.
- Budge, I. (1994). A new theory of party competition: Uncertainty, ideology, and policy equilibria viewed temporally and comparatively. *British Journal of Political Science*, 24, 443-467.
- Burden, B. (2001, March). *Choices and echoes in U.S. house elections*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Public Choice Society, San Antonio, TX.
- Calvo, E., & Hellwig, T. (2011). Centripetal and centrifugal incentives under different electoral systems. *American Journal of Political Science*, 55, 27-41.
- Campbell, A., Converse, C., Miller, W., & Stokes, D. (1960). *The American voter*. New York, NY: Wiley.
- Canes-Wrone, B., Brady, D., & Cogan, J. (2002). Out of step, out of office: Electoral accountability and house members' voting. *American Political Science Review*, 96, 127-140.
- Clark, M. (2009). Valence and electoral outcomes in Western Europe, 1976-1998. *Electoral Studies*, 28, 111-122.
- Cohen, G. (2003). Party over policy: The dominating impact of group influence on political beliefs. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 85, 808-822.
- Converse, P. (1969). Of time and partisan stability. *Comparative Political Studies*, 2, 139-171.
- Cox, G. (1990). Centripetal and centrifugal incentives in electoral systems. *American Journal of Political Science*, 34, 905-935.
- Dalton, R. (2006). Social modernization and the end of ideology debate: Patterns of ideological polarization. *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, 7, 1-22.
- Dalton, R. (2008). The quantity and the quality of party systems: Party system polarization, its measurement, and its consequences. *Comparative Political Studies*, 41, 899-920.
- Dalton, R., & Weldon, S. (2007). Partisanship and party system institutionalization. *Party Politics*, 13, 179-196.
- Dow, J. (2001). A comparative spatial analysis of majoritarian and proportional elections. *Electoral Studies*, 20, 109-125.
- Dow, J. (2011). Party-system extremism in majoritarian and proportional electoral systems. *British Journal of Political Science*, 41, 341-361.
- Downs, A. (1957). *An economic theory of democracy*. New York, NY: Harper.

- Duclos, J.-Y., Esteban, J., & Ray, D. (2004). Polarization: Concepts, measurement, estimation. *Econometrica*, 72, 1737-1772.
- Erikson, R., MacKuen, M., & Stimson, J. (2002). *The macro polity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Erikson, R., & Wright, G. (1997). Voters, candidates, and issues in congressional elections. In L. Dodd & B. Oppenheimer (Eds.), *Congress reconsidered* (6th ed.) pp. 132-162. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press.
- Ezrow, L. (2005). Are moderate parties rewarded in multiparty systems? A pooled analysis of Western European elections, 1984–1998. *European Journal of Political Research*, 44, 881-898.
- Ezrow, L. (2007). The variance matters: How party systems represent the preferences of voters. *Journal of Politics*, 69, 182-192.
- Ezrow, L. (2010). *Linking citizens and parties: How electoral systems matter for political representation*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Ezrow, L., Homola, J., & Tavits, M. (in press). When extremism pays: Policy positions, voter certainty, and party support in postcommunist Europe. *Journal of Politics*.
- Ezrow, L., & Xezonakis, G. (2011). Citizen satisfaction with democracy and parties' policy offerings. *Comparative Political Studies*, 44, 1152-1178.
- Ferejohn, J., & Kuklinski, J. (1990). *Information and democratic processes*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Fiorina, M. (1981). *Retrospective voting in American national elections*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Fiorina, M., Abrams, S., & Pope, J. (2005). *Culture war? The myth of a polarized America*. New York, IL: Pearson Education.
- Frye, T. (2010). *Building states and markets after communism: The perils of polarized democracy*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Gallagher, M., Laver, M., & Mair, P. (2011). *Representative government in modern Europe*. London, England: McGraw-Hill.
- Green, D. P., Palmquist, B., & Schickler, E. (2005). *Partisan hearts and minds: Political parties and the social identities of voters*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Groseclose, T. (2001). A model of candidate location when one candidate has a valence advantage. *American Journal of Political Science*, 45, 862-886.
- Hibbs, D. A. (1973). *Mass political violence*. New York, NY: Wiley.
- Huber, J., Kernell, G., & Leoni, E. (2005). Institutional context, cognitive resources and party attachments across democracies. *Political Analysis*, 13, 365-386.
- Jamieson, K., & Falk, E. (2000). Continuity and change in civility in the house. In J. Bond & R. Fleisher (Eds.), *Polarized politics: Congress and the President in a Partisan era* (pp. 96-108). Washington, DC: CQ Press.
- Jones, D. (2001). Party polarization and legislative gridlock. *Political Research Quarterly*, 54, 125-141.
- Kriesi, H., Grande, E., Lachat, R., Dolezal, M., Bornschie, S., & Frey, T. (2008). *West European politics in the age of globalization*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Laakso, M., & Taagepera, R. (1979). "Effective" number of parties: A measure with application to West Europe. *Comparative Political Studies*, 12, 3-27.

- Lau, R., & Redlawsk, D. (2001). Advantages and disadvantages of cognitive heuristics in political decision making. *American Journal of Political Science*, 45, 951-971.
- Laver, M. (2005). Policy and the dynamics of political competition. *American Political Science Review*, 99, 263-281.
- Layman, G., Carsey, T., & Horowitz, J. M. (2006). Party polarization in American politics: Characteristics, causes, and consequences. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 9, 83-110.
- Lewis-Beck, M. (1988). *Economics and elections*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Linz, J. J. (1978). *Crisis, breakdown and reequilibration*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Lupia, A., & McCubbins, M. (1998). *The democratic dilemma: Can citizens learn what they need to know?* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Lupia, A., McCubbins, M., & Popkin, S. (2000). *Elements of reason: Cognition, choice, and the bounds of rationality*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Lupu, N. (2012). *Elite polarization and voter partisanship: A comparative perspective*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Lupu, N. (2013). Party brands and partisanship: Theory with evidence from a survey experiment in Argentina. *American Journal of Political Science*, 57, 49-64.
- Mainwaring, S., & Torcal, M. (2006). Party system institutionalization and party system theory after the third wave of democratization. In R. S. Katz & W. Crotty (Eds.), *Handbook of party politics* (pp. 204-227). London, England: Sage.
- Marks, G., Hooghe, L., Nelson, M., & Edwards, E. (2006). Party competition and European integration in the East and West: Different structure, same causality. *Comparative Political Studies*, 39, 155-175.
- McCarty, N., Poole, K., & Rosenthal, H. (2006). *Polarized America: The dance of political ideology and unequal riches*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Merolla, J., Stephenson, L., & Zechmeister, E. (2008). Can Canadians take a hint? The (in)effectiveness of party labels as information shortcuts in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 41, 673-696.
- Merrill, S., III, & Adams, J. (2002). Centrifugal incentives in multi-candidate elections. *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 14, 275-300.
- Miller, W. (1991). Party identification, realignment, and party voting: Back to basics. *American Political Science Review*, 85, 557-568.
- Miller, W., & Shanks, J. M. (1996). *The new American voter*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Nagel, J., & Wlezien, C. (2010). Centre-party strength and major-party divergence in Britain, 1945-2005. *British Journal of Political Science*, 40, 279-304.
- Neckerman, K., & Torche, F. (2007). Inequality: Causes and consequences. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 33, 335-357.
- Paldam, M. (1991). How robust is the vote function? A study of seventeen nations over four decades. In H. Norpoth, M. Lewis-Beck, & J.-D. Lafay (Eds.), *The*



- economics of politics: The calculus of support* (pp. 9-31). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Popkin, S. (1991). *The reasoning voter: Communication and persuasion in presidential campaigns*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Powell, B. (1982). *Contemporary democracies: Participation, stability and violence*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Powell, B. (1986). Extremist parties and political turmoil: Two puzzles. *American Journal of Political Science*, 30, 357-378.
- Powell, B. (2000). *Elections as instruments of democracy: Majoritarian and proportional visions*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Powell, B., & Whitten, G. (1993). A cross-national analysis of economic voting: Taking account of political context. *American Journal of Political Science*, 37, 391-414.
- Rahn, W. (1993). The role of partisan stereotypes in information processing about political candidates. *American Journal of Political Science*, 37, 472-496.
- Rohrschneider, R., & Whitefield, S. (2009). Understanding cleavages in party systems: Issue position and issue salience in 13 post-communist democracies. *Comparative Political Studies*, 42, 280-313.
- Rohrschneider, R., & Whitefield, S. (2012a). Institutional context and representational strain in party-voter agreement in Western and Eastern Europe. *West European Politics*, 35, 1320-1340.
- Rohrschneider, R., & Whitefield, S. (2012b). *The strain of representation: How parties represent diverse voters in Western and Eastern Europe*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Sanders, D., & Norris, P. (1998). Does negative news matter? The effect of television news on party images in the 1997 British general election. *British Elections and Parties Yearbook*, 8, 150-170.
- Sani, G., & Sartori, G. (1983). Polarization, fragmentation and competition in Western democracies. In H. Daalder & P. Mair (Eds.), *Western European party systems* (pp. 307-340). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Shea, D. (2003). Schattschneider's dismay: Strong parties and alienated voters. In J. Green & D. Shea (Eds.), *The state of the parties: The changing role of contemporary American parties* (pp. 287-299). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Sinclair, B. (2001, August). *Structure, preferences, and outcomes: Explaining when bills do and don't become law*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco.
- Tavits, M. (2007). Principle vs. Pragmatism: Policy shifts and political competition. *American Journal of Political Science*, 51, 151-165.
- Valenzuela, A. (1978). *The breakdown of democratic regimes: Chile*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Zaller, J. (1992). *The nature and origins of mass opinion*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

## Author Biographies

**Lawrence Ezrow** is a professor in the Department of Government at the University of Essex. His research interests are in comparative political representation and party strategies in elections. He has published *Linking Citizens and Parties* (2010, Oxford University Press), and his articles have been published in the *American Journal of Political Science*, *British Journal of Political Science*, *Comparative Political Studies*, *Journal of Politics*, *World Politics*, and other journals.

**Margit Tavits** is an associate professor of political science at Washington University in St. Louis. Her research interests include party politics, political institutions, post-communist democracies, and corruption. She is the author of *Presidents With Prime Ministers* (2008, Oxford University Press) and *Postcommunist Democracies and Party Organization* (2013, Cambridge University Press). Her work has also appeared in the *American Journal of Political Science*, *American Political Science Review*, *British Journal of Political Science*, *Comparative Political Studies*, *Journal of Politics*, and other journals.

**Jonathan Homola** is a PhD student in Political Science at Washington University in St. Louis. He received an MA degree at the University of Essex and completed his undergraduate studies at Freie Universität Berlin, where he also worked for the Manifesto Project at the Social Science Research Centre (WZB). His previous research is forthcoming in the *Journal of Politics*.